

# **The effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school setting**

*by*

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*This thesis is dedicated to Professor Maree*



Jesse Owens (in Baker, 1986:137) said that *we all have dreams, but in order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort*. I would like to personalise the previous quote, by adding that it also took significant people, such as the ones listed below, to make this dream a reality.

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- My siblings, Pieter-Jan and Suna – *“We were a strange little band of characters trudging through life sharing diseases and toothpaste, coveting one another's desserts, hiding shampoo, borrowing money, locking each other out of our rooms, inflicting pain and kissing to heal it in the same instant, loving, laughing, defending, and trying to figure out the common thread that bound us all together”* (Bombeck, 1987:11).
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- My Creator, constantly reminding me of the following: *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”* (Jeremiah 29:11, King James Version).



## DECLARATIONS

I, Claire Symington (20056941), hereby declare that **The effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context** is my own original work and that all the resources that were consulted are included in the reference list.

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Claire Symington

July 2014



I, Hennie Symington, hereby declare that I undertook the editing of the grammatical and language aspects of this thesis.

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**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

*This document must be signed and submitted with every essay, report, project, assignment, dissertation, and/or thesis.*

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**DECLARATION**

1. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this thesis is my own original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, internet or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements.
3. I have not used work previously produced by another student or any other person to hand in as my own.
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## **THE EFFECT OF LIFE-DESIGN COUNSELLING ON THE CAREER ADAPTABILITY OF LEARNERS IN AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL SETTING**

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The future work force will be expected to transition from the familiarity of their school environment into an unfamiliar and unstable career world. Organisational changes have shifted the terms of employment from an employee practicing a life-long vocation to now becoming part of a contingent work force. This infers that employees may have to forfeit their reliance on the company to shape their identity development in lieu of self-management. The acknowledgement of these changes has created a ripple effect in the career counselling field as career practitioners increasingly begin to experience the limitations of traditional career approaches in addressing their clients' evolving career needs. Subsequently, a post-modern framework to career counselling has been introduced to guide career counselling practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. My study focused on the use of two such approaches, namely life-design counselling and career adaptability.

This study was based on a socio-constructivist paradigm, which had developed from an interpretivist worldview. The nature of my research study lent itself well to a collective case study, which involved the participation of five learners from an independent school context in a major South African city. Qualitative data collection, analysis and interpretation techniques were used to explore the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of the afore-mentioned participants. Prior to attending eight group-based life-design counselling sessions, the participants were asked to attend an individual pre-interview. They were also asked to participate in a post-interview upon completion of the last-mentioned sessions.

The identified themes generated from the qualitative data collected were as follows: responses related to career adaptability and the related sub-skills based on the *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS)* (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012:357); family/significant others' influences; financial and economic considerations; components related to emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2007); adolescent development; school life; childhood dreams, and reflection on the process of life-design counselling. Findings suggest that the participants from my study appeared to benefit from the implementation of a life-design counselling intervention aimed at improving their career adaptability. With this study I aimed to contribute to the field of career counselling by highlighting the specific factors that were likely to influence the career trajectory of the five participants and to demonstrate the positive effect of life-design counselling on their career adaptability. Recommendations have also been made for further research and practice.

Key words: life-design, career, adaptability, adolescents, independent school, group-based interventions; emotional intelligence, post-modern career counselling, career construction theory and social-constructionism

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## Chapter 1: orientation to my research study



(Cusick, 2007)

*Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with stories that we tell and hear told, with stories that we dream or imagine or would like to tell. [ . . . ] We live immersed in narrative. Recounting and reassessing the meanings of our past actions, anticipating the outcomes of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed*

- Polkinghorne (1988:160)

## CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO MY RESEARCH STUDY

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

A reputable trend-analysis company predicts that in the near future one can expect to find job descriptions that at this point in time do not yet exist. They propose that the next generation workforce will be able to call themselves *e-scrubbers*; *realisors* or *unpluggers*. An e-scrubber's main purpose will be to minimise indiscretions that people collect on the internet. A realisor will be someone capable of turning virtual ideas into tangible objects and an unplugging will be a specialist mental health practitioner dedicated to guiding technology addicts on the road to recovery (Social Technologies in Pisani, 2007:2).

Future-analyst, Canton (2007), is certain that the prospective workforce will be expected to showcase a repertoire of diverse skills to align themselves with the rich diversity offered by the global market place. He also believes that employees will have to be sufficiently prepared for *a complex and stressful future, where accelerated change and risks can be managed effectively with high performance agility* (Canton, 2007:90). It therefore comes as no surprise that being a career counsellor has been included as one of the top twelve impending jobs of the future (Bureau of Labour Statistics in Graham, 2010).

The process involved in career transition therefore demands the identification and utilisation of various psychological resources (Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven & Prosser, 2004). My curiosity got the better of me and I could not help but wonder which psychological resources, skills or abilities will increase one's ability to manage these demands. The need for understanding these resources becomes even more critical when one considers that work essentially creates an opportunity for a person to exhibit his or her use of skills and abilities which in turn contribute to a sense of accomplishment, contentment and fulfilment (Pryor, 2008).

Chapter 1 aims to provide the reader with an overview of the intended study and the aspects to be discussed in the chapters to follow. The problem statement, rationale and research questions are introduced, followed by a brief clarification of the terms associated with my research question. Next, a preliminary literature review serves to help orientate the reader to the study. Since Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 will respectively concentrate on the constructs of life-design counselling and career adaptability, Figure 1.1. and 1.2. offer an integrated theoretical and conceptual overview aimed at anchoring each term within a larger theoretical framework before conceptualising the possible relationship that may exist between them. Furthermore, Chapter 1 offers a brief description of the research design and methodology to be followed in my study.

## 1.2. BACKGROUND ORIENTATION TO STUDY

### 1.2.1. Reflection

Chapter 1 also serves to reflect my interest in the chosen research topic and briefly describes how some of the existing research findings have informed my understanding of it. A brief introduction and/or background of my study serves to explain how my interest in the articles mentioned in the above introduction influenced my study and made me more aware of the immense responsibility resting on the shoulders of career counsellors to prepare the youth for the complex challenges that may lie ahead. More so when one considers that not only do they have to be prepared for careers that have up to now only been envisioned; but that they also have to survive in an industry where the normative progression and timing of roles from child to spouse to parent and to grandparent or from student to worker to retiree are no longer considered the proverbial life pattern (Riverin-Simard in Ebberwein *et al.*, 2004).

As previously mentioned, the inner workings of occupations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century have changed considerably from the time of early industrialisation where it was expected for employees to stay dedicated to a single life-long career to the current uncertain, fragmented and often inconsistent nature of the information and technological age. Towards the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, career guidance was described as *a micro tool for the Industrial State* (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999:163). In essence this implies that learners may be challenged when they encounter a different career model to the one their parents have become accustomed to.

My next inclination was to consider the daunting changes the future career force would need to grapple with, especially when one considers that throughout an individual's life span, career change appears to have a significant influence on one's general life satisfaction and well-being. This realisation compelled me to reflect on my current understanding of career counselling practices and the possible implications that these changes may hold for my profession as an Educational Psychologist. I began by initially asking the same three questions Pryor (2008) did, namely: 'what is career counselling?'; 'what is it for?', and 'why are we doing it?', followed by the addition of a fourth one: 'what should I be doing differently?'

The fourth question is of particular significance in light of Maree's (2009) belief that South Africa is yet to establish a unified career counselling strategy. He further argues that we are lagging far behind in terms of international advances in this field. I suppose this is much of what I have been sensing too, especially when one considers that South Africa's main counselling practice at institutions of higher education have, according to Maree (2009), predominantly been based on the trait-factor approach. This practice is cause for concern, especially when one heeds Pryor's (2008) argument that career counselling and psychometric testing have in the past not only been regarded as a reliable means of predicting a person's future, but also that these set far too much store by 'predictors' such as personality



and intelligence measures as potentially reliable indicators of future success. Watson (2004) reiterates this statement and believes that career counselling has relied much too strongly on empirical validations.

In my work, I predominantly make use of standardised psychometric testing and have at times questioned the practicality and level of preparedness that the information hopes to provide the clients in terms of their future career growth and the looming changes that may lie ahead. I have also completed a fair amount of career assessments to know that clients don't always fit into convenient boxes and that they (and the future environment) have more qualities to them than what objective assessment materials could possibly concede.

Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck, and Van Vianen (2009) confirm my realisation and mention that a paradox is being created when counsellors continue to believe in linear and causal explanations (such as basing their practice on the assumption that aptitudes and interest will serve to predict a person's future career development) whilst his/her daily experience does not corroborate this. It is also argued that new concepts such as *career adaptability*, *malleable selves*, *mastery of different roles and short-term decision-making* should be incorporated into new models of career theory (Van Vianen, de Pater, & Preenen, 2009:298). Savickas (2006) also points out that person-environment and vocational development models are likely to fall short when it comes to understanding the flexibility and mobility of the work world. I am therefore excited about the notion of exploring alternative and complementary means of understanding and meeting a client's career needs with particular focus given to their adjustment ability following impeding changes.

One such change is the rapid pace at which information and technology has infiltrated the career market necessitating the development of new skills and attitudes. Career counsellors have therefore been implored to stay up to speed with the growing career demands of a post-modern society in which the traditional career path no longer appears to be predictable and stable (Watson, 2004). Accordingly international trends have prompted several advances in the field of career counselling to promote life-long learning and change – a tendency that is inadvertently not supported by traditional career theory (Van Vianen *et al.*, 2009).

Traditional career theories instead relied heavily on the career counsellor's ability to interpret standardized data and/or only intervene during transition periods in a person's life. New models, however seem to have incorporated a pre-emptive function by taking an active interest in people's future earlier on by *acting on settings, looking for preventative alliances, and collaborations* (Savickas *et al.*, 2009:240). This approach ensures that a person will be presented with a multitude of opportunities should transitions or difficulties occur. Several initiatives (Maree & Beck, 2004; Savickas, 2005; Pryor, 2008; Maree, 2009; Hartung, 2010; Maree, 2010; Xu, 2010) have been launched to explore the growing realisation that a new approach is needed to cater for the tall order of career needs that have to be met in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Savickas *et al.*, 2009) which sees the dawning of a career that belongs to a person and not an organisation (Duarte, 2004).

Savickas (2008) regards the career construction model, particularly the concept of adaptation, to be most suited to helping a person negotiate and plan their anticipated career trajectory. Adaptation involves *psychosocial processes* that serve as coping skills for when an individual has to prepare for, enter, participate and, deal with career transitions. Savickas (2008) further explains that people are able to implement their personality in work-roles by using adaptive strategies. Career adaptation therefore requires that an individual must adjust and transition from *school to work, from job to job and from occupation to occupation* (Savickas, 2008:2). These transitions reveal five main coping behaviours that recycle in the form of mini-cycles as an individual transitions from one job to the next due to *new technologies, globalisation and job redesign* whilst at the same time completing or *moving across the career stages of the maxi-cycle* (Savickas, 2005:50). The five main coping behaviours are:

- Orientation
- Exploration
- Establishment
- Management
- Disengagement.

### **1.2.2. Identified gaps in the research**

In an effort to justify the intended purpose of my research study I embarked on a search for current literature that could inform and increase my understanding and knowledge of career theories; career adaptability; life design counselling; independent schools; current and future career trends expected in the labour market and career education, development, preparation and experiences of adolescent learners. I was particularly interested in finding studies that focused on the preparation of learners for their future career trajectories and searching for gaps that could emphasise the likelihood of life-design counselling as a form of counselling aimed at increasing their career adaptability. One of the relevant studies I came across aimed at exploring community strategies and career education using an asset-based approach. It indicated the relevance of programmes designed to increase learners' ability to make career-oriented decisions and set goals (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003).

Several authors (Goodman, 1994; Phillips, 1997; Heppner, 1998) highlighted the expected uncertainty that was likely to accompany the observed trend towards changing jobs more frequently. As early as the nineties, they appealed to researchers to initiate studies that will foster a greater understanding of adult career development, with particular focus on the psychological resources necessary for adult career transition. Since efforts made to adhere to the stories of individuals that have been exposed to transitional changes have been regarded as a means of improving the understanding of clients' needs. Savickas (1993) also urges policy makers to consider a mind shift in how they view the

job market by acknowledging that few people remain in the same vocation for a lifetime. He also emphasises that the relationship between what is being offered in tertiary training and the skills required to succeed in the employment market should be investigated. With this in mind, I can only concur with Maree's (2009) persuasive argument to find an approach that can be utilised for both work and life success. Maree (2009) further states that there is an emergent need for the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's labour market to serve direct assessment strategies. He also highlights skills that learners require to ensure future employability, such as: critical thinking, creative problem solving and, decision-making.

Skorikov (2007) mentions that although an increased effort has been made to research adolescent career development, few strides have been made in analysing the processes involved in preparing for adult careers and their role in adolescent development. Super (1980) believed in a traditional, non-linear career trajectory, assuming that adolescents should already reflect characteristics that will be mirrored in their future vocational behaviour. Since post-modern theories of career development, however reject the idea of career stages, Savickas *et al.* (2009) are therefore correct in suggesting that career counsellors are increasingly beginning to realise that it is our task to help clients find new holding environments within a rapidly changing world by facilitating the development and design of story lines that promote meaningful lives. This is especially relevant when one takes into account Duarte's (2009:263) belief that:

*The more qualified individuals are in their self-knowledge and the life-style options they prefer, the better they can detect environmental and personal changes and then create opportunities.*

Another research study that relates to the above is that of Morrison and Hall (2002). These two authors were keen to establish distinct definitions of success aimed at exploring the various mechanisms that potentially contribute to it. Of particular relevance is their interest in investigating the extent to which an individual needed to apply his/her acquired knowledge and level of experience in order to adapt. The authors were therefore interested in examining the degree of adaptability a person may require when negotiating change, whilst at the same time maintaining his/her sense of identity.

### **1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The purpose of the proposed study is to explore the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context.

### **1.3.1. Rationale**

#### **1.3.1.1. Changes noted in the career market**

According to Duarte (2009:259) concepts such as *job for life* or the *possibility of rising up the career ladder for years of dedicated and loyal work* are becoming out-dated. The idea of “employment” as understood in the context of the industrial revolution has now shifted its focus to “employability” in the post-modern world. Duarte (2009) further believes that the current, fast-paced environment leaves individuals with little choice but to find a path<sup>1</sup> to survival and satisfaction by developing competencies and taking responsibility. But, not all individuals are able to move forward; as some are likely to struggle in overcoming the barriers that they encounter, which could result in regression or stagnation (Savickas, 2005).

The recent economic crisis is typical of the above-mentioned reality. A good friend of mine in the United Kingdom was required to downscale her working hours from five to three days a week due to the recession. I admired her response to the situation when I discovered that she had not fallen by the wayside but had instead started up her own business from home, which she managed on the alternative days. She presented with a very positive and pragmatic attitude despite her difficult circumstances. I couldn't help wondering what skills or psychological resources she and others like her relied on to enable them to make the transition between changes fairly easily. My curiosity led me to research an area that not only holds a personal fascination for me but also offers research value.

#### **1.3.1.2. The need for a new approach aimed at addressing changes in the career market**

Economic and socio-cultural occurrences, such as the scenario described above, emphasise a growing need for a more *flexible* and *less reductionist* model of career guidance in which the career counsellor is able to extricate life themes and patterns from a client's story and convert these into career possibilities. Reid and West (2011:177) further promote narrative approaches to career counselling because it values the concept of allowing clients *tell their story* and emphasises the role of dialogue between the client and the career practitioner. Career change is a consistent factor mentioned in terms of future career trends and a topic of interest for O'Conner and Wolfe (2004) who divided career change into five stages, namely: stability, rising discontent, crisis, redirection, adaptation and re-establishing. The last-mentioned authors were then curious to explore how a person is prone to respond to these transitions, as well as the level of preparedness needed to adapt to a crisis. Their intention therefore

---

<sup>1</sup> Although I am aware that the word “journey” has replaced “path”; for the purposes of this research study, the two terms will be used interchangeably.

correlates with what I aim to accomplish in my research study particularly when taking into account the ever-increasing interest in identifying factors that will enhance positive youth development (Skorikov, 2007). Career counselling practices should therefore be increasingly focused on clients' adaptive responses as opposed to their non-adaptive characteristics (Van Vianen *et al.*, 2009). Savickas' (2006:1) concurs that the 21<sup>st</sup> century's global economy has stirred up a new interest in finding answers to how people can *negotiate a lifetime of job changes without losing their sense of self*, especially when one takes into account that the unsettled economy might leave workers feeling *fragmented* and confused during the *restructuring of occupations, transformations of the labour force and multi-cultural imperatives*.

### **1.3.1.3. The changing role of the career counsellor**

Leung (2008) reflected on universal nature of the above-mentioned changes and suggested that many cultural groups across the globe are likely to be immersed in the search for purpose, meaning and dealing with employment and unemployment. In response, Maree (2009) urges career counsellors to consider adopting a contemporary approach in which they take note of worldwide career trends and educate themselves on how to adjust their practices to cater to the demand for new skills and attitudes that are bound to emerge in the face of changing lifestyles and technological advances (Savickas, 1993; Pryor, 2008). It is believed that successful counsellors will be those that are skilled at integrating career and broader life concerns in addition to assisting clients to accept that transition is an ordinary part of career development (Ebberwein *et al.*, 2004).

Career counsellors should therefore ideally become immersed in the effective planning of a person's career (Maree, 2009). This statement explained my fascination with the recollection of my friend's response to her changed job situation while also reminding me of my responsibility as a career counsellor to become aware of career changes taking place in society and seeking to achieve a deeper understanding of these changes. Pryor's (2008:58) description of how a career counsellor can assist others in their journey towards finding their sense of accomplishment, contentment and, fulfilment, resonated with me:

*While I refuse to tell clients what they should do in terms of their career development, what I do want to do is to provide them with counselling experiences which enable them to develop the skills, the vision and the passion to make significant career decisions for themselves. This must occur in the context of a chaotic world with all its uncertainties both positive in terms of opportunities and negative in terms of misfortunes.*

### **1.3.2. Research questions**

#### **1.3.2.1. Primary research question**

The primary research question is the following: *what is the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context?*

#### **1.3.2.2. Secondary research questions**

In an effort to gain more insight, the following secondary questions are posed:

- To what extent are the current career counselling interventions, aimed at counselling adolescents, addressing their idiosyncratic career counselling needs?
- What is life-design counselling and career adaptability and what are their values and limits?
- How does culture impact on the utilisation of life-design counselling?
- What possible implication does this study hold for the application of life-design counselling?

### **1.3.3. Working assumptions**

I hold the following working assumptions related to my research:

- Life-design counselling should have a positive effect on the participants' career adaptability.
- Learners at independent schools are likely to benefit from the implementation of a life-design counselling programme.
- The implementation of a life-design counselling programme is novel and is likely to serve as a beneficial alternative or complementary programme to the current career programme offered at schools as stipulated by the Life Orientation Programme (Department of Education, 2003).
- I am likely to benefit and improve my research skills whilst also informing my understanding of career adaptability and life-design counselling.

## **1.4. AIMS OF MY RESEARCH**

I will be researching the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context – a research initiative that embodies the components supported by the career construction theory. The research endeavour will be aimed at establishing the four developmental lines of career adaptability, which will serve to enhance the participants' ability to: consider future prospects and feel optimistic; increase self-regulation through career decision making; take responsibility for the future; promote an inquisitive attitude that could lead to productive career exploration and promote the ability to solve problems and develop self-efficacy (Savickas, 2008). In terms of my intended topic, I will strive to design my own life along the principles that I hope to facilitate in the participants' lives. A favourite research motto of mine is a statement made by Grinnell and Williams (in De Vos 1998:148) reflecting this intention:

*We change ourselves in the process of helping our clients to change and, in the process of changing ourselves, we change our profession – staffing it with people who not only want to help but know how to help.*

## **1.5. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS**

For the purposes of clarification and consistency, the next section articulates my understanding of the terms frequently referred to in the chapters to follow.

### **1.5.1. Career counselling**

A very short, yet inclusive, definition of career counselling is suggested by Savickas (2007), who describes it as a means of helping relatively well-adjusted people manage daily challenges related to career transition or personal development. I agree with this Savickas' definition of career counselling for many reasons. The first reason is that it highlights the supportive relationship that must exist between the career counsellor and the client. Secondly, the definition emphasises career challenges as part of an individual's daily life – thereby acknowledging the enmeshment of a client's career with his/her personal life. Thirdly, it touches on the idea of change and transition that is likely to occur in the lives of well-adjusted people, which of course relates to my intended topic of study with regards to career adaptability.

Arthur, Hall and Lawrence (1996:292), on the other hand, accentuates the subjective nature of career counselling by viewing a person's career as an *evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time*. Wnuk and Amundson (2003) prefer this definition because it encompasses the notion that change and movement is inevitable within both the individual and their environments. Guichard's

(2009) clarification of career counselling underlines the afore-mentioned definitions in that he also emphasises the role the societal context plays in people's personal and career development. However, the last-mentioned author takes it one step further by urging career counsellors to develop interventions aimed at helping people find answers to the issues that arise within the context they live in. The golden thread that seems to run through the given definitions is that an individual is immersed within a career context and factors within the individual or the context will inevitably change. The role of the career counsellor seems to be that of assisting the individual in this challenge by implementing career counselling interventions.

Kahnemann (2003) approaches the matter from a different angle and sheds some light on the design of career counselling interventions by suggesting several requirements. These requirements were designed to guide clients in meeting the demands of a rapidly changing society by urging career counsellors to focus: their clients' employability; improving their social competencies; helping them face psychological traps in their decision making and managing possible limitations within their personal, professional and family eco-systems. The afore-mentioned factors certainly provide a valuable framework in terms of planning and implementing the interventions suggested by Savickas (1993) and Guichard (2009).

The notion of developing interventions indicates to me that the majority of authors referred to above feel strongly that counsellors should embrace the idea of acting as change agents rather than viewing themselves as professionals that deal mainly with diagnosis. It is my understanding, that career counsellors should be more inclined to adopt an active role in introducing interventions aimed at assisting their clients to find their feet in an increasingly demanding society. Mair (1989:1-12) illustrates such an interaction as follows:

*Speaking from my experience as a clinical psychologist, when I look at what I actually do, I have to conclude that I am a professional conversationalist of sorts [...]. What is called 'psychotherapy' could also be called 'psychological conversation' [...]. In these conversations, stories of many kinds are told and listened for. These stories may be broken in fragments seeking some greater flow and coherence, or overworked coherence needing to be infiltrated with risk-filled questioning rather than tidied up with imprisoning answers. I do a lot of listening to the stories others tell. I listen for the different voices within the voice, to hear who is speaking under the guise of 'I'. I listen for who has the right to speak and who is deprived of rights to say and know. I listen for the breaks in the offered 'text' of a person's account of who and how they are, so that hints of other stories, other selves, other ways of feeling and being can be offered a, sometimes never before granted, chance of articulation. I chip in, suggesting another scrap of story line that might, equally well or better, be woven through the events of a person's life. [...]. I suggest other stories,*



*sometimes mini-stories; sometimes stories which offer a wider and different view that the person with me could begin to tell themselves.*

As an Educational Psychologist trained in the practice of narrative career counselling, I am able to appreciate the dynamic interaction that is bound to occur when a client and counsellor begin to explore past, present and future narratives. The contextual and subjective information extracted during such interactions are likely to contribute significantly to the co-construction of a career narrative and intervention that will hopefully also serve to enhance the client's ability to manage change and transition within a shifting society.

### **1.5.2. Life-design counselling**

The term life-design counselling is briefly clarified in the following section. A more detailed discussion of how this term relates to my study will follow (See: paragraph 1.6.2.1. and Chapter 2).

Savickas *et al.* (2009:241) argue that while it is important to understand how people decide on a career, it may also be beneficial to ask the question: *How might an individual best design his/her own life in the human society in which they live?* Whereas past career theories focused on how people chose occupations and how careers developed over time, life-design counselling focuses on understanding how an individual can construct his/her life through his/her work and more importantly how individuals will be able to design their lives within the society in which they live (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). Maree and Beck (2004) make a further postulation by adding that all individuals are different and that post-modern career counselling should be focused on planning a life design aimed at adequately preparing and supporting the client in making a career choice. Life-design counselling therefore focuses on encouraging clients to structure their lives according to the basic facets of work, leisure, friendships and family life (Super, 1980).

For the purposes of clarification, post-modern career counselling also challenges one to consider and reflect on the use of the term "life trajectories" instead of "career development" or "vocational guidance". The former articulates the image of an individual designing and building their career (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). The notion of using the term life trajectories resonates with me, since it reminds career counsellors to embrace the idea that clients cannot be isolated from their contexts and that due consideration should be given to aspects of their lives that are intricately woven into the tapestry of the society they find themselves in.

Baruch (2004) argues that career management requires the component of subjectivity or an internal career, which proposes that each human being should understand the nature of careers and integrate them in the spectrum of life. Savickas *et al.* (2009) elaborate on this concept suggesting that awareness of contextualised models allows individuals involved in the process of life building to use

these models in an effort to better understand and cope with their unique contexts. In order to achieve this goal, Savickas (2010:3) proposes the general model of life-designing, which he defines as follows:

*Life design counselling is an identity intervention that cultivates intention and action through story telling. When people seek career counselling they have a story to tell. They bring old stories to counselling and they want to compose a new story with the counsellor. Life-design interventions assist clients to elaborate and revise their identity narratives to comprehend and confront the traumas and transitions that a previous version of their life story could not accommodate.*

### **1.5.3. Career adaptability**

The term career adaptability is briefly clarified in the following section. A more detailed discussion of how this term relates to my study will follow (See: paragraph 1.6.4. and Chapter 3).

Career adaptability and life-design counselling appear to complement each other, especially when one reflects on Savickas' (2010:3) definition (See: paragraph 1.5.2.) of life-design counselling. Incorporating words such as *transition*; *previous version*; *new story* and *accommodate* ties in well with the concept of career adaptability. These words also convey the idea of inevitable change within a person's life trajectory. Hall (1976) metaphorically compared these frequent changes in a career cycle to the Greek god, Proteus who was able to transform himself whenever he chose to. This concept later evolved into the challenge of constructing a successful *protean career* by being resilient in the face of pending career difficulties, such as the impact of new technologies and the evolution of concepts of work (Baruch, 2004). The idea of a protean career is synonymous with what Savickas (2008:1) terms *career adaptability*. The Latin root of the word "adapt" means to fit (Savickas, 2008:1). This suggests that an organism can become accustomed to its environment by means of instigating behaviours that directly contribute to adaptation thus fostering the concept that *adaptation is an outcome of adapting* (Savickas, 2008:1). According to Savickas (1997a:253) the construct of adaptability answers the age-old functionalist question of career theory, namely: *what do people do – they adapt to situations, and why do people do it – they adapt to better implement their self-concepts in their situations*. However, the question of 'What am I going to do with my life?' is no longer exclusively reserved for adolescents. The latter notion justifies the importance of career adaptability and the idea that anyone is set to encounter major transitions in their work and personal lives (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). Savickas (1997a) further defines adaptability as the ability to adjust comfortably when confronted with new circumstances. The introduction of this theoretical concept seeks to replace the concept of "career maturity" with the more inclusive term of "career adaptability". Super and Knasel (1981:195) define career adaptability as a *readiness to cope with changing work and working conditions*. This term subsequently enables career counsellors to work with individuals at various stages of their life trajectory

in an attempt to facilitate skills aimed at promoting a better anticipation of their choices; management of transitions; exploration of possibilities and choice of directions to increase fit and develop the self .

#### **1.5.4. Independent school context**

Levin (2001:3) pinpoints the importance of introducing individuals to these characteristics of adaptability by highlighting the premium being placed on formal schooling and life-long learning to manage the contending *forces* (advances in technology, information and communications) that cause changes in both public and private institutions. Tooley (2001) suggests that education is becoming a global playing field and that independent education has grown significantly over the past ten years.

A closer look at the various formal schooling institutions indicates that the *South African Schools Act (SASA)* (ISASA, 1999, RSA, 1996) recognises two categories of schools: public and independent. A public school is controlled by the state, whereas an independent school is privately owned. The government does however specify that independent schools may not discriminate on the basis of race; must be registered with the state and must maintain standards not inferior to those of comparable public institutions. All state-owned schools are regarded as public schools and all privately owned schools are denoted as independent schools

Hofmeyr (2003) highlights the increased diversity within the independent school sector based on changes in the demand and supply curve, new educational policies and the growth of the black upper and middle classes. Hofmeyr and Lee (2002:81) were able to conclude with certainty that: *Independent schools are rich and poor, religious and secular, urban and rural, big and small, traditional and alternative.*

Kruss (2002) distinguishes between three factors associated with the growth in private higher education in South Africa. The first category is referred to as the “more” factor, which describes private institutions that offer more than what is demanded. Secondly, she refers to the “better” factor, which operates from the assumption that independent schools can offer more resources and is therefore better able to offer a richer quality of education as opposed to public schools. The third factor suggests that some independent schools are able to offer a completely unique educational experience, second to none. Given the growth in numbers, diversity and openness to introducing added components to the school curriculum, it will be interesting to study the value of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners during the intended research period.

#### **1.5.5. Adolescence**

The participants that will be selected from an independent school context will consist of Grade 11 learners. It is therefore necessary to establish a working definition of adolescence as well as the career tasks that may be expected of them during this developmental phase.

Erikson's (1963) stages of development, assumes that adolescents find themselves immersed in the process of establishing a role identity, which suggests that they are actively exploring new possibilities and roles. Their cognitive ability has matured and they are able to function at an abstract level. The developmental tasks of adolescents centre on the consolidation of an identity, which is largely influenced by their physical appearance, cognitive ability, interpersonal relationships and contact with the wider social context. Career aspirations also contribute to an individual's identity (Hirschi, 2010).

Adolescents engaged in the exploration career task are therefore already involved in the task of discovering the mechanisms required for career adaptability that should help them plan a future; make educational and career decisions; explore the self and problem solve. (Hartung *et al.*, 2008). Jordaan (in Usinger & Smith, 2010: 590) explains exploratory behaviour as:

*Activities (mental/physical) undertaken with the conscious purpose of eliciting information about oneself or one's environment, or of verifying or arriving at a basis for a conclusion that will aid one in choosing, preparing for, entering, adjusting to or progressing in an occupation*

So apart from being engrossed in the above tasks, adolescents are therefore also actively involved in the process of career preparation – a process regarded as a significant precursor of successful career development (Super, 1990). This task is also complicated by an increase in decision-making stress partly because adolescents now have more freedom to choose their career and are therefore afforded an increased opportunity for *truly designing their career* (Van Vianen *et al.*, 2009:299).

## **1.6. BRIEF THEORETICAL OVERVIEW**

Now that the relevant terms have been clarified, the following theoretical overview is intended to provide a roadmap to provide a brief theoretical introduction to the concepts that will be explored in my study in an effort to navigate the reader through this chapter. This section also serves to introduce and anchor the theoretical and conceptual framework to follow (See: paragraph 1.7. and 1.8).

### **1.6.1. Life-design counselling**

Savickas *et al.* (2009) were amongst the international scholars who examined the trans-national validity of career counselling theories and techniques against the fast-paced nature of globalisation and information technology. It was apparent that a new approach was needed to accommodate the changing needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century clients. This need was addressed by forming the Life Design International Research Group, consisting of a considerable number of international representatives. The group meets regularly across the globe to conceptualise models and techniques that are likely to enjoy universal

application. The creation of such a group is an indication of the commitment scholars have shown to research, identify and discuss factors of life-design counselling that may be of contributing value.

As previously mentioned, narrative career counselling encourages story-telling. A person's life story is believed to serve as a *biographical bridge* helping an individual cross from one career to the next. In order to assist clients with designing their lives and *constructing their careers in knowledge* Savickas *et al.* (2009:245) further suggest that new approaches to intervention are required. With this in mind, I started to explore alternative means of practicing career counselling and upon further reading became increasingly more convinced that I have undoubtedly underestimated the extent to which I would have to accommodate my fundamental understanding of career counselling. The full integration of post-modern career counselling techniques, in particular life-designing, demanded a complete shift in my thinking, methods, reporting and strategising. Savickas *et al.* (2009: 242-243) guided me in above matter by pinpointing the five shifts that have to take place in order to develop a fundamental paradigm shift for life designing and building in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These presumptions are summarised in Table 1.1., below.

**Table 1.1.: Presuppositions of life design counselling**

Paradigm shift	Presuppositions
From traits and states to context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling occurs far from controlled conditions</li> <li>• Objective measures and normative measures are insufficient to describe clients as living entities who interact with and adapt to a manifold of contexts.</li> <li>• Professional identities should be derived from the client's stories.</li> </ul>
From prescription to process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the 20<sup>th</sup> century people were hired for long-term employment, whereas the post-modern society rather focuses on short-term goals. Career counselling has therefore become a continuing responsibility for our clients.</li> <li>• Counsellors must discuss "how to do" not "what to do" by developing strategies for problem solving, action planning and overall life-designing.</li> </ul>
From linear causality to non-linear dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The traditional sequence of differential diagnosis, indication and prescription must be replaced.</li> <li>• Career models should broaden the perspective from simple advice for career decision making to an expertise in co-construction and more holistic life design.</li> <li>• Multiple contact sessions and polyvalent expertise should be acquired by using many different tools and methods.</li> </ul>

From scientific facts to narrative realities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past societal norms have been changed. Standardised tests and statistically derived norms result in counsellors using a language (technical terms) that does not belong to their client’s vocabulary.</li> <li>• Focus should be on client’s on-going construction and re-construction of their subjective and multiple realities. The client’s own significant reference for designing their personal life should emerge.</li> </ul>
From describing to modelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence upon descriptive statistics will result in limited success because counselling addresses multiple subjective realities with non-linear causes due to changing premises and definitions of problems.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from Savickas *et al.*, 2009: 242-244)

These five assumptions, otherwise referred to as contextual possibilities, dynamic processes, non-linear progression, multiple perspectives and personal patterns promote the idea that a person’s knowledge and identity is the product of social interaction and that meaning is created through discourse (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). The above theoretical shifts shaped the development of a three-step life-design counselling model which consists of: firstly encouraging the client to tell small stories (construction); followed by the reconstruction of his/her small stories into a larger story before concluding with the co-construction of his/her future story (Savickas, 2010).

These steps are further sub-divided into an organised six-step model. The first step involves defining the problem and establishing the client’s expectations. This step is followed by an exploration of the client’s current system of Subjective Identity Forms. These stories are then studied from an objective and fresh point of view that enables the client and the counselor to revise relevant stories. The fourth step involves scripting a new story that integrates the old problem within a new story. The fifth step involves an action component whereby the client is encouraged to participate in activities or new experiences that allow him/her to actualise his/her possible self. The final step requires continuous quality assurance incentives scheduled on a short-term and long-term basis to evaluate the success of the consultation (Savickas *et al.*, 2009:246-247).

Duarte (2010:1) views the outlined structure of life-design counselling as a *holistic, life-long, contextual and preventative* framework. Structuring life-design interventions according to these principles should serve to increase clients’ (Savickas *et al.*, 2009):

- **Adaptability:** career counselors should focus on helping individuals shape a narrative that is geared towards adaptive and flexible responses to developmental tasks, occupational predicaments and career transitions.

- **Narratability:** this principle focuses on assisting a client in forming and narrating a congruent story in an effort to create an improved understanding of their life themes, vocational personality and adaptability resources (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). It also contributes to an increased possibility of achieving their expectations by allowing them to become more aware of their salient life roles and domains in relation to their future expectations.
- **Activity:** a person is more likely to develop an accurate sense of self-efficacy by engaging in different types of activities. This creates an opportunity for them to develop abilities and interests that they may prefer to utilise in future expectations.
- **Intentionality:** in a capricious world counsellors are encouraged to introduce their clients to the intentional processes of reflection and revision in order to focus their minds on meaning making instead of choice (Richardson *et al.*, 2009)

To fully appreciate life-design counselling as proposed by the above principles, involves a better understanding of the theory that contributed to its development, namely the life-span, life-space theory (See: paragraph 1.7.3.).

### 1.6.2. Career counselling in South African schools

To fully appreciate the value of a life-design counselling implemented in a school context, it is necessary to briefly reflect on the existing career practices in South African schools. Watts and Fretwell (2004) suggest that South Africa is yet to meet public policy goals, while underlining the weak link that exists between teaching and training systems and the labour market. This link can however be strengthened by working towards improving labour adaptability in response to market demands. My first thought upon reading the afore-mentioned statement was to consider the role of tertiary institutions and schools in bridging the afore-mentioned gap.

Maree (2009) too, is adamant that tertiary institutions should adopt a contemporary and qualitative approach to career counselling, especially when one considers international trends. He urges career counsellors to design innovative approaches to meet the needs of a post-modern society and I couldn't agree more. It is, however important to consider what the term career counselling or career education denotes.

Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003:323) conceptualised the term career education as *formal and informal opportunities for people to acquire skills, attitudes and competencies with regards to career development*. They further elaborated on this point by stating that the objective of career education should be to achieve career maturity and readiness. Career counselling in South Africa is incorporated in the compulsory learning area Life Orientation – designed to replace the educational system's career dedicated programme, previously known as Guidance. In the revised curriculum, career education *per*

se is represented as one of the four learning outcomes incorporated in the Life Orientation statement (Department of Education, 2003).

According to Roux (in Ebersöhn and Mbetse, 2003:324) the decision to suspend guidance in school has however resulted in the discontinuation of career assessment for individual learners in the schooling system. Educators are now trained to provide informal guidance to learners seeking career advice. The informal guidance offered to these learners, should according to Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2008:235) impart two integral skills, namely decision-making and goal setting. The Department of Education (2003:9) depicts the value of Life Orientation as follows:

*Life orientation is the study of the self in relation to others and the society – the focus is the development of the self-in-society, and it encourages the development of balanced and confident learners who will contribute to a just and democratic society, a productive economy and an improved quality of life for all. Life Orientation guides and prepares learners for life, and for its responsibilities and possibilities.*

The Department of Education (2003) further strives to facilitate Life Orientation as a means of equipping learners with personal management skills necessary for success in additional and higher education, and in adult life. A relevant assessment standard for this learning area suggests that a learner should be able to *display an awareness of trends and demands in the job market, as well as the need for life-long learning* (Department of Education, 2003:12)

Watts and Flederman (2004) also highlight some of the career guidance challenges that still have to be bridged. He believes that a strategic policy should be developed to direct the co-ordination efforts between all of the involved parties and furthermore, that information should be made more readily available. One of the pivotal points he makes is that the learner should be at the centre of all discussions regarding career guidance and that attempts have to be made to provide learners with navigational tools to help guide them through transitional phases across their career journey. This presupposition illuminates the role that career adaptability can hold in preparing learners for the future world of work.

### **1.6.3. Career adaptability**

Acknowledging the above notion prompts one to consider which specific skills and internal processes are likely to either enhance or inhibit people's adjustment to the new world of work. The necessity of finding the answer to this question became even more apparent when I read that Naicker (1994) and Muller (1999) proposed, as far back as the nineties, that the average person is likely to change careers five times during their career span. A more recent longitudinal study in the United States



indicated that this number has already increased given that on average young people from the age of 16 up to 36, changed their jobs 9.6 times (U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics in Savickas *et al.*, 2009).

Maree (2009) commented on this trend by referring to the idea of a contingent workforce, which suggests that employees are only temporarily contracted to complete work for a limited time. Given these changes, Canton (2006) encourages future employees to develop the skill of high performance agility to meet the demands of accelerated change and risks that the future is likely to hold. Savickas (2010:3) also suggests that individuals will be able to adapt better if:

*They meet each change with growing awareness, information-seeking followed by informed decision-making, trial behaviours leading to a stable commitment projected forward for a certain time period, active role management and eventually forward looking disengagement.*

Vondracek and Porfeli (2008) further describe the goal of adaptation as a resulting action stemming from the interaction between self-evaluative thoughts (evaluating personal interests, values and abilities) and environmental evaluations (evaluating opportunities or available social supports). Goal selection and adjustment are also based on information processing such as planning, decision making and information storage. Similarly, Herr (1992) identified five adaptive responses based on Super's work. These are: planfulness, exploration, information, decision-making and reality orientation. He further believed that individuals who demonstrated a high level of planfulness and realism were more likely to encounter a smooth transition. Savickas (2006) related these evaluative tendencies to an ABC model consisting of the attitudes (A), beliefs (B) and competencies (C) associated with adaptability according to four dimensions stipulated below:

- **Concern:** being able to consider future prospects and feeling optimistic about it.
- **Control:** refers to the process of increasing self-regulation through career decision making and taking responsibility for the future.
- **Curiosity:** suggests the presence of an inquisitive attitude that should lead to productive career exploration.
- **Confidence:** the ability to solve problems and self-efficacy.

These four dimensions are also known as “adapt-abilities” and are initiated once an individual encounters a transition or an occupational trauma. These adapt-abilities are designed to help the individual adapt to a changing context and based on several research studies (Savickas, 1997a; Ebberwein *et al.*, 2004; Hartung *et al.*, 2008; Hirschi, 2009; Porfeli & Vondracek, 2009; Scholl & Cascone, 2010; Savickas & Porfeli, 2010), is exactly what a rapidly changing workforce needs.

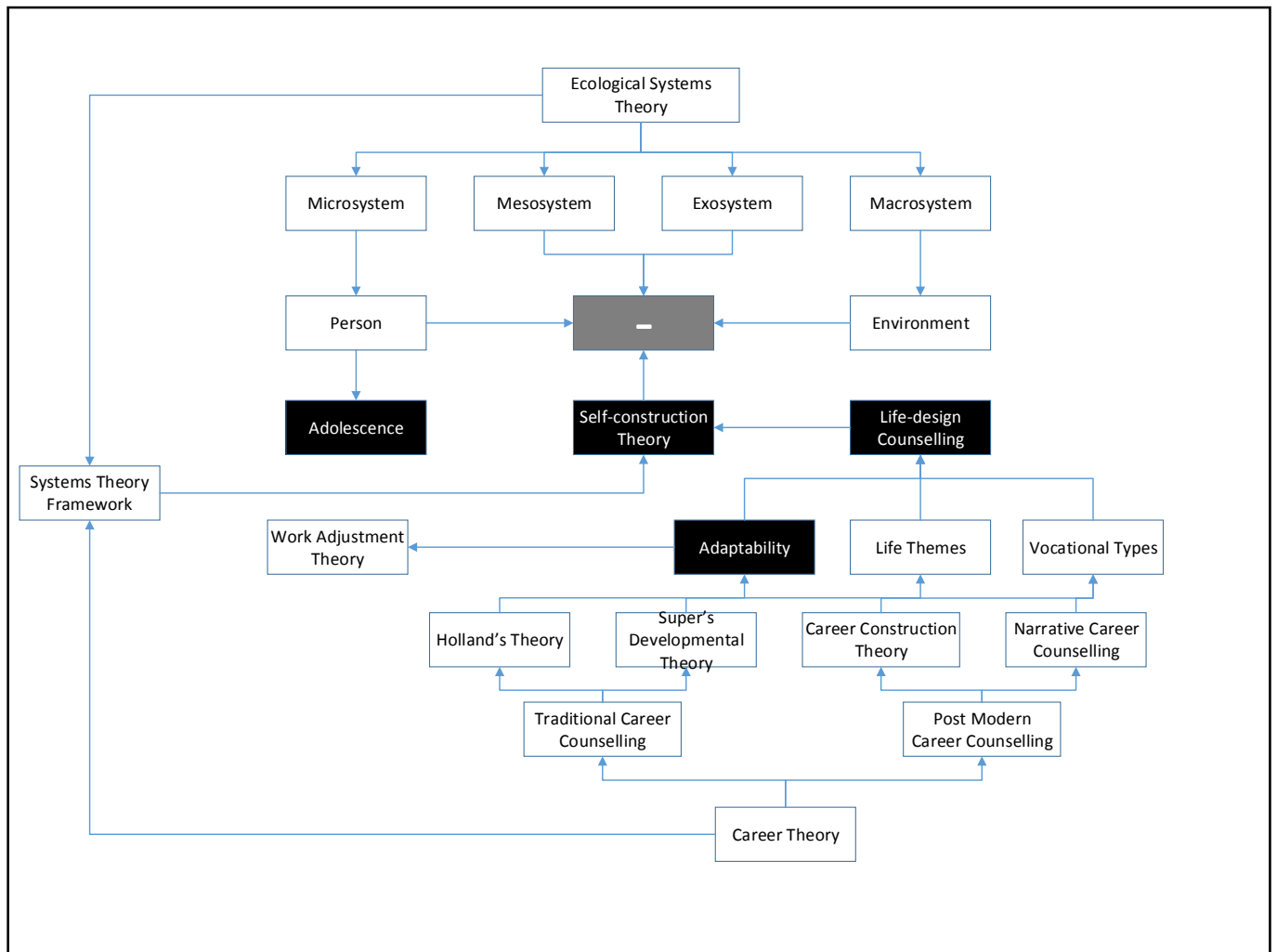
Facilitating the development of these adapt-abilities in high school learners to support their entry to the new world of work therefore makes sense. The success of these interventions is also increased in the light of Van Vianen *et al.*'s (2009) results indicating that a person is able to adjust, despite his/her individual characteristics.

## 1.7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Although Chapter 2 and 3 will respectively detail the specific theories informing the concepts of life-design counselling and career adaptability, I have thought it well to discuss the theoretical and conceptual frameworks (See: paragraph 1.8.) that govern my overall study over the next two sections. A separate discussion of each framework will allow me to firstly highlight the relevant theories that serve to inform and root my understanding of career counselling, before I then attempt to demonstrate how the concepts of life-design counselling and career ability could relate to one another in the greater scheme of things. That said, Duarte (2009:264) summarises the function of theories through the use of a lyrical metaphor:

*We can say that theories can function as scores which show all the parts of the musical composition. Each theory seeks to record and systemise in total, the rules applicable to its own specific area.*

The graphical representation depicted in Figure 1.1 below illustrates my *composition* of only the relevant *scores* or theories. I have included both traditional and post-modern theories in an effort to acknowledge Savickas' (1993) advice to be mindful of the rich history and value that past career models have contributed.



**Figure 1.1.: Graphical representation of my theoretical framework**

Although, Figure 1.1. depicts Super’s development theory (See: paragraph 1.7.3.) as a traditional career counselling model, its link to post-modern career theory should be carefully noted since it was one of the first career theories to acknowledge that a person’s self-concept could determine his/her career choice (Super, 1980; Duarte, 2009). It also recognised career as a process in which the individual was able to consider the interaction between personal and situational variables and his/her series of work roles and experiences within a social or cultural setting (Super, 1980). The influence of different contexts also motivated my inclusion of the ecological system’s theory (See: paragraph 1.7.1.) and the Systems Theory Framework (See: paragraph 1.7.2.). Guichard, Pouyau, De Calan & Dumora (2012:53) self-construction model (See: paragraph 1.7.8.) relates well to the last-mentioned theory and in turn, connects it with life-design.

Previously, models of career counselling were mainly characterised by psychometric assessments based on the trait-factor approach, which believes that all individuals possess certain measurable traits that can be matched to the characteristics of a career environment (Brown, 1990; Maree & Beck, 2004). Although Holland’s theory of vocational personalities in the work

environment (See: paragraph 1.7.7.) may be regarded as “outdated”, I nonetheless agree with Leung (2008) that the six described typologies are still applicable to today’s career world.

Where past models predominantly catered to *a slack and stable labour market, a tight and changing labour market* now calls for empirically tested and systematically-improved models of career theory (Savickas *et al.*, 2009:240). Lotter (1995) draws the propensities of a post-modern approach together and states that the general characteristics are: an open attitude towards differences; a firm grounding in the value of diversity with communities; a creative combination of established ideas and a general cynicism towards the accuracy postulated by the Western perspective. These propensities suggest a paradigmatic shift from a positivist to a constructivist paradigm within career psychology. I have therefore also included post-modern career counselling models in my theoretical framework since my study is interested in understanding how a person makes sense of who they are within different contexts (See: paragraph 1.7.2.) and comes to accept change as part of his/her life (Brott, 2001). Both the career construction (See: paragraph 1.7.4.) and narrative career counselling (See: paragraph 1.7.5.) stem from this theoretical worldview (McIlveen & Patton, 2007).

The inclusion of the specific theories that will be discussed in greater detail below, was based on the presupposition that the facilitation of successful career and transition management is improved by balancing the component of subjectivity with a firm understanding of the nature of careers (Baruch, 2004). From a theoretical perspective I have adopted an eclectic approach as suggested by Duarte (2009:265):

*Career management and life psychology must develop the eclecticism shown by vocational psychology at the beginning of the 20th century. Construction is only effective if the voice of the individual and the voice of the organisation speak in harmony, seeking to anticipate one another in the search for satisfaction.*

### **1.7.1. Ecological systems theory**

More than seventy years ago, Angyal (1941:100) proposed that the developing person should not be viewed as a separate entity from his/her environment, since it creates an *artificial distinction* that undermines the intricate link that exists between the two components. Since then, the ecological systems theory has endeavoured to reflect the relationship that exists between a developing person and their environment on a social, physical and psychological level (Tudge, Gray & Hogan, 1997). Bronfenbrenner (2005) specifically, focused his attention on patterning the inter-relationship of the various factors that may affect a person based on his assumption that *human beings are not only the partial products, but also the partial producers of their environments* (Bronfenbrenner, 1992:6). Bronfenbrenner (1992) therefore emphasised the set of processes that are able to activate or sustain development in the characteristics of a person or the properties of the environment as they interact with

each other. He describes these characteristics as developmentally instigative and elaborates on this concept by distinguishing characteristics related to the individual (individual differences in reaction to, interest in and exploration of the world) and the environment (material, physical or social resources).

The ecological systems theory is best illustrated and perhaps most recognised in the form of a diagram that demonstrates an individual surrounded by several concentric circles (Darling, 2007). These concentric circles represent the various contexts that surround an individual. Bronfenbrenner (1979) compares these concentric layers to the metaphor of a Russian nested doll or *matrioshka* in which the individual is regarded as the centre piece embodied by systems that affect him/her on a direct or indirect level. The model comprises of the following systems:

- **Micro-system:** according to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) this system represents the multifaceted relations that exist between the individual and their immediate environment (e.g. school, home, work and church). This also includes the personality and temperamental characteristics of the person (Tudge *et al.*, 1997).
- **Meso-system:** is best described as a *system of microsystems*. This system focuses on the links between the various systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).
- **Exo-system:** elaborates further on the meso-system referring to both formal and informal social structures that do not contain the developing person but nonetheless affect them.
- **Macro-system:** considered the *blueprint that underlies the organisation of institutions* (Garbarino in Muus, 1988). This macro-system refers to societal levels such as social class, race and ethnicity (Tudge *et al.*, 1997).
- **Chrono-system:** is best described by referring back to the *matrioshka* doll where the layers represent the above contexts and the chrono-system is represented by the passage of the doll through time. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The chrono-system suggests that the developing person is bound to go through changes but that these changes also occur within a set of contexts that are in constant flux at every level of the entire ecological system (Muus, 1988).

The ecological systems theory has been included in my theoretical framework because it lends itself to the concept of adaptability based on the focus it has given to understanding how a person is able to adjust and improve himself/herself to suit the needs of the environment – a question that can be traced back as far as Darwin’s (in Tudge *et al.*, 1997) theory of evolution that studied the survival of species through adaptation. In more recent times, adaptation has surpassed the physical level and can now also be witnessed on a social and psychological level. The ecological systems theory therefore increasingly seeks to understand how an individual, such as an adolescent, is able to adapt to an unpredictable, interconnected social and cultural environment (Muus, 1988). Moreover, Muus (1988:302) was also interested in answering the above question and offers the following insight:

*A microsystem rich in information with questions answered, exploration and experimentation encouraged and guidance provided enhances learning and development and leads to opportunities for success in later life. In these respects it is a marked contrast to an information poor and exploration-inhibited microsystem.*

This reflection relates well to my intended study by emphasising the potential benefit that life-design counselling could offer an adolescent in terms of preparing them for future careers by improving their career adaptability.

### **1.7.2. Systems Theory Framework (STF)**

McIlveen and Patton (2007) discuss another systems approach that has been included in my theoretical framework due to its existing integration with career counselling, namely the System's Theory Framework (STF). It focuses on both the individual as well as the systems that he/she is immersed in. The following three systems are distinguished:

- **Individual system:** the individual is at the centre of this model and factors such as gender, health, sexual orientation, disability, ability, interests, beliefs, skills, personality, work-of-world knowledge, age, self-concept, physical attributes, ethnicity and aptitude are included.
- **Social system:** this system indicates the closely related systems the person interacts with such as family, peers, community, groups, education, institutions, media and the workplace.
- **Environmental-societal system:** these factors influence an individual indirectly and consist of political decisions, historical trends, employment market, geographic location, socio-economic status and globalisation.

### **1.7.3. Super's developmental theory**

Super's life-span, life-space theory emphasises the importance of childhood as a critical period for developing career maturity or adaptability. Super (1980) considered the idea that life- and career counselling should not be grounded in occupational roles, but should instead focus on the rainbow of life roles and role saliency – including the roles enacted at home, school, work and the community. The life-span, life-space model is grounded in functional theory and does not view work as the predominant role in a person's life; but instead makes mention of the importance that the work role holds in relation

to the other roles a person portrays. The focus is on establishing the way in which individuals are able to position their work role amongst their other life roles, and then to utilise their subsequent life structure to achieve their personal values. There are four segments associated with the life-span, life-space theory, these include: individual differences, development, self and context.

It is important to note that roles are likely to change as a person advances through life and that two or more life roles usually overshadow the others at any given moment. The life-space part of this theory refers to the collection of life roles that a person is playing in different contexts or cultural theatres, such as: home, community, school and work place (Leung, 2008). Super, Savickas and Super (1996) therefore also promote the idea of career maturity as an important component to consider in adult career change. The authors' proposed theory of a life-span, life-space model focuses on five developmental markers that guide a person's career decision making process and ability to cope with career tasks, namely:

- Growth (4-13 years)
- Exploration (14-24 years)
- Establishment (25-44 years)
- Maintenance (45-65 years)
- Disengagement (65 years plus).

Super *et al.* (1996) further expanded the growth developmental marker to include four substages, namely concern (developing a future orientation); control (gaining mastery of one's life), conviction (believing in one's ability) and competence (acquiring proficient work habits and attitudes). These substages are reminiscent of the four competencies associated with career adaptability, namely career concern, control, curiosity and confidence (See: paragraph 1.6.3.).

#### **1.7.4. Career construction theory**

Duarte (2009) feels that the 21<sup>st</sup> century personal and career development interventions should focus on helping individuals find their voice in answering questions related to the direction their life should take. According to Savickas (2005) it seeks to not only understand the fit between the individual (person) and organisation (environment), but also the process that occurs between them. He further regards the process of building a career as a psychosocial activity in which society and the individual should work towards being in harmony with one another. In order to achieve this goal, Savickas (2005) has included three classic segments of career theory:

- Individual differences in traits (differential view of careers);

- Developmental tasks and coping strategies (developmental view of careers) and
- Psychodynamic motivation (dynamic views of career).

The process in finding these responses can be viewed as the individual's self-construction and is facilitated through the above aspects. In short, these sentiments are perhaps best reflected by Usinger and Smith (2010:581):

*For career construction theory – occupational choice is the implementation of self-concept, work is the manifestation of selfhood and vocational development is the continuing process of improving the match between self and the situation*

The importance of self, relayed by the above quote supports Elias' (in Guichard, 2009) declaration that our society is one of individuals and as independent subjects we are responsible for deciding on the journey our lives should take. Since career-driven behaviour is initiated once an individual starts to meaningfully engage with his/her career experiences, "career" subsequently becomes embedded within an individual's life cycle by placing him/her in the position of managing his/her own life (Savickas, 2005). Careers are thus seen as a series of work roles and experiences in the life of an individual (Duarte, 2009). Savickas (2005) also believes that people are bound to make career choices that match their self-concepts and meet their goals in the social reality of their work allowing careers to be constructed instead of merely unfolding. Elaborating on this notion Savickas (2005) introduces the three underlying components of the career construction theory. He further considers these three components as the mechanisms used by individuals to negotiate the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which meaning is constructed. The three aspects are as follows:

- **Life themes:** this suggests that individuals put into occupational terminology the types of people they are and would like to be in the future. Savickas (2005:44) compares this component to Super's (1980) premise that people are bound to enter an occupation that allows them to implement a *concept of themselves* followed by initiatives aimed at *realising their potential and preserving their self-esteem* once stabilisation has occurred. Savickas (2005) suggests that a life-theme consists of personal meanings allocated to past memories, present experiences and future aspirations.
- **Vocational personality:** refers to the individual's career related abilities, needs, values and interests and the implementation of vocational self-concepts. These *personal ideas* cumulate in a sense of purpose and *purpose rather than traits composes life themes that control behavior, explain behavioural continuity, sustain identity coherence and foresee future action* (Savickas, 2005:44)



- **Career adaptability:** these are the attitudes, competencies and behaviours that people use to fit themselves to work that suit them and validate their self-concepts.

This theory forms the basis of my theoretical framework since it conveys that a person's development is influenced by his/her ability to adapt to a social environment and integrate with the community (Savickas, 2008). Career construction theory therefore promotes the idea that people have to adapt. The ability to adapt reflects the current global trend that employees are being paid for their creativity. Moreover, this notion stresses the importance of acquiring skills and life-long training that will boost a person's ability to manage transitions in the career context (Maree 2009). The career construction theory therefore provides theoretical support and guidance for career counsellors to encourage the use of their clients' imaginative thinking to explore their possible selves.

#### **1.7.5. Narrative career counselling**

Narrative career counselling is synonymous with dynamic approaches such as individual scripts that embody the unique course each person may experience in a rapidly changing career environment (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). It also takes contextual conditions into consideration and proposes that people can relate to, interact with and find meaning through social experiences. The counsellor and client share a collaborative relationship in which a story/narration is relayed. The story helps a client work through past experiences in an effort to enhance meaning-making of his/her present or future plots. The idea behind creating a narrative is to achieve self-realisation and develop self-knowledge about one's interests, abilities, achievements and motivation (Brott, 2001). This theory therefore personifies subjectivity and meaning through story-telling, which in turn serves to inform a person's life and career decisions.

One of the major principles of narrative counselling lies in its assumption that a change of heart can alter subjective reality. The counselling relationship consequently becomes a story that is shared between the counsellor and the client. Perhaps, the client is having difficulty in some area of their career tale in the form of an obstacle (material/personal) to which the counsellor should offer skills or techniques to help clients reshape their stories to overcome these obstacles (Vilhjálmsdóttir and Tulinius; 2009). Sharf (2006) writes that a narrative model of career development focuses on the meaning behind a metaphor. He suggests that the career tale should be similar to a novel and that it should contain certain literary elements such as: a plotline, antagonists, protagonists and different settings.

The narrative approach begins with a co-construction phase, where the counsellor listens to and begins to develop an understanding of the client's memorable experiences, significant people in their lives and meaningful words (Brott, 2001). Assessment techniques during this phase may include: life-lines, card sorts, life-role circles and goal-maps (Brott, 2004).

The second phase of a narrative career counselling method, involves deconstructing the stories by viewing them from different perspectives. Patterns and themes are noted. The final phase of the process is the construction process where the client is now asked to re-author their stories with a future perspective in mind. Brott (2001) makes a very valid statement in declaring that a shift has taken place in the process of career counselling from previously attempting to find a person's occupation towards finding his/her sense of self.

Narrative approaches are therefore regarded as part of a wider epistemological and methodological movement that seeks to elevate people's stories and the value of collaborative dialogue between the client and the professional. This shared interaction encourages the telling of stories with the intention of identifying patterns that convey the client's subjective view of themselves and their environment (McIlveen & Patton, 2007). Winslade (2007) believes that this method is likely to appeal to the narrative nature of the traditional South African society.

#### **1.7.6. Theory of work adjustment**

This theory focuses on the person (P) - environment (E) fit and seeks to understand the interaction between them. Dawis (2005) identified four adjustment style variables that influenced the degree of satisfaction. The first is flexibility – a factor that refers to the level of tolerance a person demonstrates towards the environment and whether they are easily prone to dissatisfaction. The second variable is activeness, which involves looking at whether a person is willing to change or commit to action in order to change their dissatisfaction with the environment. Reactiveness is indicative of a person's resolve. The last adjustment style reflects a person's ability to persevere as demonstrated by their determination to adjust or adapt.

#### **1.7.7. Holland's theory of vocational personalities in the work environment**

Holland (1996) is renowned for his theory on how the person-environment fit leads to congruency or incongruence depending on whether the characteristics of the individual match the requirements of the environment. A good person-environment match is believed to contribute to more satisfaction, stability and achievement in a person's career. The six ideal environments are: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional.

Although Holland's theory has been postulated for a few decades, Leung (2008) believes that the six described typologies are still applicable to today's career world. Reich (in Holland, 1996:404), in fact regards the six typologies as *tools for understanding the three jobs of the future*, which are described as: Routine-Production Services (combination of realistic and conventional environments); Person-Services (Social and Social-Realistic) and Symbolic-Analytical Service (Investigative, Artistic and some Enterprising jobs).

Holland too (1996), was cognisant of other career trends and attempted to research ways to accommodate the structural and social changes that were occurring in the career world. He also sympathised with individuals that were no longer spoiled for choice and had to take jobs that were regarded as important as opposed to compatible. Moreover, he predicted that people would be expected to create their own structure to combine *incompatible work with a more satisfying social and recreational life* (Holland, 1996:398).

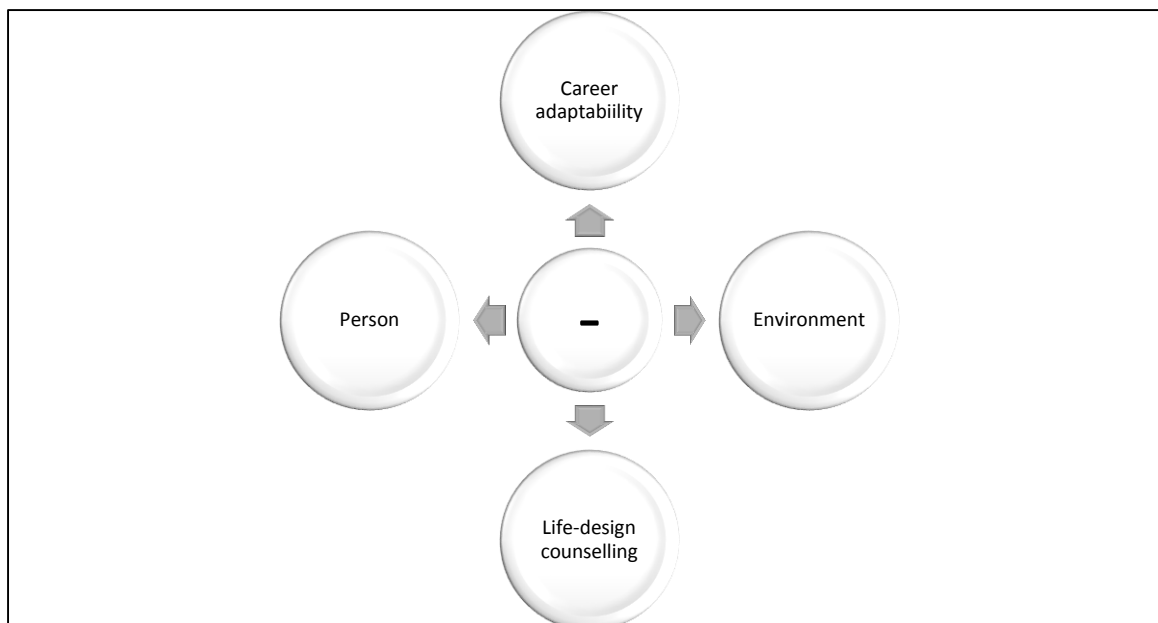
### **1.7.8. The self-construction model**

The self-construction model is offered as a career counselling intervention model. As the name suggests, this model is interested in gaining a deeper understanding of *personal identity*. Guichard *et al.* (2012:53) regard personal identity as a *dynamic System of Subjective Identity Forms (SIFs)*. These forms help counsellors and the client recognise that different settings may demand the construction of a new or different self. This self encompasses the individual's social role and how he/she perceives it in a particular context. This supports the notion that individuals may draw on different SIFs when moving from one context to the next and consequently display idiosyncratic behaviours, patterns of interaction and/or self-accounts in each one. This theory also contributes to the life-design model (Savickas *et al.*, 2009) I will be making use of in my intended study.

## **1.8. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Maree (2009:439) states that *career development theories are not static and [that] a number of theories will impact significantly on existing career counselling theories*. The presented theoretical framework (See: paragraph 1.7.) therefore provided the necessary background information to inform this discussion of my conceptual framework which is aimed at highlighting the potential inter-relatedness between the different theories and their associated concepts.

My conceptual framework is inspired by Savickas' (2005) explanation of the Person-Environment (P-E) fit and the role of adaptability. He changes the previous focus from being either on the person or the environment to the dash (–) between them. With this new angle, Savickas hopes to cement career building as a psychosocial activity aimed at achieving a *synthesis* between *self and society* (Savickas, 2005:45). This view strives to account for the constant flux expected to occur between the environment and the person; a contingency that the traditional model (See: paragraph 1.7.7.) of matching a person to an environment may struggle to account for.



**Figure 1.2: Visual representation of the conceptual framework**

I have designed the visual representation of my framework (See: Figure 1.1 and 1.2.) based on the above approach and have grounded my conceptual thinking in the existing theoretical models previously discussed. Several key components from the different theoretical models will be considered in combination with each other throughout my intended study.

As previously mentioned, the construct of adaptability (See: paragraphs 1.5.3. and 1.6.3.) appealed to me as a means of understanding the seemingly dependent relationship between the person and the environment that workers form part of. I have discussed (See: paragraphs 1.2.1. and 1.3.1.) the immensely high level of change experienced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’s career market due to technological advances and globalisation and have expressed my interest in finding out more about how individuals, specifically adolescents (See: paragraph 1.5.5.), could be sufficiently prepared for meeting an uncertain and unpredictable career market. This is of particular significance to me as a career counsellor involved in assisting clients with their anticipated career trajectory. In an effort to answer this question, both from a theoretical and conceptual perspective, I have included several theoretical models (See: section 1.7.).

I have approached my conceptual framework from two main theoretical branches that culminate in the P-E model – the first being the ecological systems theory and secondly, the career theory. One model that integrates aspects of both these theories is the Systems Theory Framework (See: paragraph 1.7.2.). The ecological system’s theory (See: Paragraph 1.7.1.) as well as the Systems Framework Theory (See: paragraph 1.7.2.) explore the person-environment fit by focusing on both the individual (microsystem); social (meso- and exo-system) and socio-environmental system (macro-system).

From a conceptual point I am interested in understanding the “dash” between the person-environment fit better. It is hoped that my endeavour will allow myself and others to see the bigger picture and acknowledge a person as a holistic being immersed in different contexts where he/she is

expected to portray different roles within his/her work, family and social environments. Savickas (2010:5) integrates the idea of the above-mentioned systemic approaches and adaptability as follows:

*Work as a context for human development, provides the outer form of something intensely private, it is the bridge between public and private. Crossing the bridge between self and society is called adaptation.*

Career theories that are also of interest to me are the more traditional ones of Super (See: paragraph 1.7.3.) and Holland (See: paragraph 1.7.7.). The inclusion of Holland's theory in my conceptual framework is twofold. Firstly it accounts for the career construction concept of vocational personalities and secondly, it contributes to an improved understanding of the relationship between the person-environment fit. Holland's typologies reflect *resemblances to socially constructed clusters of attitudes and skills* (Savickas, 2005:47) and thus serve to provide a clearer idea of a client's possibilities while gaining greater insight into the characteristics of various contexts/environments, which hopefully will increase my understanding of the possible dynamics that might exist between them. Holland (1996) also acknowledges that career counselling is bound to encompass life-counselling as a means of promoting not just career, but also life-satisfaction thereby justifying the intention of my proposed study. Super's life-span, life-space theory (See: paragraph 1.7.3.) has played a significant role in contributing to post-modern theories and has inspired the theoretical underpinnings of the career construction theory (See: paragraph 1.7.4.) and narrative counselling (See: paragraph 1.7.5.). The two afore-mentioned theories have contributed significantly to the development of several concepts related to my study, of which two are of particular relevance to my study, namely adaptability and life-design counselling.

Moreover, since I am attempting to make sense of the contextual demands placed on adolescents during their exploration phase and the extent to which they are being prepared for their future, I intend to limit my study to the exploration of the person-environment fit to adolescents. This is supported by Hirschi's (2010:229) belief that *adolescent career development can be best understood as the result of a dynamic interaction of person and the environment*. I aim to inform, establish and facilitate these adapt-abilities (See: paragraph 1.5.3.) through life-design counselling (See paragraph: 1.4.2. and 1.6.2.1.) since *life-stories are the crucial threads of continuation that make the elements of vocational personality and adaptability meaningful* Savickas (2005:49). By assisting clients in scripting their personal life stories they should hopefully be able to re-author their stories and/or introduce new storylines that show adaptability in the midst of transition. My study is intended to contribute positively to youth development so that adolescents, as the future work force, emerge as active agents demonstrating a *readiness to adjust to unpredictable working conditions by demonstrating active role management, forward-looking declaration and disengagement* (Savickas, 2005:50).

## 1.9. LOCATING MY PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

A paradigmatic perspective represents the way in which a person understands and views the world (Cohen *et al.* in Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2010). It is therefore necessary to clarify the lenses through which I will be shaping my perspective and approaching my research venture.

As an educational psychologist and a dedicated interpretivist involved in the undertaking of understanding human behaviour, life-design counselling patently appeals to me. It is therefore evident that my passion aimed at grasping a specific concept should guide my self-initiated choice for this research to be undertaken.

It is also of value to recognise my immense dedication to the paradigm shift that has taken place from a needs-based model to a positive psychology model. The positive psychology model embraces and encourages post-modernistic career approaches that resemble the departure from an objective perspective to an interpretive process (Maree & Beck, 1996). Post-modern counselling recognises the building of strengths as potent weapons in addressing difficult challenges, by emphasising them as buffers against mental illness (Seligman, 2005).

The paradigmatic perspective that would direct my approach is rooted in an interpretivistic epistemology. Based on this, the predominant model of investigation will be qualitative. This approach necessitates an inductive mode, which allows for creative reasoning aimed towards making a contribution to the current scientific knowledge base.

## 1.10. RESEARCH DESIGN

In the next section a brief overview is provided of the intended research design to be followed in my research study. Chapter 4 will further detail the research methodology followed, such as the data collection techniques and data analysis strategies.

### 10.1.1. Intervention research

De Vos (1998:365) defines intervention research as *a new technology or intervention– an innovation*. Intervention research lends itself to my intended purpose, since my study involves the implementation of a life-design counselling programme with the aim of possibly increasing the participants' career adaptability. Keeping the above programme principles in mind, the form of my intervention design will be based on the model suggested in De Vos (1998:385).

- Problem analysis and project planning
- Information gathering and synthesis

- Design
- Early development and pilot testing
- Evaluation and advanced development
- Dissemination

### 10.1.2. Intervention strategy to be followed in my research study

My planned life-design counselling programme will follow the model proposed by Savickas *et al.*, (2009) and Duarte (2010) and will be aimed at creating something new for an intended purpose. The life-design programme will follow the six counselling steps of life-design counselling (See: paragraph 1.6.1 and Table 1.2.). The participants will meet on a weekly basis over a period of four months. The programme is planned to run over eight group sessions of one hour each. Participants will work in a group consisting of five members. I intend to base my design on the one specified by Di Fabio and Maree (2011) used in their group life-design counselling programme tabulated in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2.: My intended life-design six-step programme**

Steps	Description	Technique to be used
<b>Step 1</b>	Defining the problem and identifying what the participants' hope to achieve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life-story</li> <li>• Chapters</li> <li>• Describing their average day</li> <li>• Discussion (one-on-one interviews and group sessions)</li> <li>• Journal writing</li> </ul>
<b>Step 2</b>	Exploration of the participants' current system of subjective identify forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life-line</li> <li>• Collage</li> <li>• Life-story</li> <li>• Journal writing</li> <li>• Discussion (one-on-one interviews and group sessions)</li> </ul>
<b>Step 3</b>	Opening perspectives by objectifying their stories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life-story</li> <li>• Journal writing</li> <li>• Discussion (one-on-one interviews and group sessions)</li> </ul>
<b>Step 4</b>	Placing the problem in a new story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life-story</li> <li>• Discussion (one-on-one interviews and group sessions)</li> </ul>

<b>Step 5</b>	Specifying activities that actualise an identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role playing</li> <li>• Discussion (one-on-one interviews and group sessions)</li> <li>• Self-reflection</li> <li>• Job shadowing</li> </ul>
<b>Step 6</b>	Follow-up	I commit to following up with my clients at regular intervals.

(Adapted from: Duarte, 2010; Savickas *et al.*, 2009; Fritz & Beekman, 2007)

## 1.11. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 1.11.1. Sampling

When it comes to sampling it is important to assess what criteria is relevant to the researcher's conceptual framework and research questions. Sampling should also serve to ensure that the phenomena that the researcher is interested in will appear and in effect also enhance the generalisability of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For the purposes of this study non-probability sampling will be implemented. This method does not *make use of random selection of population elements* (Maree & Pietersen, 2010:176). The chosen sampling methods are convenience and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling infers that I will be selecting participants from a convenient setting (Maree & Pietersen, 2010). Purposive sampling requires the researcher to set specific boundaries in order to support the purposes and the research questions of the study (Punch, 2005:189).

I will be working with Grade 11 learners from an independent school because they are at an age where they are most likely involved in exploring possible career opportunities. From this sample group, I will select five Grade 11 learners to participate in a life-design programme. The sample group will, where possible, consist of black, white, coloured and Indian participants. Male as well as female participants will be selected.

### 1.11.2. Data collection methods.

#### 1.11.2.1 Qualitative data collection methods

A qualitative approach appeals to my interpretivistic nature and allows for a longitudinal, interpretive study. I will be making use of a collective case study which will involve the in-depth investigation of the unique characteristics of a programme, event, activity, individual or group gathered over a period of time (Neuman, 1997; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Other qualitative techniques that will be contributing to the holistic understanding of the participant and the variables are:



- **Observations:** before, during and after the presentation of sessions over the four-month period. The group counselling sessions will be audio recorded. Observations will also be documented in the researcher’s journal to ensure that reflection of the group dynamics and behaviours are recorded. I will regard myself as a *participant observer* (Nieuwenhuis, 2010), which suggests that I will be part of the research process. Observations will further be recorded through anecdotal records and structured observations.
- **Conversation:** informal and directed conversation with participants will be recorded during individual and group life-design counselling sessions. Semi-structured interviews will allow the participants to elaborate on a set of predetermined questions whereas group counselling sessions will hopefully provide me with rich, interpretive data (Nieuwenhuis, 2010).
- **Educational-Psychological intervention:** life-design counselling will be presented to the sampled group of learners over a period of four months. The participants’ planned activities (such as collages, drawings, life-lines, card sorting, life-stories and anecdotes) will also be utilised as qualitative data sources.
- **Longitudinal assessment:** period of four months
- **Journal entries from the participant and the researcher:** Burns (2000) motivates the inclusion of a journal in the research endeavour as a means of logging personal thoughts and professional activities that could contribute to clarifying possible work patterns by providing clear information.

### 1.11.2.2. Implemented data collection plan

Table 1.3. (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2009) presents a summary of the multi-method data collection plan I plan to follow in my study:

**Table 1.3.: Qualitative data collection strategies**

Strategy	Technique
In-depth individual interviews (at the beginning and end of the research process).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio recordings and verbatim transcriptions.</li> </ul>
Co-constructive discussions during group life-design sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio recordings and verbatim transcriptions</li> </ul>
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking field notes and compiling a reflective journal.</li> </ul>
Research journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants and I keep a reflection journal to record daily experiences, thoughts and behaviour.</li> </ul>

Observations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field notes and reflective journal</li> </ul>
Post-modern techniques <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio recordings and verbatim transcriptions</li> <li>• Texts</li> </ul>
Field notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researcher's journal</li> </ul>

(Adapted from Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2009)

## 1.12. PLANNING FOR QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

De Vos (2000:48) describes the data analysis stage as the *ponder-and-check* stage, because efforts are made to draw all the evidence that relates to the concept, together. The main steps that can be followed in analysing and interpreting qualitative data are depicted below. These steps correspond to the steps suggested by Vithal and Jansen (2003).

### 1.12.1. Data Reduction

The researcher selects a conceptual framework, research questions, cases and instruments to focus and discriminate the aim of the specific field of study from the potentially extensive data available. Once the study is initiated, the researcher will continue to reduce the data from the various data collection methods (interviews; transcribed audio-recordings; journals and an external coder) by means of:

- Coding
- Finding themes
- Clustering
- Writing stories

### 1.12.2. Conclusion drawing and verification

Next, the data will be interpreted from which meaning can be generated. Tactics that will be employed to guide this process will be:

- Comparison contrasting
- Noting of patterns and themes
- Clustering
- Use of metaphors
- Use of triangulation

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<sup>2</sup> Please refer to chapter 2 for a more comprehensive description of these techniques.

- Looking for negative instances
- Following up surprises
- Checking the results with the participants

A similar qualitative data analysis technique that will also be incorporated is proposed by Creswell (2003:192) and consists of the six steps summarised in Table 1.4., below.

**Table 1.4.: Data analysis techniques to be followed in my study:**

Steps	Data analysis technique	Description of technique
<b>Step 1</b>	Organisation and preparation of data	The data that has been collected must be prepared for analysis, which includes transcribing any handwritten or audio-recorded material. This step also involves a data-reducing component by which unnecessary information is discarded.
<b>Step 2</b>	Reading of data	This step involves reading through all the collected data in an effort to create a general impression of it, so that reflection can be facilitated.
<b>Step 3</b>	Detailed analysis of the data	The transcribed data consisting of interviews and group have to be coded. Nieuwenhuis (2010:105) regards coding as the process by which data is divided into <i>meaningful analytical units</i> by <i>marking the segments of data with symbols, descriptive words or unique identifying names</i> .
<b>Step 4</b>	Identifying sub-themes and themes	Sub-themes related to my study of career adaptability and life-design counselling will be identified in an effort to generate possible themes.
<b>Step 5</b>	Discussion of themes	The most prominent and occurring themes are identified
<b>Step 6</b>	Interpretation and explanation of data	The final step, involves establishing what was acquired through the research process. The researcher integrates their research findings with his/her personal conclusions, literature study conducted and theories consulted.

(Adapted from Creswell, 2003:192)

### 1.13. QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE DATA

#### 1.13.1. Validity

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:408) encourage the researcher to consider the following steps (See: Table 1.5.) to enhance the quality assurance of the data obtained during my study.

**Table 1.5.: Strategies to increase validity of the study**

Strategy	Description of the planned activity
Extended fieldwork	The data-collection process will be spread over a period of three months. Data analysis and triangulation should ensure that the researcher's findings are aligned to and can be compared to the participant's reality.
Multi-method strategy	Triangulation is incorporated throughout the study.
Verbatim reporting of responses	Audio-recordings will be transcribed verbatim.
Low inferential explanations	Explanations and situations will be noted in detail.
Multiple researchers	My supervisor is committed to guiding me through the data-collection method.
Mechanical data-collection	Audio-recordings will be utilised.
Participatory researcher	A journal will provide adequate opportunity for reflection on my perceptions and assumptions, in an effort to ensure that the participants' responses are clarified.
Participant follow-up	The participants will be consulted throughout the process to confirm their perception of the responses and situations.
Participant feedback	The data will be discussed with the participants to clear any understandings or concepts, before the data is interpreted.
Discrepancies in data	Data that appears negative or discrepant will be discussed with my supervisor.
External coder	A competent and suitably qualified coder will review the data. He/she will be a qualified psychologist.

#### 1.13.2. Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1994) refer to term trustworthiness as the way in which a researcher is able to attest to his/her findings as being worthwhile and that the research is of a high quality.

Trustworthiness is promoted through member checking, which will ensure that the participant engages in the discussion of the identified themes (Creswell, 2003).

### **1.13.3. Triangulation**

Using a multi-method approach gives rise to triangulation. Triangulation adds to the validity and trustworthiness of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). De Vos (2000) agrees with this statement and views triangulation as a means of facilitating verification and validation of the findings.

Triangulation of the journals, interviews, group life-design counselling sessions and the completed post-modern activities will be performed. Triangulation will also contribute to the identification of common themes that will enhance trustworthiness. The journal entries will also be utilised to avoid possible bias by means of reflections.

### **1.13.4. Crystallisation**

Crystallisation is used to identify possible discrepancies with the aim of increasing the credibility of the study (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001; Nieuwenhuis, 2010). This process allows the researcher to *probe for a deeper understanding of a phenomenon and not to search for causal relationships* (Nieuwenhuis, 2010:81). Crystallisation stems from the word crystal, which Richardson (in Nieuwenhuis, 2010) describes as an object that is multi-faceted, as opposed to only having three sides (as suggested by triangulation). Thereby suggesting that different researchers, sources, methods and findings have to be compared with each other. In my study an external coder (a qualified psychologist) will assist in this process.

## **1.14. ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

During the research process the researcher's role is of the utmost importance. The roles that I will take responsibility are the following:

- To explain to the participants and his/her guardian the purpose of the research and to obtain informed consent for his/her participation and his/her knowledge that the interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis.
- To ensure that the facilities and the equipment are in good working order and the venue is comfortable.
- To create an atmosphere that speaks of warmth, where interruptions are limited.

- To ensure that sufficient opportunity is given to the participants to review the interpretation of the data to clear any misunderstanding.
- To analyse and interpret the data.
- To adhere to the ethical standards (ethical code) as specified by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

### **1.15. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

De Vos (2000) highlights the importance of considering ethical guidelines in the social sciences, and notes the unique ethical problems that might materialise in this field. The afore-mentioned author subsequently points out several pitfalls that I should try and avoid and proceeds to offer the following guidelines:

- Informed consent: I will provide the participant and his/her guardian with a clear indication of the goal of the investigation, the procedures, advantages, disadvantages, the dangers to which the participants may be exposed and the credibility of the researchers.
- Harm to the participants will be minimised as far as possible. Dane (in De Vos, 2000) emphasises the ethical obligation I have towards the participants to protect him/her against any form of physical or emotional harm. Emotional harm may often hold far-reaching consequences for participants. As a researcher, I will take great care in avoiding any possible harm that may be inflicted on the participants by committing to my intended plans (as approved by the ethical committee) and regularly communicating with my supervisor.
- Deception of participants involves disguising the real goal of the study, hiding the real function of the actions of the participants and hiding the experiences that the participants will have to go through (Judd *et al.* in De Vos, 2000:27). I will ensure that my participants are aware of the intended purposes of my research and that my research process will be transparent.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) also suggest the following ethical guidelines that I should implement:

- To respect the client's privacy. I will take great care in ensuring anonymity in the reporting of my data.
- To make every effort in minimising the inaccurate interpretation of the data. My research relies on accurate interpretation and I will follow the suggestions stated in Table 1.7.

- To make known the results of the research to the participant and his/her guardian(s). I intend to show transparency in my research and am committed to ensuring the well-being of all participants.

A specific aspect related to ethics is that I am a psychologist at the school. In order to minimise conflict of interest, participation in the research study will be voluntary and participants will be under no obligation to participate. I am fully aware of the fact that my role in this regard is purely that of a **researcher and not a psychologist**. However, as a trained psychologist, I realise only too well that participation in my research study may lead to the emergence of thoughts and attitudes that may be construed as negative. I have been trained to identify these types of concerns and should I observe this to be the case, I will arrange with my colleague to assist and provide counselling for the participants. My colleague is employed as a psychologist in a full-time capacity at the high-school and will be sufficiently informed to manage all possible referrals. During the entire process I will abide by the ethical guidelines in order to ensure that the best interests of the participants are served. This will involve assuring the role players know exactly what is going to be expected of them.

#### **1.16. ACKNOWLEDGING THE LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

The following limitations may arise during my study:

- Learners may not be willing to volunteer for the intended study.
- Participants may feel inclined to withdraw from the study at any time or even request that specific information may not be published.
- Participant attendance may be inconsistent.
- Only one school and a small sample group will be used in this study, which is likely to limit the generalisability of the findings.

#### **1.17. SUMMARY**

This chapter served as a backdrop to my study. I discussed that the purpose and rationale of my study is to explore, by means of a collective case study, the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context. I also introduced the constructs of life-design counselling and career adaptability as it pertains to my study and located them in a theoretical and conceptual framework. I also briefly discussed the research questions, methodological considerations and possible limitations that may arise in my study.

## **1.18 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

### **1.18.1. Chapter 1: Orientation to the research study**

As the first of seven chapters, Chapter 1 intended to provide the reader with a comprehensive layout of the proposed study. Prior to describing the rationale and purpose of my study, I thought it best to first sketch a background orientation supporting my choice of topic. This was followed by a systematic break-down of the problem-statement into primary and secondary research questions depicting the purpose of my study, which incidentally is to explore the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context. The terminology related to the afore-mentioned problem statement was also clarified in an attempt to familiarise the reader with the content to be discussed. Next a very brief, preliminary literature view was provided to demonstrate the relevance of and possible value that the proposed study may contribute to the existing academic and scientific research field.

Moreover, this chapter illustrated the various theoretical tenets informing both my conceptual framework and paradigmatic perspective. Once my predominant model of investigation was located, a brief discussion of the planned research design and accompanying methodology and data analysis followed. Reference was also made to the particular aspects associated with the quality assurance of the qualitative data, followed by a listing of the role of the researcher and a concise outline of the various ethical considerations to be taken into regard. The chapter concluded with a brief acknowledgement of the anticipated limitations of the study and lastly, the expected outline of the study.

### **1.18.2. Chapter 2: Life-design counselling**

Chapter 2 exclusively focuses on life-design counselling by drawing on a number of existing literature sources comprising of scientific journal articles, published books, research papers, and amongst others, some literary works. The introduction of this chapter describes how the analogous nature of stories and literary devices lends itself well to career counselling practices. This is followed by a comprehensive depiction of how current career trends, characteristic of a post-modern world, have shaken the theoretical assumptions held by the so-called traditional career paradigm. Chapter 2 subsequently elaborates on the increasing demand for more post-modern inspired career counselling practices, which further initiated a description of the constructivist paradigm and the different counselling approaches and models that stem from it. The theoretical overview launches a lengthy discussion of the various presuppositions, principles and overall goals of life-design counselling. Additionally, a detailed representation of the contributing theoretical influences that have shaped the design of two different life-design counselling models, is presented, respectively detailing the steps and phases involved in each one. A number of techniques associated with life-design counselling is also



briefly be mentioned. Lastly, the application value of life-design counselling, particularly within an educational and group-based setting, is discussed.

### **1.18.3. Chapter 3: Career adaptability**

Chapter 3 offers an extensive literature overview to inform the reader's theoretical understanding of career adaptability. Once again, the demands of the current career world are described with the added intention of illustrating the impact its changing nature has had on the worker. Theoretical models are revisited to locate career adaptability within an existing knowledge framework. Next, an attempt is made to define career adaptability, with specific reference made to the ABC model and the four Cs namely: career concern, control, curiosity and confidence. This chapter also attempts to demonstrate the association between life-design counselling (discussed in Chapter 2) and career adaptability. Moreover, Chapter 3 also details the various concepts associated with career adaptability, such as career identity, employability and career resilience. It also discusses both the personal and organisational factors said to improve a worker's career adaptability. Furthermore, quantitative and qualitative means of assessing career adaptability, as well as various interventions (including those that were group-based) are briefly referred to. This chapter also includes a more detailed description of adolescence, in particular its association with career related tasks and other career relevant information.

### **1.18.4. Chapter 4: Research design and methodology**

Chapter 4 details my intention to conduct research from an interpretivist/constructivist/social constructivist paradigm. This chapter therefore elaborates on my decision to work from the aforementioned paradigm and subsequently also describes how my choice of data collection and analysis methods are employed to support this intention. Particular care is taken to provide the reader with a comprehensive roll out of the study's qualitative research design. Aspects related to quality assurance, such as crystallisation, triangulation and trustworthiness are also discussed in slightly more detail. Lastly, this chapter touches on my role as a researcher, various ethical considerations and the limitations of my study.

### **1.18.5. Chapter 5: Research findings**

This chapter presents the findings derived from the analysis of the qualitative data sources (including the individual pre- and post-interviews as well as the joint group counselling sessions). Qualitative data analysis allowed for the transcribed data to be organised according to various pre-determined and/or emergent themes and sub-themes. These identified themes are discussed in greater

detail at the hand of relevant participant responses cited from the specified qualitative data source. A frequency table illustrating the reoccurrence of specific participant responses is also included.

#### **1.18.6. Chapter 6: Discussion of the research findings and literature control**

This chapter comprises of a comprehensive summary of the research findings described in Chapter 5. These findings are then compared to other relevant research studies reporting on similar themes as the ones identified in my study. An effort was made to either corroborate findings from existing studies, highlight those that may differ or uncover previously unreported findings.

#### **1.18.7. Chapter 7: findings, conclusions and recommendations**

Chapter 7 concludes my study by considering how the original research questions compare to the eventual findings derived from my completed research initiative. I also reflect on my personal experience of the research process and consider what I could have done differently. I then wrap up by the study by offering recommendations for further research and practice.

## Chapter 2: literature overview: life-design counselling

**“Story telling is a fundamental form of human communication. It can serve to essentially function in our lives. We often think in story form, speak in story form, and bring meaning to our lives through story. Storytelling, in its most common everyday form, is giving a narrative account of an event, an experience or, any other happening. We can tell of these happenings because we know what has happened. It is basic knowledge of an event that allows and inspires us to tell about it. What generally happens when we tell a story from our own life is that we increase our working knowledge of ourselves because we discover deeper meaning in our lives through the process of reflecting and putting events, experiences, and feelings we have lived into oral expression. It has always been this way. That may be why we have a need to make our lives coherent, understandable, and meaningful. Telling the story of our life is so basic to our nature that we are largely unaware of its importance”**

-Atkinson (1997:1)

**write your own story**

(Image: Basse, 2014)

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: LIFE-DESIGN COUNSELLING

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Miller (2009), an American author, wrote a popular memoir that had the makings of a movie. He was subsequently asked to transform the transcript into a compelling screenplay. In order to do this, Miller spent time studying the specific literary devices that constitute a good story, with the aim of applying them to his autobiographical screenplay. Quite unintentionally, this exercise provided him with the opportunity to re-read and, to some extent, rewrite his life story from a different perspective – that of an editor. What followed was the realisation that people were more likely to design their lives in a meaningful manner if they were able to reflect on it from a different perspective. The reason I chose to relate this story will become more evident as this chapter on life-design counselling unfolds. It is, however, only fitting that the introduction to a chapter on life-design counselling should be illustrated through the use of a story.

To my mind, the process of designing a life recognises the emphatic power individuals possess to author and emplot themselves in the narrative of their lives. It allows them to reflect on how the past informs the present and influences the future and how these experiences have affected their development (character arc/themes/motifs). It also lets them view their lives from multiple perspectives and construct knowledge based on their experiences (content) and interaction with others (audience). Most importantly, it acknowledges that although change is inevitable, it becomes more manageable in the greater scheme of things.

The most striking aspect of life-design is, most probably, the individual's capacity to occupy multiple roles, such as that of the main character, author and editor in his/her life narrative. This supposes that an individual is in control of enacting, directing and shaping his/her story into a cohesive and meaningful whole, one in which the boundaries between life and career have become blurred. This type of awareness is expected to drive a person towards designing a more purposeful and enlightened life. Miller (2009:115) describes this sentiment as follows:

*Once you live a good story, you get a taste for a kind of meaning in life, and you can't go back to being normal; you can't go back to meaningless scenes stitched together by the forgettable thread of wasted time.*

Chapter 2 is dedicated to the discussion of life-design counselling, beginning with an overview of the rapidly changing world of work and an analysis of the multi-level effect that these changes are likely to carry for the individual, organisations and more specifically, career practices. Reference is also made to the paradigmatic shift that has taken place from a positivist to constructivist career counselling model, before various post-modern theories such as the career construction theory, are discussed in

greater detail. The remainder of the chapter will serve to augment life-design as a career counselling technique by describing the presuppositions and goals that direct it, as well as the models, interventions and techniques that flow from it. The chapter will conclude with a brief mention of the potential application value life-design counselling holds.

## 2.2. CRISIS IN CAREER MODELS AND METHODS

### 2.2.1. Transformations in the career world

In order to fully appreciate life-design as a possible *paradigm for career construction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (Savickas *et al.*, 2009:1), it is essential to reflect on the events that have contributed to its birth. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, work in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was regarded as stable, predictable and constant; employees were expected to stay in a specific occupation performing a specialised skill for the same company up until retirement (Chen, 2007). This tendency is, however, facing its imminent demise, as the post-modern world reels from the aftermath of globalisation, technological advances, downsizing, organisational mergers and a free-market economy (Severy, 2008; Stebleton, 2010; Reid & West, 2011; Savickas, 2011b).

As a result of the digital revolution, Savickas (2011b:9) argues that organisations have been left with no alternative other than to become *smaller, smarter and swifter* in keeping up *with the market conditions*. Given these circumstances, it would be naïve to imagine that these changes have not altered society's conceptualisation and understanding of work, employment and the expectations placed on employees and organisations. Many organisations no longer have the means or desire (given the current situation) to offer long-term employment contracts (Savickas, 2011b). New terminology has consequently been introduced, such as the concept of “dejobbing” which refers to the notion of short-term employment based on the companies' need to temporarily acquire the services of a contractor for a specific purpose as opposed to employing someone on a permanent basis (Maree, 2013). Some of the words that reflect the new term for short-term employees are: *temporary, contingent, casual, free-lance, part-time, self-employed* and *consultant* (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a; Savickas, 2011b:9).

This degree of flexibility demanded by the labour market is therefore likely to see more workers embracing the idea of a portfolio career. This means that individuals are likely to enter into temporary contracts with a number of different organisations spread across a specific period of time. The advantages to this arrangement are that free-lance workers might be in a better position to balance work and personal demands, in addition to developing, enhancing and diversifying their skills due to the experience of working in a multitude of settings (Platman, 2004).

The *boundaryless* or protean career is indeed about *organising rather than organisation* (Littleton, Arthur & Rousseau, 2000:101) and is characterised by the following four features. Firstly, it recognises the adaptable and individualistic nature of a person's career path. Secondly, it emphasises

home and family factors as important considerations in career decision. Thirdly, it regards the individual as a competent entity capable of harnessing his/her psychological resources to make up for the lack of security he/she may be experiencing due to the number of global changes. Lastly, it suggests that employees can benefit from developing the characteristics of an entrepreneur such as innovation, resilience and practicality (Young & Valach, 2000).

### **2.2.2. The role of work in an individual's life**

A boundaryless career, therefore acknowledges contexts suggesting a departure away from what has previously been advocated by the more traditional approaches (Hall, 2004). The firm boundaries that were previously drawn up to compartmentalise work and life are now more permeable, suggesting that a client's personal life is likely to flow over into their work life and decisions and *vice versa*. A person therefore does not have to deal with career issues such as retrenchment or taking on the role of a parent in a *social void* (Lent, 2012:271). Given that the boundaries between work and other life domains have now become less defined, it has become increasingly important to understand the role that work plays in a client's life – especially when one regards the direct effect it has on his/her subjective well-being, overall life purpose, productivity and satisfaction (Hartung & Taber, 2008; Lent & Brown, 2008; Walsh, 2008).

*Within the life structure of a developing person, work can energize or exhaust. Yield fulfilment or discontent, offer a source of achievement or failure. Working too much or too little or not at all can debilitate or discourage. Work can foster creativity or diminish it. Obsession with work and compulsive work involvement in the case of workholism or work addiction prompts a significant imbalance.*

Considering that employment contracts previously offered employees organisational boundaries, security and a formula for living their lives; one does begin to wonder what effect it will have if they are left to their own devices (Amundson, 2005; Reid & West, 2011; Savickas, 2011a). Protean careers after all create the impression that individuals do not have to be confined to a predictable career, previously predetermined by objective means, but that they are free to follow a path with heart (Hall, 2004). It has therefore become seemingly more commonplace for individuals to pursue their inspirations, passion and talents, which in turn are likely to have a positive effect on their general health and longevity (Shepard, 1984).

Alternatively, this process may be rather daunting to individuals who are suddenly expected to be in charge of their professional choices and steer their life in a chosen direction solely relying on their values as a moral compass (Hall, 2004). These rapid changes, therefore hold the potential to improve a person's self-knowledge and mastery by coercing an individual into exploring different experiences and

being more open to self-experimentation, but it might also wreak havoc with his/her identity sowing doubt and insecurity (Rose, 1999; Richardson *et al.*, 2009; Reid & West, 2011). Clients may therefore have to call on the services of a career counsellor to offer them a method to deal with all the madness that has accompanied the fast-paced, technology-driven and economically unstable world (Hartung, 2011; Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). In search of possible interventions that may accomplish this goal, counsellors are likely to come across life-design models, such as the one informed by the integration of Guichard's (2005; 2009) self-construction model and the theory of career construction (Savickas, 2005) or the life/work-design model presented by Campbell and Ungar (2004b).

### **2.2.3. The development of valuable skills**

Life-design is aimed at supporting people's best efforts at engineering their career portfolios by encouraging them to monitor their experiences and social interactions and revise or correct any apparent dissonance (Benko & Weisberg, 2007). In order to improve clients' career management abilities, attention should be given to enhancing their coping skills and abilities in setting career goals that are attainable (Salmela-Aro, Mutanen & Vuori, 2012). They are also encouraged to reflect on and integrate the different roles they play in a professional and personal capacity (Arthur & Rousseau in Zikic & Franklin, 2010; Blustein, 2011).

Additionally, Savickas (2001) and Hall (2004) also discussed specific meta-competencies believed to ease the individual's adjustment to a protean world, ranging from acquiring a diverse set of employability skills, consisting of integrative planning, adaptive strengths and transferable skills (Savickas, 2000; Cohen, Dubberley & Mallon, 2004; Amundson, 2005) to the ability to engage in self-reflection activities aimed at identifying clients' *values as well as the elements that give meaning and direction to their lives* (Guichard, Pouyaud, De Calan & Dumora, 2012:56).

## **2.3. REFOCUSING THE GOALS OF CAREER INTERVENTION**

### **2.3.1. Past versus present conceptualisations of career and career counselling.**

The effect of the changes described in the preceding section (See: paragraph 2.2.) has resulted in a paradigm shift that has seen an increase in the use of qualitative approaches to balance the predominantly quantitative approach associated with past career models and practice (Maree, 2010). Since careers have become more personal, existing theories of career counselling and assessment can no longer account for the post-modern focus on contexts or how the individual adapts to various social settings (Savickas, 1993; Richardson, 2002; Cochran, 2007). This recognition prompted career counselling practices to make the inevitable transition from helping clients *develop their careers* to helping clients *construct lives through work and relationships* (Richardson, 2012:191). As expected,

this transition holds further implications for career counselling practices such as contextualising the use of the trait-factor models of the past in favour of narrative models and self-construction methods (Savickas, 2007).

Bujold's (2004) description of career counselling as being both a science and an art, however, highlights the complementary nature that can exist between them – where the “science” aspect is reflected in the traditional positivist approaches and the “art” in co-creating stories that are true to the post-modern approaches. Sampson (2010:91) also believes that modern and post-modern career theories complement each other and regard their separation as an *unnecessary divorce* where *creating winners and losers in this discussion is detrimental to the profession and the individuals being served*.

The use of both objective and subjective approaches is best illustrated by the following two questions: “what occupation to pick?” and “how to ready self for occupational choice and adjustment?” (Hartung, 2011; Savickas 2011c). The first question presupposes the use of objective approaches associated with vocational **guidance**. The second question involves career **education**, whereby objective information is presented to teach people about developmental tasks, life trajectories and transitions (Hartung, 2011). A third question can be posed: “why do people move in the life career direction that they do?” (Hartung, 2011; Savickas, 2011c). The answer to this question propels one towards a subjective approach that will allow people to attach meaning to their life-stories – a process better classified as career **counselling** aimed at designing a work life (Savickas, 2011c).

The third question, therefore clearly shows that the objective approach does not account for personal meaning or values, nor does it explain how a person resolves the difficulties associated with issues such as job-loss, retirement and immigration. This explains why the bureaucratic nature of past models is slowly being replaced by a fundamentally different model that promotes the use of stories and dialogue to create meaningful narratives as opposed to objective scores (Savickas, 1993; Peavey, 1996; Young & Valach, 2000; Watson & Kuit, 2007).

## **2.3.2. The basic principles of career counselling**

### **2.3.2.1. Defining career counselling**

Since work is no longer considered a means to an end (such as having to put bread on the table), but rather a vehicle for people to locate purpose and meaning in their lives – the basic recipe for successful career planning no longer suffices. Previously, career counsellors would base their practices on discovering what the client already knows about him/herself and the world of work; rationally consolidating the information generated from both inquiries and, lastly filling in any gaps between them (Hartung, 2011). More recently, career counselling practices however aim to help people discover, decide on and organise a career on top of ensuring that the career lives up to their expectations (Hartung, 2011). Career counselling has therefore progressed from merely assisting a client in making a career



decision to also addressing the possible psychological difficulties that may accompany career concerns or problems (Herr, 1997).

### **2.3.2.2. Suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of career counselling**

To realise the above intentions it is worthwhile to note that the effectiveness of career choice interventions can be improved by incorporating the following six suggestions made by Brown, Ryan-Krane, Brecheisen, Castelino, Budisin, Miller and Edens (2003:425):

- Clients are more likely to follow through on intentions if they are written down and enforced by post-intervention career work and individualised counsellor support.
- Counsellors should provide many opportunities for gathering and processing occupational information.
- Clients should be expected to search for and use occupational information outside of the counselling session.
- Both counsellor and client should engage in a written activity where the various occupations or fields of interest are compared in addition to evaluating the level of support available.
- Counsellors should suggest individual consultations for problematic assessment results.
- Counsellors should invite examples and models to a session so that clients are able to draw inspiration from those who have successfully managed to venture into career explorations and decisions.

### **2.3.3. The changing role of the career counsellor**

Based on the described suggestions, career counsellors are seemingly being implored to review and adapt their career counselling theories, approaches and techniques to best support the influx of disillusioned clients seeking counselling (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a; Guichard, 2009; Savickas *et al.*, 2009 and Savickas, 2011c). Clients are especially likely to turn to counsellors when they realise that they lack the words to make sense of their lives and need someone to supplement their vocabulary and organise their experiences into descriptive categories and terms (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b).

This emphasis on description and linguistics suggests that many career practitioners may find themselves increasingly drawn to the constructivist paradigm and more specifically, narrative counselling practices (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a). The constructivist worldview regards the narrative or story as a means of creating meaning (Polkinghorne, 1988). The client in effect becomes the expert, whilst the counsellor serves in a witness capacity aimed at reflecting the clients' shared knowledge back to them in a comprehensible way. This meaningful and collaborative deliberation results in co-created

story lines, solutions to career problems and life-design which in turn promotes effective identity-integration and self-awareness (Chen, 2007; Savickas, 2007).

Brott (2004) states that the success of the intervention depends as much on the counselling process as it does on the relationship between the counsellor and the client, since this form of counselling is a collaborative process. Counsellors can maintain a good relationship with the client by being understanding, accepting, trusting and caring (Granvold 1996). It is also important that counsellors tread carefully when exploring clients' stories – patiently allowing it to unfold in an unhurried fashion. Throughout the process counsellors have to listen attentively for patterns and life themes that may start to emerge so that they can utilise the information gained to generate a future story that will contribute to actualisation; display ways in which barriers can be overcome and, affirm the clients' confidence (Reid & West, 2011). Counsellors should furthermore make a point of emphasising the clients' strengths and desires; providing educational material; facilitating continuity; highlighting personal causality and reframing their experiences (Cochran, 1997).

## **2.4. REVISITED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The need to refocus the goals of career intervention (See: paragraph 2.3.), forces one to consider the evolution of career theory over the years in keeping with the historical, contextual, societal and organisational demands imposed on the individual. There have been three notable distinctions in how careers issues have been perceived since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely vocational choice, career development and most recently, life-design. Life design therefore takes the place of the increasingly irrelevant term *vocational choice*, whilst *career development* is more appropriately envisioned as life trajectories (Savickas *et al.*, 2009:15). Before life-design is discussed in greater detail, its theoretical roots are briefly revisited in this section.

### **2.4.1. Constructivism**

The above discussion of the basic principles of career counselling (See: paragraph 2.3.) once again affirms life-design counselling's strong foothold in the constructivist paradigm. Although Chapter 1 (See: paragraph 1.7.) also discussed the basic tenets of a constructivist paradigm, this section will focus on its particular affiliation with life-design counselling. Lent (2012:270) reiterates that the *zeitgeist* of career counselling currently focuses on what he terms an *article of faith* based on the belief that individuals possess the ability to *co-construct their work lives/stories with others in a social-economic-political-cultural-historical context*. Since constructivism is concerned with the cognitive and psychological processes involved in understanding how individuals generate meaning and gain knowledge from their experiences it intentionally also acknowledges multiple realities; believes that

everyone's life lends itself to a story and, claims that people are able to make sense of their experiences and construct their own realities (Peavy, 1992; Bujold, 2004).

Also relevant to life-design counselling is the theory of social constructivism which splinters from the overarching paradigm based on its fundamental focus on the relationships that exist between a person and his/her social environment; suggesting that knowledge is historically and culturally specific and to be found in interactions, processes and social practices (Young & Collins, 2004). Social constructivism is further interested in the descriptions the person has attached to the self as well as the concepts of agency, purpose and subjectivity (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a).

Life-design counselling unmistakably derives from these beliefs purely based on its objective to help individuals categorically organise themselves and their surroundings according to the personal meaning they have attached to themselves, others and, the environment (Cochran, 1997; Blustein, Schultheiss & Flum, 2004). Embedding life-design counselling within a constructivist framework facilitates a greater appreciation for the way in which an individual's career has become integrated with his/her personal life domains.

#### **2.4.2. Narrative Career Counselling**

The word "story" has been mentioned a couple of times in the preceding text, which should in itself serve to give some indication of the significance that narratives hold in life-design counselling. Similar to life-design counselling, narrative career counselling's key focus is on language, discourse and theme development (Severy, 2008). Fundamentally, it is also concerned with subjectivity and meaning through self-reflection in the hope that it would lead to an improved understanding of the self (McIlveen & Patton, 2007). Narrative practice infuses life-design counselling in a number of ways, one of which is its capacity to cater for diversity in acknowledging that clients of different ages, races and cultures should be able to interpret their life-experiences meaningfully. It also advocates a holistic perspective that recognises the psychology and emotions behind life-changing decisions. The most significant factor, however, is that it casts the client as the main character in his/her story empowering him/her to actively participate and engage in the process, promoting commitment and agency (Locke & Gibbons, 2008).

The career construction theory, which underlies life-design, relies on the premise that people construct their career trajectories by attaching meaning to their career experiences. This meaning is imbedded in various themes that join together to form a recognisable plot that creates the basis of a life story about a person's career identity. Basically, *story describes what happened, the plot tells why it happened and the theme tells what it means* (Savickas, 2011b:29). The goals of career construction counselling are therefore best achieved through the narrative paradigm. Counsellors and clients are therefore encouraged to construct stories that allow clients to *actively master what they have passively*

*suffered* as they relive a specific issue repetitively in the hope that they will become more apt at resolving it (Christensen & Johnston, 2003; Savickas, 2011b:33).

The above principles are integrated on a practical level through a skilful process of recasting the client as both the author (constructing) and main character (enacting) in his/her life story (Christensen & Johnston, 2003). Career practitioners are therefore afforded the opportunity to listen to their clients' stories containing various episodes or chapters such as loss, transition, indecision or hope that stretches across a clients' realm of contexts. By applying the skilful art of empathetic listening, counsellors may be able to extract metaphors or proverbs that add meaningful value to the narrative (Stebleton, 2010). McIlveen and Patton (2007:229) illuminate the role of the counsellor by comparing him/her to a *caring editor*, responsible for shaping a client's story through collaboration.

Savickas (1993) believes that in doing so, the career counsellor is involved in a three part process of firstly, assisting the client in authorising their career into a congruent story; secondly, identifying themes and tensions in the story that provides meaning to career and lastly, promoting agency by shaping a future story that identifies the skills required to ensure its success. It is however advisable to combine narrative approaches with a comprehensive career theory should career counsellors and clients require a more in-depth understanding of who they are (vocational personality), how they adapt (career adaptability) and what work matters to them (life themes) (Del Corso & Reh fuss, 2011).

Using stories in life-design counselling provides a means of unlocking hidden motives and career problems (Hartung & Borges, 2005). A narrative also serve as steadfast anchor that secures a person as he/she navigates through the turbulent times of national and global economic insecurities (Stebleton, 2010). Narratives can therefore be regarded as the best way to add meaning to a person's life. This meaning is driven by a need to *live well, with unity and purpose* that in turn motivates a person to compose a *heroic narrative* of the self that purposefully serves to reveal the truths that a person holds about him/herself (McAdams in Del Corso & Reh fuss 2011:335).

#### **2.4.2.1.        *The storied approach***

*The storied approach* suggested by Brott (2001:306) is also rooted in the narrative framework and aims to promote the construction of new realities, whilst at the same time acknowledging past experiences through a three-part process of co-construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. In the first phase, the floor belongs to the clients as they are encouraged to share memorable experiences, significant role players in their lives, as well as meaningful words. The deconstruction phase picks elements of the story apart to search for repetitive patterns or themes that may lead to new insights and perspectives. The final phase is aimed at consolidating the knowledge gained into a feasible future narrative by either augmenting or reducing certain themes (Brott, 2004; 2001).

## **2.5. LIFE-DESIGN**

The theoretical background discussed in the above section (See: paragraph 2.4.) served to further introduce the concept of life-design. Since this construct contributes significantly to the basis of my study, a detailed description of its presuppositions will follow in the discussion below (See: paragraph 2.5.1.). This section will also highlight the basic flow of a life-design model (See: paragraph 2.5.2.) with reference to its longevity, holistic focus and emphasis on context. The four goals of life-design, namely adaptability, narratability, activity and intentionality are also discussed (See: paragraph 2.5.3.). Two different life-design models (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b; Savickas, 2005; Guichard, 2009.) will also be discussed in the next section (See: paragraph 2.6.).

The basic premise of life-design counselling, regardless of which model is followed, emphasises the concepts of identity (self), narratability of identity (story) and intentionality (meaningful action) (Lent, 2012). It is best facilitated through the process of co-construction between the client and counsellor. Ultimately, it seeks to promote a client's level of agency by adding meaning to his/her interactions with others in various contexts (Watson & Kuit, 2007). Its value as a career counselling approach lies in its facilitation of the much sought-after effects of career adaptability, planned coincidence and positive uncertainty. The secret lies in offering clients a means of organising their life-roles and making sense of their social interactions from multiple perspectives (Peavy, 1993). It is however wise to keep in mind that life-design counselling may not appeal to all clients and that it is important to clarify whether a client is seeking a brief assessment that does not necessarily require him/her to engage in the lengthy juxta-positioning of his/her life and career (Lent, 2012).

### **2.5.1. The five presuppositions of life-designing**

#### **2.5.1.1. Contexts**

The world has become a global village reflected in the changing demographics of most organisations. This change suggests that people from different walks of life are now more likely to find themselves working side by side. It is therefore not surprising to note that context is a pertinent feature of post-modern career counselling practices and life-design (Taber, Hartung, Briddick, Briddick & Reh fuss, 2011). Post-modern approaches are centred on highlighting the immersion of an individual within a social setting signalling a drastic diversion from the traditional positivist approach of viewing the individual as an isolated being reduced to quantifiable traits and factors (Cohen *et al.*, 2004). Until recently, the latter was considered the metaphorical golden child of career counselling and assessment practices. This has, however, been questioned, since psychological testing aimed at identifying a person's dispositional traits are unlikely to reflect the person in his/her totality. Alternatively, a holistic

approach appreciates the internal processes underlying a person's motives, goals and worldview – a point that objective approaches neglected to consider (McAdams, 1995). As a result, scientific practices have taken a back seat to the new subjective techniques that can reveal the knowledge imparted by contexts and the value that personal meaning holds in shaping a person's life (Taber *et al.*, 2011).

This infers that people are unequivocally more than the sum of their quantifiable scores achieved on objective career measures (Taber *et al.*, 2011). This statement gains momentum when Bronfenbrenner's (1992) ecology of human development is considered. It reflects the vast number of interactions, systems and contexts that influence a person, such as family, school, community, religion and culture. It is therefore only natural to assume that people are likely to adopt different roles and attach different meanings to them depending on the context. Particular attention should be paid to culture since it is largely responsible for communicating expectations, attitudes and habits that constitute an individual's worldview and ethos (Cochran, 1997). By eliciting information from the above-mentioned contexts – clues to understanding clients' behaviours or preferences are uncovered, revealing their unique and idiosyncratic qualities (Taber *et al.*, 2011). This approach can also reveal the enigmatic influence a person is capable of exerting on his/her future (Guichard *et al.*, 2012).

### **2.5.1.2. Prescription to process**

#### **(i) Changes in the workplace**

It is believed that the complexity of today's career issues has revealed the shortcomings of previous approaches as shown by its inability to meet current demands. Flexible organisations have pulled the rug out from under employees by creating an unpredictable world of work and neglecting to provide them with the map to navigate their way through it (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). Gone are the days that marked a lifetime of loyalty between a company and its employees – instead organisations and individuals are negotiating situations that seek to benefit them both in the achievement of short-term goals (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). Individuals can literally not afford to rely on their current competencies and are therefore left with little choice other than to update their knowledge and skills, since boasting a wide repertoire of skills will advance an individual's bargaining and hiring power (Young & Vallach, 2000).

#### **(ii) The value and limitations of the trait-factor approach**

The above reality exposes the limitations of the trait-factor approach, since knowing which setting matches your traits best seems inconsequential in a short-term employment capacity. Instead, individuals embarking on a *planned adventure* or *guided improvisation* (Bujold, 2004:471) are better off relying on their sense of innovation as opposed to static traits. In saying this, it is nonetheless important to note that the value and contribution of the trait-factor approaches cannot be refuted. The problem, nonetheless, lies in the overemphasis of this technique as the solution for all career-related

concerns. The post-modern career world demands more than the normative data generated through tests and career information published in information booklets (Savickas, 2005).

**(iii) Promoting adaptability**

The field of career counselling has matured beyond merely matching individuals to careers to supporting them in coming to terms with an unfamiliar world and the *zeteophobia* or stress experienced (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b:18). This experienced fear may mask itself as procrastination, since individuals effectively neutralise their decision-making when they experience anxiety surrounding the perceived repercussions of their decision (Krumboltz, 1992). A similar tendency can be discerned when clients exercise a *death grip* on their career decision and are unable consider alternative and more beneficial perspectives (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b:18).

Given that constructivism supposes that as long as individuals are able to reflect on their experiences and attach meaning to them, they will be able to adapt and survive – this perceived procrastination or career death grip might be better addressed in a non-threatening way, such as using a storied approach (Bujold, 2004). From this angle, a person's story should promote the development of a coherent and cohesive sense of identity, which in turn increases his/her level of adaptability during transition times. Another benefit of this approach is that it provides clients with perspectives and experiences that may uncover hidden needs or desires that can be integrated into a remodelled version of their identity (Del Corso & Rehfuss, 2011).

**(iv) The demand for new skills**

From a practical point of view, individuals are likely to increase their chances of survival in a highly competitive environment, if they become life-long learners dedicated to staying abreast of the newest career developments and technological trends. Career counselling should also concentrate on informing clients about these tendencies to help them stay on top of the career game. Training should therefore move away from focusing on preparing clients for linear careers and rather focus on developing multi-tasking, critical thinking, innovation and competent decision-making (Maree, 2010). It is clear that the changing nature of today's career world infers that individuals don't necessarily require information as much as they need coping strategies to manage the demands. It is therefore more an issue of *how to do* and not *what to do* (Savickas *et al.*, 2009:242).

**2.5.1.3. Linear causality to linear dynamics**

As discussed before, traditional approaches paid little attention to the role of context. This is seemingly ironic considering that the objective measures were assessing the very components that are, as is now believed, greatly influenced by the social environment. Since the social environment is informed by dialogue the conceptualisation of interest, values and inspiration are bound to change as

new meanings are derived (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b). The traditional approach, however, disregarded the changing nature of these components based on the assumption that the career world will remain static and a person's composition stable. It was therefore presumed that the qualities assessed by interest inventories and aptitude measures such as traits (e.g. values, skills, interests and personality style) would correlate directly to certain factors characteristic of an occupational category (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a; Savickas *et al.*, 2009). This viewpoint stands in stark contrast to the reality of a post-modern world where individuals are faced with the imminent challenge of either re-inventing themselves or getting left behind. For this reason, individuals should be encouraged to choose and develop a skill set based on the future that *they* envision for themselves as opposed to scientifically being matched to one (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a; Campbell & Ungar, 2004b). This can be achieved through career interventions that focus on the process of co-construction and holistic life-design (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). A client is therefore better off asking: "*What is my preferred future?*" than "*What job must I do?*" (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b). The transition from *finding one's life work* to *constructing one's life work* underpins or informs the premise of life-design counselling (Savickas, 2011b:12).

Campbell and Ungar (2004b), used the metaphor of Lego blocks to describe the difference between the trait-factor model and life-design counselling, suggesting that the a client is taught to believe that these building blocks (traits/factors) are all that is needed to construct his/her future. A narrative approach instead regards a person as more than just the sum of his/her proverbial Lego blocks and consequently shifts the focus to how he/she can combine the various parts to construct different holistic designs.

#### **2.5.1.4. Scientific facts to narrative realities**

##### **(i) The construction of stories**

The fourth presupposition of life-design counselling acknowledges the subjective construction of multiple-realities. It is for this reason that Savickas *et al.* (2009) encourage individuals to interpret life experiences from different perspectives to support the construction of various possible life-designs. In this light, the expectation of one absolute truth becomes fallible. This awareness becomes more evident when people start to move between jobs and may find themselves desperately grabbing at straws to find some sense of stability. The intention behind asking clients to compose their life stories is to remind them that feelings of uncertainty and insecurity always accompany change and they, as in the past, have the resources within them to embrace the next chapter (Savickas, 2011a). Narratives seem to unlock the personal meanings that play an integral part in the process of self-construction, concerning the what (vocational personality), how (adaptability) and why (life themes) (Savickas 2005; Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). Where the traditional model of career counselling portrays the counsellor in a position of power, as the expert interpreter of all things career related, narrative career counselling on the other hand is focused on empowering the client to design his/her life (McIlveen & Patton, 2007).



This process of self-construction starts the moment the counsellor asks the client to tell his/her story. In this way, the counsellor is able to identify the *meta-narrative* or *personal myth* at the core of a client's identity and empower him/her to design his/her own life (Del Corso & Reh fuss, 2011:334). A *meta-narrative* refers to the culmination of various stories that appear to share a similar and consistent theme of how individuals appear to have responded or processed experiences at various intervals in their lives (Polkinghorne, 1988).

**(ii) The effectiveness of metaphors**

Inkson (2004) believes that people tend to view careers in a figurative and personal way. The afore-mentioned author also suggested that individuals tend to have an image or metaphor in mind that symbolises their thinking and structuring of both the problems and the opportunities in careers. Career metaphors commonly used in the literature are *career path*, *career ladder*, *fast track*, *journey*, *glass ceiling* and *window of opportunity* (Inkson, 2004:99). Career metaphors can further be divided into nine categories, namely the legacy metaphor; craft metaphor; seasons metaphor; catching metaphor; path metaphor; network metaphor; theatre metaphor, economic metaphor and the narrative metaphor. This wide array of metaphors allows counsellors to consider and integrate career occurrences from multiple perspectives.

A metaphor differs from an analogy in the sense that the latter is a comparison indicating the similarity between the story and the specific concern in a client's life. A metaphor on the other hand, is more implicit and only hints at the possibility of a relationship between the story and dilemma – leaving the client to fill in the gaps or draw his/her own conclusion from it (Fritz & Beekman, 2007).

**(iii) The importance of language**

Campbell and Ungar (2004b) believe that career identities are not discovered, as is the case with traditional approaches; instead it is created through conversations and interactions between the person and his/her social environment. Language used during these conversations is not only used as a mirroring tool, but also serves as a crucial device in uncovering the personal meanings that clients have ascribed to settings and themselves. Through dialogue, stories are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed in an effort to create knowledge and enhance meaning. Since this reflection is impossible without language, the career counsellor has to be very attentive to the words a client chooses to use (Brott, 2004; Watson & Kuit, 2007; Savickas 2011a). The significance of language is also not restricted to the counselling session, since it is also regarded as a social action (Young & Collin, 2004). People consistently reconstruct reality through discourse, which suggests that *language and meaning are indexical, social and contextual and do not mirror reality* (Durrheim 1997:181). There is in other words no essential truth; instead, reality is organised in the form of a narrative that has been socially constructed through language (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a). Language therefore *constitutes* reality

instead of accurately *reflecting* it (Young & Collin, 2004:377) and should consequently not be taken out of context, but rather be seen in the context of the person interpreting it (Stead, 2004).

### **2.5.1.5. From describing to modelling**

Traditional career counselling models followed an empirical and scientific approach to validate findings and support the development of theories. Post-modern approaches on the other hand, rely on subjective accounts that focus on individuality and uniqueness instead of seeking similar patterns and consistencies in the data. It therefore stands to argue that a new conceptualisation of doing research and studying the effects of this type of counselling is needed (Savickas *et al.*, 2009).

Some major strides have already been made to capture the essence of a constructivist school of thinking. Bujold (2004) early on envisaged its popularity as a means of informing career conceptualisations, research perspectives and applications. He also anticipated that the scope and limitations of previous career counselling approaches were likely to motivate further research efforts aimed at studying career constructs that have not previously been considered or even imagined to play a role in career counselling practices.

### **2.5.2. The basic flow for life-design intervention**

#### **2.5.2.1. Life-long**

Life-design promotes continuity and extends beyond just offering clients once-off or temporary guidance. It focuses on instilling qualities that will benefit the person throughout his/her life by planning for possible contingencies. It identifies when, where and how these skills and knowledge will be needed as well as identifying people who might be useful to call upon in any event (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). Using stories in helping clients construct their careers, offers a life-long approach that provides individuals with a means of relating past stories to future ones. Through the process of storytelling, clients are reminded that they are the authors of their life-story and that they are capable of constructing alternative story lines or plots at any point (Del Corso & Reh fuss, 2011). Designing a life is therefore viewed as a flexible process that allows people to alter aspects of their lives to accommodate their changing needs (Savickas *et al.*, 2009).

An adaptable process, such as life-design, is useful when people encounter bumps in the road, such as job loss, disability, death of a loved one or divorce. These situations force a person into perspective-taking mode, which leads them to explore different avenues in designing their lives. McKee (in Miller, 2009: 104) describes this sentiment as follows:

*Humans naturally seek comfort and stability. Without an inciting incident that disrupts their comfort, they won't enter into a story. They have to get fired from their job or be forced to sign up for a marathon. A ring has to be purchased. A home has to be sold. The character has to jump into the story, into the discomfort and the fear, otherwise the story will never happen.*

A person therefore stands to actually benefit from occasional disruptions in his/her life. Career counsellors can be very helpful in this regard by assisting clients to anticipate, manage and adapt to the various changes they are likely to incur throughout their lives. Life-design counselling is thus expected to better equip an individual with the skills needed to deal with life-altering events such as becoming a parent or grandparent or even retirement (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b).

#### **2.5.2.2. Holistic**

A holistic approach to life-design infers two considerations: firstly, that multiple realities exist (See: paragraph 2.3.1.) and secondly, that experiences are contextual (See: paragraphs 2.3.2.; 2.5.2.3. and 2.6.1.1.). This infers that life-roles have to be studied across various social contexts, since people are likely to enact numerous roles (some of which feature more prominently than others) across their lifetimes (Stebbleton, 2010). The person may also enjoy and prefer certain roles to others. Occasionally, an individual may also be required to alter an existing role or even add a new one. At first, these changes may cause an individual to feel out-of-sorts; after which he/she begin to embody and integrate these roles into his/her sense of self. It is during these transitional times that clients are also more likely seek career counselling to assist with the process of reorganising their life structures into more significant role patterns (Hartung, & Taber, 2008). Career counsellors are subsequently implored to view a client's career in the context of the numerous roles, including the non-paying ones that he/she portrays in the community, school, family and, work environments and not just as a paid occupation (Richardson, 1993; Hartung and Taber, 2008).

#### **2.5.2.3. Contextual**

As reiterated above, successful life-design relies on the premise that all the contexts and roles pertaining to the client's life have to be explored. Savickas *et al.* (2009) refer to these contexts/environments as *life theatres* (Super, 1980), because they set the stage for the salient roles to be enacted upon. These life theatres represent the holding environments to which people's needs, abilities, interests and values can be attributed. Life-design counselling is thus, primarily, a contextual model that believes the social environment to have a direct influence on people's ability to generate

knowledge and construct their identities based on the meaning derived from the discourse (Brott, 2011; Del Corso & Rehfuß, 2011).

Another post-modern theory that acknowledges the importance of context is the Systems Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon in McIlveen & Patton, 2007). It places the individual at the centre of the model – surrounded by the various systems likely to influence his/her career. Within the **individual's system** of influences factors such as age, gender, values, health, sexual orientation, personality, beliefs, self-concept, physical attributes, aptitude and ethnicity are acknowledged. This is followed by the **social system** depicting the influence of people in close proximity to the individual, such as family members and others that he/she may encounter at educational institutions, the work place and/or community groups. The third system is the **environmental-social system**, which reflects the large-scale influences of politics, history, the employment market, socio-economic status and globalisation.

Given the above array of contexts, McIlveen and Patton (2007) anticipated that many people might experience difficulty in their attempt to make sense of the above systems' influence on their lives. The authors subsequently suggested story writing as a suitable means of backtracking a person's career path and revisiting the decisions and experiences that have brought him/her to where he/she is currently at in their lives. This exercise allows clients to attach greater meaning to their life experiences by revealing that their story is imbedded in a collective context held together by myths, scriptures and the arts (Stevens, 1996). This realisation seems to create a greater sense of belonging and certainty because inclusion in a larger context (such as culture), knowingly or unknowingly, infers conformity as well as encoded exposure to the choices that are made available, such as training and educational opportunities, world-view, family expectations and career ambitions. In view of this, career counsellors are expected to acknowledge and show tolerance towards cultural diversity and norms (Consoli & Chope, 2006).

### **2.5.3. Preventative**

Riverin-Simard (2000:115) believes that *linear and stable* careers are outdated and that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be characterised by *non-linear, unstable and even chaotic components*. Many employees are consequently caught off-guard when their career, as they know it, is overhauled. It is also been noted that they often lack the skills needed to prepare for and manage these transitions. To address these concerns, life-design counselling is offered as a suitable method for assisting the current work force in coming to terms with the current challenges (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). It is also likely to contribute to the development of a future workforce capable of dealing with the expected transitions and imminent job changes by providing across-the-board training to adolescents (Riverin-Simard, 2000; Savickas *et al.*, 2009).

Career counselling in a post-modern world is, however, more than just providing adolescents with information – especially when they have moved beyond the straightforward answers and are more

concerned with how they are going to cope after leaving school. They are therefore looking for a means to improve self-knowledge and organise their roles in the future. This is where the idea of life-designing comes into play (Reid & West, 2011). Shepard (1984:175) believes that instilling personal development in adolescents will enhance their ability to design their lives around a protean career. He states that it is like letting them into the *happy little secret* on following careers that have *heart* (See: paragraph 2.2.2.).

#### **2.5.4. Goals of life-design intervention**

##### **2.5.4.1. Adaptability**

In general, people are inclined to dislike change, whether planned or unplanned. Transitions usually carry feelings of annoyance, despondency and fear in its wake. On the other hand, transitions can also steer individuals towards opportunities that are likely to result in self-realisation and satisfaction (Stebbleton, 2010). Whether the aforementioned or the latter result is achieved, depends on the effectiveness of the life-design interventions (Savickas *et al.*, 2009).

To better understand the relationship that exists between life-design and adaptability, Savickas' (2005) career adaptability model is briefly explained. At its most fundamental level it focuses on strategies that involve attitudes, behaviours and competencies. It is also particularly interested in exploring a person's level of career development according to the following four dimensions: **concern** focuses on whether a person has developed a future orientation; **control** refers to a client's level of responsibility; **curiosity** looks at whether the individual is realistic about the future and **confidence** is concerned with aspects related to self-efficacy.

These dimensions are likely to complement life-design interventions and can be improved through the use of various life-design techniques (Maree & Hancke, 2011). Success is evident if a client displays concern for the future; control over their environment; curiosity in exploring available options and confidence in addressing difficulties (Savickas *et al.*, 2009).

##### **2.2.4.2. Narratability**

Life-design requires an individual to reflect on his/her current life roles and domains and envision a future perspective. Polkinghorne (1988:160) describes the importance of narratives in a person's life as follows:

*Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with stories that we tell and hear told, with stories that we dream or imagine or would like to tell. We live immersed in narrative. Recounting and reassessing the meanings of our past actions, anticipating the*

*outcomes of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories  
not yet completed*

Anticipating our future narrative should serve to motivate a person towards achieving it (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). Since organisations no longer provide a meta-narrative for people to build their future life trajectories on, individuals now have to become the authors of their own stories. By telling stories about themselves, clients enhance the following three competencies (Savickas, 2011b):

- Comprehension: clients are encouraged to learn more about themselves and make sense of their experiences.
- Coherence: episodes in a client's life may at first appear unrelated. Counsellors can help clients piece their stories together and illuminate patterns and connections that show different versions of the Self.
- Continuity: shows that a little meaning goes a long way in promoting stability.

It would of course be a lot of easier if career counsellors had a crystal ball to envision the future perspective, but alas this is not the case and counsellors can only devise representations or expected scenarios based on meaningful conversations with their clients (Cochran, 1997). Life-design counselling therefore operates from the premise *that stories play a key role*. In addition to the three competencies mentioned above, clients' stories also serve to inform them both *directly* (heeding their own words) and *indirectly* (guidance received from the counsellor) of their ability to design their own lives. In this regard, they are also most likely drawn to stories that contain a word of advice on effectively planning, preparing for and managing their futures (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012:101).

Savickas (2011b:12) believed that *the reward of looking back is moving forward*, which suggests that clients' past and present stories can contribute to their future intentions. Clients therefore have to share a collection of micro-stories from the past that describe events and experiences that expose their faults and deepest desires. It aims to improve the congruency between the present and future scenario by strategically weaving the information into a larger macro-narrative (Savickas, 2011b). Successful integration involves looking past the facts and instead focusing on the meaning that the individuals have given to their shared accounts (Cohen *et al.*, 2004). Clients, however, occasionally struggle to see the forest for the trees and are unable to recognise the relationships that exist between actions and reactions. They subsequently start to disregard the very stories that shape their reality by putting it down to chance (Bloch, 2005).

The collaborative relationship that exists between the client and counsellor are helpful in this regard, because the counsellor is able to draw the client's attention to the life-themes (See: paragraph 2.6.) that account for life structures, career adaptability strategies and vocational personality style. Life

themes are essential to creating coherent stories – without which a client may feel like he/she has lost the plot altogether (Hartung & Taber, 2008). Fritz and Beekman (2007) also emphasise the role of language (See: paragraph 2.5.1.4.) during these narrative interventions. They are adamant that the counsellor must use language that resonates with the client. They also believe that a counsellor should take care in acknowledging the client’s current developmental stage. Another consideration to keep in mind is the client’s command of language and linguistic skills. It is very possible that some clients do not possess the ability or the confidence to verbally express their thoughts and are likely to prefer non-verbal or tangible means of sharing their story.

### 2.5.4.3. Activity

In Young and Vallach’s (2000) view of career, they acknowledge the role of action (involved in process of making plans, setting goals and predicting consequence) as a vehicle for people to make sense of the self and the social world they live in. Action is described as a three-step process. Firstly, a person has to construct a meaningful perspective of a possibility and then design a life to achieve it, before finally actualising the ideal through action (Cochran, 1997). Individuals who are keen to actively engage in this action process are referred to as **agents** (Cochran, 1997). They display features of agency such as *autonomy, independence, initiative and adaptation* (Littleton *et al.*, 2000:109). These characteristics serve facilitate forward movement by instilling a future direction and long-term objectives (Littleton *et al.*, 2000). There are, however, also people who are reluctant to take action and follow a passive approach to their future; they are referred to as **patients** (Cochran, 1997). One of my role models, professor Randy Pauch (Pauch & Zaslow, 2012) affectionately refers to agents as “Tiggers” and patients as “Eh-ohs” since these characters are portrayed with similar traits in the well-known children’s classic of Winnie-the-Pooh (Milne, 1926). Agents therefore know what to do in order to move ahead and actively start pursuing their goals through action. These actions may be clear-cut and explicit or require information-seeking activities. For the younger agent, exploratory activities might involve making a list of possible occupations they are interested in and for the more experienced agent, it might mean that they have to decide on a choice and test it by applying for a job. Ultimately, these actions should ensure that the client is living his/her finest and uniquely crafted story (Savickas, 2011b).

Counsellors can also promote action by improving their clients’ self-knowledge; *psychological stamina*; encouraging the development of skills; making forecasts and inviting them to participate in real-life dramas. Others often also influence the level of agency such as *family members, friends, mentors and peers* (Chen, 2007:32). Cochran (1997:31) cautions that the counsellor and client must however not lose sight of the future perspective when making decisions or taking action, two processes that are also respectively known as *practical wisdom* and *a sense of agency*.

The narrative approach promotes action in five ways: scripting (plan of action); filling-in (elaborating on the story); embedding (locating a framework); enacting (experimenting with roles) and living morals (guidance) (Cochran, 1997). Bruner (1986) suggests that a narrative can be better understood when it is conceptualised as a dual landscape. The first landscape is where the person's actions are actually observable through objective details such as action plans, desired occupations and career activities. The second landscape represents the inner world of the main character and is concerned with the client's perceptions, thoughts and feelings. The counsellor can utilise the dual landscape to co-construct detailed and credible narratives that appeal to the client so that he/she is able to enact the expected roles. A narrative is useless when it does not lead to enactment. A counsellor should take great care in uncovering the personal and subjective reasons behind a person's reluctance to enact roles (Christensen & Johnston, 2003).

#### **2.5.4.4. Intentionality**

Hartung (2011:301) defines intentionality as a *purposeful, active engagement in life career design mindful of one's life story*. Savickas (2011a:129) shares the sentiment and states that purpose, as part of intentionality, promotes choice and that individuals are naturally motivated to turn their *preoccupations into occupations*. This means that clients usually strive towards mastering an unresolved matter that continues to emerge at different intervals in their lives. This infers that at some level, most clients already know what steps need to be taken – the problem is that they don't always trust themselves to declare it. Career counsellors should therefore instil a sense of confidence in their clients' ability to listen to their own advice and inner wisdom (Savickas, 2011a).

Stories are useful in promoting intention, since they provide a rehearsal space in which clients are inspired to authorise and design their lives in addition to considering work with a greater purpose (Savickas, 2011a). Intentional states such as these reflect attitudes, feelings and intentions that hint at the early beginnings of an emerging storyline (Richardson *et al.*, 2009). The narrative therefore sets the scene for action by revealing a motive, goal, context, plan, responsibility and cast of characters (Cochran, 1997).

## **2.6. THE LIFE-DESIGN CAREER COUNSELLING MODEL**

In the next section, two life-design models are presented (See: Table 2.3. and 2.4.). These models provide a step-by-step intervention plan to facilitate life-design counselling. For the purpose of my research initiative, I predominantly followed the steps outlined in Table 2.3., as suggested by Savickas *et al.* (2009). In order to fully comprehend the intention of each step of the model, a brief theoretical overview is provided beforehand to discuss the two theories that have contributed the most to its conception, namely the career construction theory (Savickas, 2011a) and the theory of Self-construction



(Guichard *et al.*, 2012). Different formats (See: Table 2.1. and Table 2.2.) have also been added to demonstrate progression. Campbell and Ungar's (2004b) model has also been included for comparison purposes (See: Table 2.4).

## **2.6.1. Theoretical approaches that inform the life-design career counselling model**

### **2.6.1.1. Career Construction Theory**

#### **(i) Theoretical Perspective**

The career construction theory was previously mentioned in Chapter 1 (See: paragraph 1.7.4.); in this chapter, it is however given slightly more focus as its connection to life-design counselling is explained. This theory proposes four elements of vocational behaviour. The first concept is *structure*, which refers to the work arrangement and influential roles that affect the life structure. The second element is *strategies* which embody coping behaviour aimed at promoting adaptability during times of transition or change. The third aspect is *story*, which relates to the narrative patterns and themes associated with a life. The last component is *style*, which defines the client's inherent traits (Savickas, 1998; Hartung, 2007).

Career construction also recognises the interplay that exists between the personal and social aspects of a career and holds that personal constructions are likely to influence the social environment and social situations are likely to affect personal meaning-making (Mignot, 2004). From a theoretical point of view, it is therefore interested in interpreting how *individuals act together in large and small groups and in concert with history, culture and other broad factors* to create a meaningful understanding of the world (Young & Collin, 2004:384).

The Career Construction Interview is an example of how career construction *melds the science of vocational psychology with the practice of career counselling* (Hartung, 2007:118), because it lends itself to both assessment and intervention practices aimed at elaborating on the three underlying concepts of the career construction model, namely vocational personality, career adaptability and life themes (Del Corso & Rehfuss, 2011).

#### **(ii) The Career Construction Interview (CCI)**

The Career Construction Interview (CCI) therefore doubles up as an assessment and counselling technique aimed at helping a client identify and realise self-decided goals by means of a structured interview technique. The goal of the CCI is to elicit life themes relative to career concerns. The CCI is believed to be very useful in improving an individual's fulfilment and wellbeing. The use of a story and the acknowledgement of context maximise opportunities for meaning making thereby facilitating the construction of a coherent life story (Hartung & Taber, 2008).

The impact of the CCI, pioneered by Savickas (2011b), has shown its proficiency in promoting awareness, clarity, direction and discovery in people’s lives. The interview also serves as an efficient means of exploring individuals’ life trajectories and self-knowledge in addition to promoting self-efficacy (confidence) and adaptability (Reh fuss, Del-Corso, Galvin & Wykes, 2011). Table 2.1. provides a more detailed description of the CCI.

**Table 2.1.: The Career Construction Interview**

Discussion questions/activity	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who did you admire when you were younger?</li> <li>How are you similar/different to this person?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clients are actually conceptualising themselves.</li> <li>Role models provide a template for finding solutions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your favourite magazine/television programme or website?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluating a client’s interests by focusing on his/her preferred settings.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell me your favourite story.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stories reveal a client’s central life concern and a possible way of dealing with it.</li> <li>These master narratives provide resources to help people design their lives.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your motto or words you live by?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mottos are likely to indicate a person’s “self-advice” and reveal a motivational strategy in moving forward.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are your three earliest memories?</li> <li>Elaborate on settings, actions, results and feelings.</li> <li>After sharing their stories, clients are asked to provide a headline for each one.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anecdotes reveal a person’s central preoccupation.</li> <li>They are portraying life lessons learned in childhood.</li> <li>Past events tend to reflect the present scenario and offer a plan of action for the future.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from Savickas, 2011b:56-57)

### 2.6.1.2. The theory of Self-construction

Identity refers to an individual’s ability to evaluate and accommodate the demands of a social context by adapting his/her given roles. This process demands *self-awareness* and *self-conscious reflection* (Savickas 2011:16). Career identity on the other hand, involves the *practice of articulating, performing and negotiating identity positions in narrating career decisions* (LaPointe, 2010:2). Identity therefore serves as the connecting link between the person and the various contexts he/she is immersed in. Through the use of narratives, identity can be storied and experiences can be constructed, because people are inclined to construct their identities through stories that eventually start to reflect notable patterns or themes. The person begins to rely on these experiences or stories to locate or describe his/her attributes (Del Corso & Reh fuss, 2011). The individual is therefore able to use the *self of the past* to ...

*set the stage for the self of the present, which in turn ... will set up the self for the future* (McAdams, 1995:371).

Savickas (2011b:33) uses the literary term, *character arc* to depict the protagonist/client's journey from start to finish and what needs to be attained or overcome in order for him/her to achieve a sense of wholeness. These efforts are documented throughout the character's journey and shows his/her progress in turning *tension into intention, preoccupation to occupation, obsession into profession, negative to positive, weakness to strengths and lemons to lemonade* (Savickas, 2011b:33).

The Constructive Life-design (CLD) interview (Guichard *et al.*, 2012) engages clients in a process of envisioning themselves in a future projection. It is hoped that the measures put in place will motivate a client to achieve his/her goals. This model is particularly useful in guiding young people in the midst of making career decisions. The process is summarised below in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2.: The Constructive Life-design Interview**

<b>Goal 1: Awareness</b>	
<b>Intention</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Clients reflect on the main life-domains inherent to each of their SIFs.	<p><i>Clients are asked to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) List and elaborate on their daily activities (major life themes).</li> <li>(b) Reflect on past activities or lifetime experiences that have continued to influence them.</li> <li>(c) Share their future hopes.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 2: SIF Analysis</b>	
<b>Intention</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Clients flit through their past and current domains and future perspectives to help order their SIFs.	<p><i>Clients must describe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Their actions, interactions, knowledge and know-how attitudes.</li> <li>(b) Modes of relating to the objects of a domain (task approach skills).</li> <li>(c) Modes of relating to themselves (self-efficacy).</li> <li>(d) Modes of relating to others.</li> <li>(e) Modes of relation of one context to another (anticipated context).</li> </ul> <p><i>They are then asked to identify:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Central SIFs</li> <li>(b) Peripheral SIFs</li> <li>(c) The relationships between the major SIFs</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 3: Reintegration</b>	
<b>Intention</b>	<b>Activity</b>
The creation of a plan that depicts the various actions clients can take to realise their future hopes. This is achieved in asking clients to view their current situation through the lenses of a chosen future perspective.	<p><i>Clients are asked to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Consider which components of their current SIFs are likely to distance or bring them closer to their goals.</li> <li>(b) Devise plans to minimize hindrances and strengthen assets.</li> <li>(c) Explore new experiences that will contribute to goal advancement.</li> <li>(d) Clients commit to engage in specific activities or settings contained in their plan of action.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 4: Closure of the Constructivist Life-design interview</b>	
<b>Intention</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Finding activities, interactions and resources that can heighten their chances of achieving the intended design.	<p>Clients are reminded that a perfect plan does not exist – but that they stand to gain from learning how to contrast their current situation against a future perspective. This should motivate them to redesign their life plan.</p>

(Compiled from Guichard *et al.*, 2012:56)

A self-constructing model slots right into the chasm that exists between post-modern career counselling requirements and existing counselling approaches. All in all it seems to fit the bill as a viable approach to facilitate life-design because it recognises the existence of multiple realities, the adaptive nature of people and the value of adding meaning to present and past experiences.

## **2.6.2. Different life-design career counselling models**

### **2.6.2.1. Life-design model presented by Savickas *et al.* (2009)**

The life-design model presented by Savickas *et al.* (2009) consists of six steps and is summarised in the table below (See: Table 2.3.)

**Table 2.3.: The Savickas *et al.*'s (2009) life-design model**

<b>Step 1: defining the career concern and client's expectations</b>	
<b>Process</b>	<b>Envisaged result</b>
(a) A working relationship is established.	The problem and its main context are recognised.
(b) Client is encouraged to depict the full extent of the concern or problem by sharing stories.	

<p>(c) The counsellor is responsible for extracting repetitive themes and personal meaning.</p> <p>(d) Ensuing discussions focus on the client's main life domains and finding common links between the core and peripheral roles.</p>	
<b>Step 2: exploring the client's current system of SIFs</b>	
<b>Process</b>	<b>Envisaged Result</b>
<p>(a) The client is encouraged to reflect and adapt the story.</p> <p>(b) The counsellor may ask the client to elaborate on experiences; describe actions and interactions and articulate future expectations.</p>	<p>The client has a better understanding of him/herself and how he/she manages to balance Self and function in the salient domain.</p>
<b>Step 3: opening perspectives</b>	
<b>Process</b>	<b>Envisaged Result</b>
<p>(a) The stories are objectified to add greater depth and conviction.</p> <p>(b) By separating themselves from the story, clients may arrive at new insights.</p> <p>(c) Silent stories are elicited, revealing the avenues that clients may not have explored.</p>	<p>That which was implicit is now explicit and obvious. The story can now be re-authored in a refreshing way.</p>
<b>Step 4: promoting new perspectives</b>	
<b>Process</b>	<b>Envisaged Result</b>
<p>(a) The possible self, waiting in the wings, can now step forward.</p> <p>(b) New expectations are crystallised.</p>	<p>A synthesis is created between the old and new, when the client is able to commit to some role and identity.</p>
<b>Step 5: specifying activities to promote actualisation</b>	
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Envisaged Result</b>
<p>(a) Clients must compile an agenda of activities or experiences they can try.</p> <p>(b) They must also devise contingency suggestions.</p> <p>(c) Identify their support network.</p> <p>(d) The counsellor must verify that the plan fits the bill.</p> <p>(e) The counsellor can provide clients with a written summary and an identity statement to provide them with a tangible means of remembering their strengths and road to success.</p>	<p>Clients move closer to future scenario.</p>
<b>Step 6: follow-up actions</b>	
<b>Process</b>	<b>Envisaged Result</b>

<p>(a) The counsellor and client meet soon after the intervention and again at a later stage to evaluate progress.</p> <p>(b) The counsellor may have to provide additional assistance should the outcomes not have been met.</p>	<p>Quality assurance.</p>
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(Adapted from Savickas *et al.*, 2009:246-247)

### 2.6.2.2. Campbell & Ungar’s Life/Work Design model

The model for life-designing described in Table 2.4., follows the seven steps laid out in the table below (See: Table 2.4.).

**Table 2.4.: Campbell and Ungar’s Life/Work Design model.**

<b>Step 1: know what you want</b>		
<b>Process</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Envisaged result</b>
<p><i>Clients have to:</i></p> <p>(a) Explore their main story lines and desired future perspectives.</p> <p>(b) Draw up goals that reflect positive uncertainty.</p> <p>(c) Discover innovative ways to integrate the various discourses.</p> <p>(d) Evaluate possible alternatives that could also meet their future expectations.</p>	<p>The counsellor attempts to identify and understand the social discourse that underlies a client’s ideas of his/her future perspectives, since social discourse is believed to influence a person’s aspirations.</p>	<p>Identifying long-term goals and shape the future perspective.</p>
<b>Step 2: know what you have</b>		
<b>Process</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Envisaged Result</b>
<p>(a) Asking a client to reflect on his internal and external resources using various techniques (See: section 2.7).</p> <p>(b) Standardised instruments may also be utilised, provided that they add to</p>	<p>(a) Exploring <b>internal resources</b> (skills, personality, styles, beliefs etcetera);</p> <p>(b) <b>External resources</b> (family, friends, institutional supports and structural advantages e.g. access to education/finances).</p> <p>(c) <b>Cultural narratives</b></p>	<p>The identification of supportive measures that contribute positively towards the future reality.</p>

not detract from to the future story.		
<b>Step 3: know what you hear</b>		
<b>Process</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Envisaged result</b>
<p>(a) The counsellor can ask the client to reflect on how he/she has interpreted past and present experiences.</p> <p>(b) They can then explore who has influenced his/her viewpoint the most.</p> <p>(c) They are also asked to recall if anyone tells a different version of the story.</p> <p>(d) Counsellors then deconstruct competing discourses by asking <i>“Who would and who would not like to see you in this new way?”</i> and <i>“What social, economic and political forces support this new possible self?”</i></p>	<p>(a) Exploring the client’s <b>internal</b> voices (self-esteem, beliefs confidence and efficacy);</p> <p>(b) Exploring the client’s <b>external voices</b> (those of family, friends and the broader community as well as culture).</p>	<p>Clients become more aware of the multiple influences on their career development (past, present and future). This will facilitate help them to identify different self-stories and identify a support network.</p>
<b>Step 4: know what constrains you.</b>		
<b>Process</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Envisaged result</b>
<p>(a) Internal constraints are identified through discussion</p> <p>(b) External constraints are identified through discussion.</p>	<p>Clients are asked to identify the constraints/barriers so that they can gain new insights and perspectives.</p>	<p>Perceived constraints are re-authorised or dispelled to ensure that a client achieves his/her preferred future perspective.</p>
<b>Step 5: map your preferred story</b>		
<b>Process</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Envisaged result</b>
<p>(a) Clients are now ready to map a path that will bring</p>	<p>(a) Mapping a path clearly displays the actions that need</p>	<p>Clear goal-setting promotes action.</p>

<p>the client closer to his/her future perspective.</p> <p>(b) The narrative is utilised for this purpose.</p> <p>(c) A flow chart is drawn up demonstrating how the gap between the future narrative and present time can be bridged.</p> <p>(d) Flexibility is encouraged.</p>	<p>to be taken and the skills that need to develop for the future perspective to realise.</p> <p>(b) It allows for reflective thought on the realistic implementation of it.</p>	
<b>Step 6: grow into your story</b>		
Process	Purpose	Envisaged result
<p>(a) Clients are encouraged to enact their stories, step by step, in front of a larger audience and outside of the therapy experience.</p> <p>(b) Follow up sessions are scheduled.</p>	<p>(a) Feedback from a larger audience will promote confidence and further action.</p> <p>(b) New audiences encountered bring along new perspectives.</p>	Actualisation and social support.
<b>Step 7: grow out of your story</b>		
Process	Purpose	Envisaged result
<p>(a) Clients may become stuck at times.</p> <p>(b) Reconstruction is encouraged.</p>	Clients are encouraged to adopt a flexible approach to their career development.	The ability to plan and prepare for various life-experiences result in adaptability.

(Adapted from Campbell & Ungar, 2004b)

### 2.6.2.3. Reflection on the above life-design models

Both life-design models (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b; Savickas *et al.*, 2009) offer a useful guideline for assisting clients in designing their future narratives. The two models share some similarities, such as its focus on establishing a client's intentions as a first step in the process. Both models also stress the importance of exploring a client's existing framework. Campbell and Ungar's (2004b) model has, however, elaborated more on this concept (See: Table 2.4., 2-5). The aforementioned model also highlights the role of internal and external resources more explicitly. Savickas *et al.*'s (2009) model, on the other hand, explores these aspects under an umbrella term, namely SIFs; suggesting this model's stronger emphasis on identity formation. The latter model also appears to place more importance on the future narrative, whereas the former concentrates largely on exploring the client's past and current story plot. Nonetheless, both models share an interest in assisting the client



with envisioning a new future perspective or narrative. Similarly, they also emphasise the role that the counsellor is likely to play in supporting the client with the enactment of their new story line in their lives. Follow-up sessions are also suggested by both approaches. In my study the model suggested by Savickas *et al.* (2009) will be followed. It is, however, interesting to note that both models overlap considerably in their planned processes and envisaged results.

## **2.7. USEFUL TECHNIQUES THAT CAN BE UTILISED IN LIFE-DESIGN COUNSELLING**

My search for literature on life-design uncovered a number of techniques and activities that could be integrated with the above life-design counselling models. These complementary techniques are purely mentioned for their potential to inform and enrich the practice of life-design counselling. The variety of techniques discussed also confirms the versatility of life-design as a career counselling and assessment technique. Since life-design counselling is not limited to a specific age group (See: paragraph 2.1.5.1.), the techniques below lend themselves to be used across the board.

### **2.7.1. *The My Systems of Career Influences***

The Systems Framework proposed by McMahon and Patton (in McIlveen & Patton, 2006) offers a holistic approach to career counselling. This approach has been extended to include the Career Systems Interview (McIlveen, McGregor, Bayne, Alcock & Hjertum in McIlveen & Patton, 2007) and is aimed at identifying and discussing the role and meaning of the various systems present in a client's life.

The above process is facilitated by means of a nine-page booklet focused on helping a client reflect on his/her current career situation. It consists of activities that will assist clients in identifying significant influences in their lives such as specific intrapersonal factors, referring to other people, society and the environment as well as past, present and future experiences. These reflection activities are integrated into a diagram illustrating the client's system of career influences (McMahon, Watson & Patton, 2005).

### **2.7.2. Diaries and journals**

Travers (2011) reports that the use of diaries with the intention of using it for reflection and goal-setting purposes seems to improve clients' perception of control over their lives. Diary writing may also appeal to clients that are reluctant to share sensitive information verbally. As a narrative source, diaries tend to encourage active reflection on events or experiences that may have become an

issue of concern, thereby contributing to increased self-awareness (Boyd & Fales in Travers, 2011:205). According to Richardson *et al.* (2009) the use of journals is also likely to enhance intentional states.

### **2.7.3. Group-based interventions**

Life-design counselling strategies also lend themselves to being utilised within a group-based setting, as would be the case in my research study. Useful exercises aimed at promoting clients' self-awareness are largely aimed at exploring questions, pertaining to who they are, who they would like to be and who they think they should be (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). Di Fabio (in Di Fabio & Maree, 2012) suggests the following written exercises aimed at eliciting possible answers to the above questions:

- The career genogram;
- My imaginary/ideal curriculum vitae;
- My imaginary/ideal anti-curriculum;
- The pyramid of acted interests;
- The iceberg of interests;
- Interests seen by others and
- Interests that others do not see.

### **2.7.4. Techniques used in the storied approach**

In describing the elements used in conjunction with the storied approach, Brott (2004) makes use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques to supplement and intensify a person's life story. She intentionally integrates these activities at specific intervals during the three phases. Brott (2004:199) has found the Personalised Card Sort activity helpful in the initial exploration of the possible occupational traits or characteristics the client may present with. The Life Roles Circle technique is useful in exploring a client's life-roles with regards to past and future experiences. The Goal Map activity is intended to promote action by identifying possible obstacles or resources in a client's life and organising them according to specific time frames and action steps.

### **2.7.5. Online-mechanisms**

Severy (2008) converted various constructivist career interventions as well as more traditional ones to a digital format and uploaded them online. These internet-based activities created an opportunity for participants to discover their life themes, impact of others, interests, personality type and other factors of their career stories in an electronic format. Based on the results of the afore-mentioned study,

this method is regarded as an effective means to lessen career indecision in an accessible and affordable manner.

### **2.7.6. Narrative techniques**

Techniques provide clients with a number of structured activities to facilitate meaning-making and self-expression. Cochran (1997) suggested the following useful techniques:

- Vocational card sorts: aimed at describing and organising careers according to client's preferences.
- Construct laddering: the process of pitting preferred career choices against one another and seeing which one rises to the top.
- Drawing: the client is instructed to draw four pictures, namely "What I am"; "What I would like to be"; "What hinders me" and "What will overcome the obstacle?".
- Testing: using an objective means of matching a person's characteristics to an ideal working environment.
- Anecdotes: asking the person to tell stories, including those from their earliest recollection.
- Life-line: an activity that presents a client's significant life-events (positive and negative) from birth to present day.
- Life chapters: specific time periods in a client's life are given a title that characterises them best.
- Success experiences: the client must list their most successful experiences and describe them in detail.
- Family constellation: every family member is described (cast of characters and character types can be depicted).

### **2.7.7. Written exercises**

Christensen and Johnston (2003) propose written exercises, supplying clients with career information and vicarious learning experiences such as role-modelling, shadowing and informational interviewing.

### **2.7.8. Autobiographical stories**

Sacino (2007) believes in the benefit of having clients read a selection of autobiographical stories to pave the way for narrative intervention. Articles or books describing how other people have confronted their struggles or achieved success, is said to reveal helpful solutions that could be transferrable to the client's own life. Another suggestion is to ask clients what they wanted to be when they were growing up. Clients are invited to elaborate on the reasons behind these choices and may even want to share a childhood photograph showing them involved in a preferred occupational activity. The *Tree-of-life* activity serves as a metaphor for clients to demonstrate significant influences in their lives (the roots); their achievements (the fruits) and their future hopes (the blossoms) (Sliep, 2007).

### **2.7.9. *The Career Interest Profile (CIP)* (Maree, 2007)**

The *Career Interest Profile* comprises of nineteen different career categories. The questionnaire aims to facilitate a greater understanding of a client's career preferences based on his/her interest profile followed by an in-depth discussion of these and other factors pertaining to his/her life (Maree, 2007).

## **2.8. THE APPLICATION VALUE OF LIFE-DESIGN COUNSELLING**

### **2.8.1. Group interventions**

The life-design intervention presented in my study will be presented as a group intervention. Before the application of life-design counselling in a group is discussed, an overview of this approach is needed. Savickas and Porfeli (2011:365) reflect on a group approach to improving career adaptability. They believe that a discussion surrounding the process of decision-making can prove to be very useful. Douglass and Moustakas (1985:50) reflect on the influence that others can have on one another as follows:

*At the heart of heuristic lies an emphasis on disclosing the self as a way of facilitating disclosure from others – a response to the tacit dimension within oneself sparks a similar call from others*

To achieve the above Savickas and Porfeli (2011) further suggest that the focus of a group discussion should be to utilise *group dynamics in the item discussion cycle*. They also support the idea of teaching the four Cs in the classroom environment. Additionally, Kuijpers *et al.* (2011:28) considered the effectiveness of using *personal development plans (PDP)* as a suitable career method to facilitate career education within a group. The last-mentioned authors stressed the value of dialogue between

students as a reflective activity, because, like Mair (1989:12), they also believe that it *not just what is told and how it is told, it is the very act of telling, the speaking itself, which seems to matter*

This method is preferred to the more traditional approach of adhering to the protocol outlined by standardised tests in interactions between the student and the career counsellor. For this method to be more effective, learners need to be encouraged to take greater responsibility for choosing the content of learning as well as the method of instruction. This method further relies on an educational environment aimed at providing sufficient opportunity for dialogue with mentors and/or educators as well as practical hands-on work experiences. Shotter (in Kuijpers *et al.*, 2011:29) states that the dialogue should consist of a *socially constructed myriad of spontaneous, responsive, practical, unselfconscious, but contested interactions*.

Kuijpers *et al.* (2011:23) believe that the above conditions can be achieved when efforts are made to create a *career-oriented learning environment*. This environment promotes the inclusion of real-life work experiences; continued guidance; consideration of the learners' emotions and more choices and opportunities for participation. Thomas and Feldman (2007) previously reported on the beneficial effect that the group context has had on in easing learners' transition from school to work. The last-mentioned authors explored the advantages of organisational socialisation, including orientation programmes and in-service training, to enhance individuals' adjustment and productivity in a new environment. They also pointed out the significance of social networking as a useful technique to improve work role identification (Thomas & Feldman, 2007). Santos (2004:37) discussed career dilemmas (See: Chapter 3, paragraphs 3.5.3.) as part of a career intervention programme. He decided to use career counselling groups for the following reasons:

- It allows for the contention and confrontation of different opinions;
- It promotes the development of skills such as *analysis, synthesis, flexibility, problem-solving, discussion and empathy*;
- It promotes group interaction and bonding;
- It serves a reflective function in which others might be able to indicate possible factors that may influence an individual's decision;
- It allows the sharing of information and experiences.

Del Corso and Rehfuss (2011) agree with the above advantages and are confident that should clients be afforded the opportunity to share their stories with an audience that they will be more inclined to recognise repetitive life-themes or patterns that contribute to a cohesive story. The following useful guidelines for group work were also offered (Santos, 2004:38):

- Ensure an atmosphere of *mutual respect* for different points of view;

- Facilitate group discussions in an orderly fashion;
- Encourage and extend the participants' empathetic listening techniques; and
- The counsellor must act as a *catalysing element*.

### **2.8.1.1. Group based life-design career counselling**

Di Fabio and Maree (2012) commented on the advantageous nature of group based life-design counselling methods. They propose that the larger audience is likely to re-enforce the client's process of meaning making because he/she is able to integrate the collective feedback into his/her construction of Self. The numerous advantages of group-based counselling imply that it is a viable approach to consider when planning career interventions (Santos, 2004; Sliep, 2007). These advantages include offering the client an opportunity to perform a dual role of being both an actor and an audience member – contributing to more insightful and enriched decisions. It also makes career counselling more accessible and affordable (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012).

### **2.8.1.2. The educational setting**

Furthermore, the planned life-design counselling intervention will take place in an educational setting. Sliep (2007) focuses on the value of sharing life stories with others in an educational setting. Participants or peers become a *witnessing community* when another person openly shares his/her life story with them. Weingarten (in Sliep, 2007:122) supports this notion and adds that a collective approach to sharing stories allows for *compassionate witnessing of self through others*.

Welch (in Sliep, 2007:145) has also noticed the benefits of this type of intervention and mentions that *mutual transformation occurs when there is the power of empathy and compassion ... and strength in the solidarity of listening to others*. When learners share stories with one another, it can have a therapeutic effect. The storyteller and author must however feel comfortable enough with the audience to engage in reflective thought. The shared engagement of storytelling and listening that occurs between the teller and the audience holds a beneficial reward for both parties. It also places the audience member in the privileged position of witnessing and being inspired by how the storyteller takes an active approach in authorising his/her stories (Sliep, 2007).

A strong link exists between educational training practices and careers, since employers rely on educational institutes to implement programmes that focus on the development of skills that will contribute to an individual's future employability. New developments in the career market therefore necessitate changes in the instruction practices of the future workforce. Important considerations for curriculum change are to acknowledge the discontinuous nature of work and its influence on a person's identity, role saliency and the transferability of skills from school to work (Richardson, 2000).

Previously, training institutions focused on preparing the learners for a stable, predictable and linear career and accordingly directed their efforts towards improving their decision-making abilities. With the demands of the current job-market in mind, educational institutions are now challenged to devise interventions aimed at promoting learners' *employability skills, life-long learning strategies and flexibility* (Savickas, 2000:65).

## 2.9. CONCLUSION

It is only appropriate to also end this chapter on a literary note. A narrative that has inspired me to design my own life with more purpose is a commencement speech given by the late Steve Jobs, the mastermind behind Apple Inc. In 2005, he was asked to address the graduation class of Stanford University (Stanford Report, 2005). The most notable aspect of this address, and how it relates to this chapter, is that he chose to share three significant life-stories with them. The title of the speech was *You've got to find what you love* and it is a reflection on how various events in his life have contributed to his life's design.

In his address, he makes special mention of the occasions in his life that required adaptability, such as dropping out of college, getting fired from the company he had started and being diagnosed with cancer. What is evident from his stories is the way in which he managed these life-altering events as he recounts how each of these *hapless* events seemed to contribute to a greater purpose in his life's design. He refers to this realisation as a process of *connecting the dots* and reflects on it as follows (Jobs in Stanford Report, 2005):

*You can't connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. This approach has never let me down and it has made all the difference in my life.*

Jobs was not only able to conceptualise innovative technological devices ahead of their times, but also began to exemplify the "boundaryless" career long before it became a reality. He understood the protean career principle of following his heart and implored others to persist in their search for *great work* believing that *great work is to love what you do* (Jobs in Stanford Report, 2005).

Life-design offers a creative way for individuals to face the challenges they are likely to encounter in their career and personal lives, since it promotes adaptability and strives to add meaning to lived experiences. It is also an effective way of appealing to the career needs of adolescents and will hopefully ensure that they are *buoyed with biographical agency, ripe with intention* and ... *ready for action in the real world ... prepared to deal with new questions that will arise* (Savickas, 2011a:147).





## CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW: CAREER ADAPTABILITY

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

The content of this chapter reminds me of a book I read, titled: *Who moved my cheese?*, (Johnson, 1998). This book makes use of a simple fable illustrating the different ways in which people (or in this case two mice and two little people) deal with change. The story introduces four main characters in search of cheese (a metaphor for success). At one point they discover a room filled with cheese and settle there. After a while the cheese supply begins to dwindle before eventually running out. However, the two mice had been monitoring the cheese stock and were able to mentally prepare themselves for another cheese-seeking expedition.

The two remaining characters are confronted with an unexpected reality and must decide whether to go in search of more cheese or to wait for the cheese to make a re-appearance. After a while, one of the two characters realises that the cheese is not going to reappear and that he must go in search of new cheese. The character that is left behind views the entire the situation as unfair and begins to display a negative outlook towards life. Initially, the other miniature human being felt the same, but upon realising that he might become extinct should he remain where he was, he ventures out on a journey towards finding new cheese. Towards the end of the book he succeeds in finding the cheese while familiarising himself with the unknown parts of the maze. Inspired by his experiences, he writes the following on the maze wall (Johnson, 1998:90):

Change happens

*They keep moving the cheese*

Anticipate change

*Get ready for the cheese to move*

Monitor change

*Smell the cheese often so you know when it is getting old*

Adapt to change quickly

*The quicker you let go of old cheese, the sooner you can enjoy new cheese*

Change

*Move with the cheese*

Enjoy change!

*Savour the adventure and enjoy the taste of new cheese!*

Be ready to change quickly and enjoy it again

*They keep moving the cheese.*

This book describes the inevitability of changing circumstances and points out the role of agency versus passivity in navigating one's way through a maze of uncertainty. "Lesson" shared throughout the book postulate that some individuals may be afraid of change and run the risk of stagnating, whereas others are able to take control of their lives and actively seek out new opportunities that allow them to adapt successfully. This chapter explores the above aspects in more detail and aims to demonstrate how the implementation of a life-design counselling programme (See: Chapter 2) complements the concept of career adaptability.

I will begin by firstly providing the reader with relevant background information pertaining to the new world of work and the anticipated challenges ahead. Although the current world of work has been described in the preceding chapters, the relevant background information is motivated from a career adaptability angle. This will be followed by a short overview of the career counsellor's changing role in response to the described changes in the workplace. I will then propose a theoretical framework to locate the concept of career adaptability, which will include a short description of the four Cs. An effort has also been made to demonstrate the association between career adaptability and life-design counselling (See: Chapter 2). Next, I will discuss the personal and organisational factors that are likely to increase a person's career adaptability, before turning my attention to a brief discussion of the various interventions, including a group design that can be implemented to serve this purpose. I will then proceed to outline the concept of adolescence with specific reference to career, culture, self-concept and skill-development. Lastly, I will mention both the quantitative and qualitative means of assessing career adaptability.

## **3.2. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **3.2.1. The new world of work**

Santos (2004:32) cites Azevedo's (1999) metaphor comparing the evolution of career to the flight patterns of birds and butterflies thereby suggesting that careers have transitioned from the more *predictable and structured* patterns associated with *bird flight* to the *more chaotic and disordered* flight characteristic of butterflies. As discussed in Chapter 2, this description is fairly accurate in depicting how the world is morphing into a global village and bringing with it a great deal of uncertainty typically in the form of short-term employment, downsizing, technological advancement and organisational restructuring (Savickas, 2005). King (2002:113) describes how these changes have contributed to a *chaotic organisational environment, where workers are bound to experience a great range and frequency of transitions.*

These rapid changes are bound to have an effect on employees and may even account for the increasing number of employees who have chosen to resign as opposed to being retrenched from their jobs (Creed, MacPherson & Hood, 2011; Klehe, Zikic, Van Vianen & De Pater, 2011). This decrease in loyalty towards the organisation, is most likely a defensive response, characteristic of what has long since been known as survivors' syndrome (Borosan & Burgess, 1992). The afore-mentioned umbrella term or syndrome is used to describe the emotional consequences suffered during the process of corporate downsizing, such as disbelief, shock and anger towards the company. Survivors of traumatic events are known to have reported similar emotional experiences to those described by the current workforce – hence the term *survivor syndrome* (Kidd, 1996:281).

So-called survivors are bound to encounter changes in both their work and personal lives. Employees should be aware of this distinction because it allows them to review the *stability of life scripts* with regard to their *career* as well as *the scripts that helped them structure their personal lives* (Richardson, 2002:412). King (2002:113) further elaborates on these two spheres pointing out some of the changes an employee may have to get used to within the market world such as *levelled organisational hierarchies, virtual teams and teleworking*. On top of this, he/she is also expected to accommodate new social and familial patterns in their scripts, such as the high divorce rate; increased longevity, a variety of child-bearing practices (i.e. fertilisation treatments and adoption) changed family constellations and the growing recognition of sexual orientation. From the above it becomes clear that the cheese has indeed been moved considerably in terms of the new world of work; challenging new entrants to the world of work as well as survivors to review their future roles and adequately respond to the new demands being imposed on them.

### **3.2.2. Responding to the demands posed by the new world of work**

The possible chaotic aftermath of the above-mentioned changes necessitates contingency planning to promote damage control – which is exactly what Hall (2004) proposes in his suggestion that employees will be more likely to meet these challenges head-on, if they are prepared to wrap their head around the notion of a protean career (See: Chapter 2, paragraph 2.2.1.). From the outset, this approach aims to shift the individual's perspective of career from one of reliance on the organisation towards one of personal accountability and self-motivation. The anticipated shift in responsibility from the company to the worker will require employees to construct and shape their own careers instead of relying on the vision or plans of companies to guide them (Hall, 2004). The upside to this shift is found in the worker's willingness and capacity to take advantage of the opportunity to exercise a larger degree of control over his/her career decisions. This type of experience is likely to contribute to higher levels of career adaptability, which holds

the added benefit of doubling up as buffer against looming and potentially threatening experiences (Briscoe, Henagan, Burton & Murphy, 2012).

It is, nonetheless, necessary to differentiate between those people who are likely to embrace this approach and may even *thrive* under these conditions, compared to others that may appear to crumble under the pressure (O’Connell, McNeely & Hall, 2008:248). Greater efforts should therefore be made to explore the processes involved in career transitions and the role that organisations can play in minimizing the potential distress workers may experience (Brown, Brimrose, Barnes & Hughes, 2012). This incentive implies that career educational practices should also start to look at implementing activities aimed at enhancing the development of *employability skills, life-long learning strategies and flexibility* (Savickas, 2001:64), as well as *self-awareness, occupational knowledge and decisional processes* (Rottinghaus, Buelow, Matyia & Schneider, 2012:136). Savickas and Porfeli (2011) are convinced that efforts made to improve the last-mentioned skills are key to improving employees’ chances of future survival in a career world that favours *career adaptability and flexibility* above *rational and autonomous decision-making* (Rottinghaus *et al.*, 2012:136).

### **3.2.3. Career development and maturity**

The above descriptions of the current and future career world, signifies the demise of the so-called bureaucratic career in favour of a more subjective one (Collin & Watts, 1996:385). This implies that the sequential nature of traditional career theory may struggle to account for the inexplicable, unpredictable and undefined nature of the post-modern career world (Kidd, 1996). Given the described circumstances, career practitioners are likely to become increasingly challenged by requests to facilitate the development of the above-mentioned skills (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011; Rottinghaus *et al.*, 2012). To assist with this effort, career practitioners would most likely have to review their understanding of career psychology and counselling as they know it (Swanson & Parcover, 1998).

Savickas’ (2011c) reflection on career theory and the changing face of the career world (See: paragraph 3.2.1.) has made him question the relevance of the term “career development” in the present career world. Seifert (1993) also expresses his doubts in terms of the value of career development measures since they rest on the assumption that decisions made during the exploratory stage of career development have a long-lasting quality to them. His concern over their predictive value is certainly plausible when one takes into account the 40%-70% dropout rate from Austrian universities.

Lewis (1997) shares this sentiment and proposes that development rather be regarded as continuous and flexible. Richardson (2002) concurs that developmental tasks and stages become insignificant in the face of self-agency since life courses are either restricted or inspired by contextual limitations and/or

opportunities. This statement supports Lewis' (1997) belief that every person possesses the ability to steer his/her life trajectory in a chosen direction.

#### **3.2.4. The role of the career counsellor**

Since career development is no longer confined to specific stages, more adults may find themselves managing career tasks traditionally expected of adolescents (Super & Knasel, 1981). For this reason the more inclusive term of adaptability, rather than the adolescent concept of career maturation might be more appropriate when applied to adult career guidance. The afore-mentioned example depicts one of the expected changes career counsellors can anticipate considering the changes within the work environment. This realisation, should prompt counsellors to work towards Brown *et al.*'s (2012:760) expectation for career practices:

*New ways of personalising services for the individual and developing innovative strategies so that career professionals, teachers and employers can make more effective use of career stories and trajectories within education, training and employment settings.*

Embracing a contextual approach, as suggested above, may be a step in the right direction since it encourages efforts aimed at contemplating the value of the present moment as a means of promoting hopefulness in people who feel bogged down or restricted by past events (Richardson, 2002). This approach also resonates with post-modern career counselling approaches since its premise that change is an inevitable component of life is in line with the core aim of counselling which is to bring about change or advancement in a person's life.

Furthermore, career counsellors also stand to gain from viewing individuals as *active participants* involved in shaping their lives as opposed to *passive agents* who adjust to external demands when it comes to career decision-making (Borgen 1991:280). Career counsellors are also required to facilitate and promote their clients' problem-solving abilities, in addition to their future planning behaviours (Rottinghaus, Day & Borgen, 2005). From the above it becomes clear that career practitioners are in the ideal position for motivating their clients to exercise choice and employ their ability to make decisions about work and life. Career counsellors should, however, also be supported by career education practices to ensure that schools are also preparing learners for the career world they are likely to encounter upon leaving school. Having said that, the next section will focus on career education practices.

### 3.2.5. Career education

Kuijpers, Meijers and Gundy (2010) question the effectiveness of career educational guidance models exclusively based on the person-environment fit model arguing instead that dialogue about real-world experiences encourages the creation of personal meaning and enhances the development of useful career competencies. In addition to this, the afore-mentioned authors also feel that emphasis on standardised methods and personality traits, characteristic of the traditional career counselling approach, does not adequately make provision for real-world application and transferability.

The reasoning behind the above statement stems from the belief that information based approaches can no longer support the unpredictable nature of career paths, since this approach is limited to providing learners with career information about their interests and personalities without taking real-world application into consideration. In light of this tendency, post-modern educators and curriculum designers are challenged to move away from the traditional career counselling model (with its modernistic associations of imparting knowledge to students) towards an approach that encourages personally meaningful and relevant dialogue about careers (Kuijpers *et al.*, 2010). Rottinghaus *et al.* (2012) support the notion that increased dialogue between the individual and the changing work environment is essential, but also cautions that different coping skills are required to negotiate this dynamic relationship.

Kuijpers *et al.* (2010) previously acknowledged this concern and subsequently emphasised the instrumental role that schools can play in offering educational programmes aimed at easing the transition between school and work (Thomas & Feldman, 2007). According to Janeiro (2010), the usefulness of these career programmes could be enhanced if they have included activities aimed at informing attribution beliefs, self-esteem and future time perspectives. The latter author further proposes that career interventions offered in Grade 9 should already include activities focused on motivating adolescents to clarify and contribute ideas to their career plans so that they will be able to engage in more realistic career initiatives towards Grade 12.

In the preceding section, I have provided a general description of the current and future world of work. I have also briefly discussed the implications of the present and anticipated changes with regards to the employee, the career counsellor and career education practices. In the next section, I will provide a theoretical background of the career construction theory; the theory of work adjustment and Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. The inclusion and discussion of the afore-mentioned theories are intended to locate career adaptability within a theoretical framework.

### **3.3. REVISITED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.3.1. Career construction theory**

The above-mentioned theory was previously discussed in Chapter 1 (See: Chapter 1, paragraph 1.7.4. and also in Chapter 2, paragraph 2.6.1.1.). To avoid repetition, brief mention will be made of its association to career adaptability. Since, the career construction theory focuses on understanding an individual's *psycho-social readiness and resources for coping* in his/her current life as well as future career tasks, such as job loss or possible transitions (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011:357), it also lends itself to an insightful view of the processes involved in career preparation such as planning, decision making, problem-solving and exploration (Savickas, 2005). A person's ability to cope with career challenges and dilemmas is viewed as fundamental to the concept of career adaptability. It, therefore, makes sense that career adaptability is regarded as one of the theory's major tenets (See: Chapter 2) (Stringer, Kerpelman & Skorikov, 2011).

Case in point would be when adolescents experience a large degree of uncertainty, confusion and experimentation during the exploration phase of their career trajectory and may stand to benefit from career preparation incentives aimed at improving their future adjustment. These incentives should be focused on improving their planning, decision-making and problem-solving skills (Skorikov, 2007). With today's changing world of work, adolescents are, however, not the only ones experiencing a large degree of confusion. Workers should therefore also be encouraged to achieve a greater sense of cohesion between their work and home life. Self-construction can be facilitated through programmes that encourage the creation of sound narratives and the development of skills that will serve employees well in their future career trajectory (Collin & Watts, 1996).

#### **3.3.2. The theory of work adjustment**

The theory of work adjustment was previously discussed in Chapter 1 (See: paragraph 1.7.7.), but for the purpose of this chapter it will briefly be discussed again with an emphasis on how it relates to career adaptability.. Eggerth (2012: 60) regards the theory of work adjustment as one of the *most robust and best validated* theories in career psychology. He uses an interaction model to describe the reciprocal relationship (*correspondence*) that exists between the employee and the organisation. The model also proposes that individuals and organisations seek to achieve a successful match (*tenure*) between them, inferring that employees' needs are being met by the organisations' requirements.

This theory has bearing on my proposed research study since it focuses on the process of work adjustment that occurs after the initial match has been made. Circumstances within the career field are bound to change in the face of corporate re-organisation as well as the ability of employees to balance their work and home lives. Individuals are likely to adjust in either an active (attempting to change the work environment) or reactive way (attempting to change aspects related to the self). This aspect touches on the concept Dawis (2005) refers to as the locus of initiative and the locus of change i.e. who is responsible for taking the initiative to change as well as who has to change – the company or the employee? An individual may also choose to continue functioning as usual in spite of the changing environment thereby showing a tolerant response. The work adjustment theory also focuses on the constant interaction between these two parties (Griffen & Heskett, 2005).

A number of career development aspects are likely to influence work adjustment in the future primarily in cases where a person has not enjoyed or invested any input in his/her career choice; secondly, if the person arrived at his or her career choice due to *chance events or non-specific and extrinsic occupational characteristics* and lastly, if the person experienced challenges that impeded his/her career goals (Seifert, 1993:359). Crites (1961) on the other hand distinguished between three types of career self-managing behaviours in his robust model of vocational adjustment, namely positioning (ensuring that one has the skills, contacts and experience to achieve career goals); influence (exercising some degree of influence over the decisions made by one's superiors) and boundary management (achieving balance between the various contexts and roles).

These behaviours are adaptive responses to changing conditions within the work environment. A more recent reflection on Crites' model (King, 2002) presents the progression of work adjustment as follows: a person enters the work environment with certain expectations and intentions. If he/she is stifled due to either frustration (external circumstance) or conflict, he/she is likely to engage in some form of adjustment that will hopefully serve to reduce the tension or remove the hindrance. If a person succeeds in accomplishing this goal, it results in career adjustment – if not, it will continue to cause great frustration.

### **3.3.3. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of development**

Richardson (2002:408) acknowledges the role that *context and contextualism* play in career developmental theory and emphasises the *transformational* and *influential* interaction that exists across the contexts of the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Since this theory has already been described in Chapter 1 (See: paragraph 1.7.1), it will not be further elaborated on in this chapter.



### 3.4. DEFINING CAREER ADAPTABILITY

Revisiting the theories that feed into the concept of career adaptability helps to strengthen its position as a career construct associated with post-modern career counselling. In the section to follow I intend to provide the reader with a clearer understanding of the term career adaptability in an attempt to firstly, define it and secondly, to describe the underlying concepts and models associated with it.

#### 3.4.1. Perspectives on career adaptability

The theory of career construction (See: paragraph 3.3.1. and Chapter 2, paragraph 2.6.1.11.) consists of three different components, namely life themes, vocational personality and career adaptability. Vocational personality relates to more traditional career models that are focused on matching a person's personality traits to a specific job, suggesting that a suitable fit is likely to enhance a person's chances of experiencing satisfaction and success. The career construction theory, however, acknowledges the idiosyncratic nature of human beings and aims to rather view work as a reflection of a person's subjective experiences, hence the preferred term of life theme. Career adaptability describes the "how" of career construction as well as the coherence between a person's career choice and his/her self-concept (Savickas, 2005). Establishing this coherence involves *a planful attitude, self and environmental exploration and informed decision* (Savickas, 1997a: 254). Rottinghaus *et al.* (2005:11) defined career adaptability as follows:

*The capacity to cope with and capitalise on change in the future, level of comfort with new work responsibilities and the ability to recover when unforeseen events alter future plans.*

Hall (2002) views adaptability as a meta-competency and regards it as the ability to respond to change. Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth (2004:14) define adaptability as a *willingness and ability to change behaviours, feelings and thoughts in response to environmental demands*. Hall and Chandler (2005:163-164) view adaptability as *the capacity to engage proactively in the process of goal-setting, initiating effort and achieving psychological success*. These different perspectives are compatible and general agreement exists that adaptability is an individual's ability to adjust to and accommodate change. For the purposes of my study, Savickas' (1997a: 254) definition of career adaptability will carry the most weight:

*The readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions.*

### 3.4.2. Distinguishing between adaptability, adaptivity, adapting, and adaptation

The etymology of the word “adapt” can be traced back to its Latin root which means *to fit or join*. Variations such as *adaptivity, adaptability, adapting and, adaptation* are often used interchangeably (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012:749). Savickas (in Savickas & Porfeli, 2012:661) however distinguishes between each of these terms and speaks about *adaptive readiness, adaptability resources, adapting responses and adaptation results*. Each of these terms refers to the level of readiness or *activation* required to maintain or achieve equilibrium between the person and his/her environment. In Table 3.1., I have tabulated the aforementioned terms to demonstrate the different meanings of each one. The organisation of the information will hopefully provide the reader with a clearer understanding of each term, as well as the career construction term associated with it.

**Table 3.1.: Clarification of terms associated with adaptability**

Term	Career construction associated term	Description
Adaptivity	Readiness	Considered to be a personality trait and refers to an individual and his/her environment. I An individual is likely to incur disequilibrium when he/she experiences a threshold in their current environment and are unable to assimilate changes. This may lead to feelings of anxiety that will hopefully promote action by initiating his/her willingness to change or adapt.
Adaptability	Resources	This term refers to the resources a person should possess to promote effective career adaptability, such as self-regulation. It is therefore the capacity that allows one to devise strategies aimed at achieving adaptation. Adapt-abilities are psycho-social constructs and develop as a consequence of person-environment interactions. Culture and context therefore play a significant part.
Adapting	Responses	The following behaviours are associated with adaptation and are cyclical:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation</li> <li>• Exploration</li> <li>• Establishment</li> <li>• Management</li> <li>• Disengagement</li> </ul>
Adaptation	Results	Adaptation is the process aimed at achieving goodness of fit between an individual's needs and the opportunities presented by the environment.

Adapted from Savickas and Porfeli (2012: 662-663).

As noted in the above table (Table 3.1.) adaptivity is effectively categorised as a *psychological style* and adaptability as a *psychological strategy* (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012:749). Adaptivity, on the other hand is best understood as a trait associated with flexible people, whereas adaptability encompasses the coping mechanisms and assets people usually mobilise when they are required to manage confusing and troubling challenges (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). An analogy sketched by Savickas and Porfeli (2012:663) further illustrates the distinct use of each term:

*In preparing for departures, flight attendants ask passenger seated in an exit row whether they are 'willing and able' to assist in an emergency ... the assistance, should it be needed, requires performance of actions that fit the situation. Some people may be willing yet unable while other may be unwilling yet able.*

Career construction theory interprets *willing and able* as career adaptivity and adaptability. It proposes that individuals who find themselves in an emergency or relatively transitional situation, should work towards being willing and able to engage in action behaviours that promote successful orientation, exploration, establishment, management and disengagement. They should therefore present with a readiness or adaptivity to manage the situation as well as apply the motivation or means to adapt to the situation (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

The chances of achieving career success are therefore heightened when a person is able to adapt positively to changing circumstances or transitions. Based on the information depicted in Table 3.1., adaptability seems to be influenced by a number of factors that are either intrinsic to the individual (gender, employability, education and management support) or extrinsic and related to the work environment itself (O'Connell *et al.*, 2008). Being able to successfully adapt to changing situations also requires a positive

orientation towards change; engagement in self-reflective activities and the ability to regulate and modify new and already mastered skills to a specific situation (Hall, 2004).

These competencies are put to the test when an individual encounters problematic developmental career tasks; possible work disruptions or transitions and of course occupational traumas (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). Pulakos, Arad, Donavon and Plamondon (2000) categorise these challenges and subsequent adaptive functioning in terms of an eight dimensional taxonomy. These eight dimensions include: successful crisis management; effectively responding to stressful times; creative problem-solving; working around the unpredictability of the work-world; acquiring new knowledge and skills and even showing physically oriented adaptability. These dimensions and challenges signify the likelihood of pending transitions and of course the initiation of adaptive behaviours. Nicholson (1990) explains transition by means of a cycle consisting of four distinct stages. The preparation stage occurs prior to accepting a new work role. Next, an individual encounters his/her chosen career, followed by an adjustment phase as the individual has to work towards balancing his/her expectations with his/her reality. Finally, the individual is able to settle in his/her career choice – commencing the stabilisation stage. Throughout this entire process, an individual is required to engage in the processes of adaptability and adaptivity. Nicholson's (1990) described cycle supports Savickas' (1997b) suggestion that career planning and exploring are critical to helping individuals make realistic career decisions. This becomes even more apparent when one considers Brown and Rector's (2008) reported finding that indecisive/trait negative effect, lack of information, interpersonal conflicts and barriers contribute significantly to difficulties experienced in making a career decision.

As a helpful strategy to assist individuals in the above regard, Bridges (1994) encourages individuals to engage in a process known as *surveying and recycling their DATA*. This process prompts self-reflection and requires individuals to consider their goals, wants and needs (Desires); to evaluate their strengths (Abilities); to take note of the type of person they are and in which situations they function optimally (Temperament) and lastly to assess the benefits or potential benefits of the existing situation (Advantages). To determine whether a person is likely to benefit from such strategies as the one described above, Savickas (2005) offers a structural model designed around four functions that allow career practitioners to establish whether a person is encountering positive or negative career experiences. A discussion of the four C's is to follow.

### **3.4.3. The four Cs of career adaptability**

Savickas' (2011b) structural model depicts the difference between successful career experiences and negative ones. It introduces the four global dimensions of career adaptability, namely: concern, control, curiosity and confidence. These functions serve to depict the attitudes, beliefs and competencies that add to

a person's repertoire of adaptive responses and resources. The four Cs provide an insightful contribution towards understanding the inner workings of choosing a future career. Savickas and Porfeli (2011) propose that a career counsellor will be able to offer more specific design interventions based on an individual's scaled achievement on each of following measurable functions discussed, below.

#### **3.4.3.1. Career Concern**

Although Richardson (2002:417) emphasises the present moment's *ever-changing* and unstable nature and the anxiety that accompanies it, the author also believes that individuals possess the ability to direct and shape their life-paths according to their *intentions, goals and projects* based on how *flexible* they are when possibilities and limitations arise. Concern therefore refers to *interest, involvement, anxiety or worry*. On the lower end, career concern is characterised by either indifference or *masterful involvement* (Savickas, Passen &, Jarjoura, 1988:84). People who demonstrate career indifference or even negativity about the future, might have neglected to develop concern for their future endeavours. Career concern therefore spearheads the decision-making process by creating a sense of urgency and deliberate "planfulness" aimed at addressing the anticipated developmental tasks or career changes (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011). Savickas (2005) views career concern as a continuous process that reflects the influence of past and present experiences on pressing career issues.

#### **3.4.3.2. Career control**

The very moments that may require flexibility could induce feelings of anxiety around career choice and is likely to rouse the need for more control. This need for control becomes evident when an individual accepts greater accountability for his/her career construction and begins to engage in decisive and goal-oriented career behaviours (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011). The concept of career self-management embodies this sense of control and is believed to be key in assisting individuals find their way through a confusing and unpredictable career world by promoting their sense of competency and self-efficacy (King, 2002). Duffy (2010) refers to career self-management as *personal mastery* and believes it to be an essential component of career adaptability. Privy to this he believes that career interventions should be focused on developing flexible decision-making skills and an internal locus of control (Duffy 2010).

This suggestion will hopefully serve to address the difficulties experienced by individuals who are battling to manage their own careers and displaying a lack of control and inhibited career planning behaviours (Smith, Jostmann, Galinsky &, Van Dijk, 2008). This tendency is usually linked to either

perfectionism or procrastination and is reflected in someone's inability to make up his/her mind (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011).

Brown *et al.* (2012) maintain that a person's adapt-abilities are bound to increase when he/she is engaged in a progressively challenging task. Engagement in a difficult task specifically heightens control since it allows the individual to feel he/she is in charge of a specific situation. This sense of control will also have a positive effect on career confidence and concern. Rottinghaus *et al.* (2012:126) agree with the previous statement and add that that people who exhibit an increased sense of control are likely to consider more career options due to an increased confidence in their abilities and *career potential*.

### **3.4.3.3. Career curiosity**

Career decisions may, initially, appear unrealistic or naïve and may be saturated with idealistic notions about the world of work. In my own dealings with adolescents, I have come to appreciate the "star-gazed" look once they have settled on a choice. Devadason (2008:1135-1137) categorises adolescents' plans for the expected future according to four typologies, namely: *hopes* (vague but realistic); *wishes* (vague and unrealistic); *blue sky plans* (detailed but unrealistic), and *precise plans* (detailed and realistic). Based on the afore-mentioned typologies, it becomes even more evident that adolescents' emerging sense of control has to be complemented by subsequent information-seeking activities (more so if their future plans are classified as either wishes, hopes, or blue sky plans). Savickas and Porfeli (2011) believe that an ensuing sense of curiosity about a career prospect serves to drive individuals out of their comfort zones towards new experiences aimed at realistically exploring their place in the world of work. Obtaining occupational information and knowledge about the career world also provides individuals with a clearer picture of their future career expectations and serves to improve their general career readiness (Brown & Rector, 2008). Rottinghaus *et al.* (2012:125) support view of career curiosity and highlight *self-knowledge* and *occupational awareness* as key aspects in this regard. The latter authors believe that clients will be able to identify and address their goals more accurately once they hold more realistic perceptions of themselves. They also suggest that career counsellors take the time to explore an individual's career experience and knowledge of career trends.

### **3.4.3.4. Career confidence**

Some individuals may find the experience of career exploration and decision-making rather daunting and are likely to withdraw from the process demonstrating what is known as career inhibition. Others may however, embrace these career developmental tasks and radiate a sense of career confidence.

Career confidence arms individuals with a powerful sense of feeling capable and self-assured about implementing their plans in addition to managing the possible contingencies that may arise (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011).

Skorikov (2007) established that career confidence tends to display a steady increase from Grade 11 up to six months after learners have completed their schooling. This finding proposes that adolescents are likely to heighten their engagement in planning activities when impending changes are on the horizon and then lessen it again once the transition has occurred. Young adults are also shown to simultaneously make career decisions, design their career plans and become more assured in their career choice. This is of particular importance, since career confidence relies heavily on effective career planning practices (Stringer *et al.*, 2011).

#### **3.4.3.5. Additional Cs to be considered**

Savickas and Porfeli (2011) previously made mention of a fifth scale, namely career consultation, in their study aimed at revising the *Career Maturity Inventory: the adaptability form*. This scale is focused on identifying a person's willingness to consult with others regarding career decisions. Another dimension known as career co-operation or commitment is not relevant to my study and a detailed discussion of these has been omitted (McMahon, Watson & Bimrose, 2012).

#### **3.4.4. The ABC model**

The four Cs referred to in the above section complement the specific attitudes, beliefs and competencies associated with career adaptability. These three components are referred to as the ABCs of career construction and contribute greatly to the development of solutions and an individual's level of adapting (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Attitudes appear to inspire or motivate behaviour, whereas beliefs tend to guide it (Savickas & Porfelli, 2011). Young adults who perceive barriers or hold self-limiting beliefs about their career development are likely to present with lower levels of self-efficacy and show inadequately developed trajectories (Hirschi, 2011). Exploring the core beliefs and competencies of the individual seeking to find a suitable career path therefore becomes a crucial part of making career decisions. Life-design counselling presents as an ideal vehicle to facilitate the exploration of these three aspects with the aim of improving a person's career adaptability.

### 3.5. CONCEPTS ASSOCIATED WITH CAREER ADAPTABILITY

In the next section, three terms associated with career adaptability will be discussed in greater detail. This is intended to contextualise career adaptability and provide the reader with a more in-depth understanding of it.

#### 3.5.1. Career identity

Career identity refers to the way in which people perceive themselves within the career context, Fugate *et al.* (2004:14) compares it to a *cognitive compass used to navigate career opportunities*. McArdle *et al.* (2007) suggest that an internal career compass is essential in promoting self-direction in a protean career world since one's identity can act as an anchoring device throughout the goal and decision making process.

Stringer *et al.* (2011) consider identity formation as the major developmental task of adolescence. When individuals become engaged in a career they begin to form their career identity based on the various associations they have made between their sense of self and their occupation. Eggerth (2012) agrees and states that occupation often becomes a classification device since it indirectly describes a person's income, status in the community, lifestyle, social interactions, relationships and past-times. It is therefore only natural to inquire about a person's occupation when meeting him/her for the first time.

Super (1980:285) used the relatable concepts of *theatres*, *positions* and *roles* as a means of classifying the different aspects related to an occupation; suggesting that a person fulfils a specific position and plays a certain role within a life theatre. The role that a person plays holds specific *expectations* related to performance. *Serial* or *multi-occupational careers*, suggest that a person is likely to change his/her position and therefore also the role that they have fulfilled. People also portray different roles simultaneously. These roles naturally overlap and may influence each other positively or negatively – meaning *success in one facilitates success in others, and difficulties in one role are likely to lead to difficulties in another* (Super, 1980:287).

Savickas (2011c) is particularly interested in the adaptive quality of identity since different social contexts, as described above, require an individual to update or adjust his/her identity repeatedly. Individuals may also experience difficulty in balancing *self-continuity* with *identity formation* in a rapidly changing world (Giddens in Richardson, 2002:410). To assist individuals with this task, Porfeli, Lee, Vondracek and, Weigold (2011) attempted to establish a possible link between career adaptability and vocational identity using the *Vocational Identity Status Assessment* (Porfeli *et al.*, 2011). This assessment measure viewed identity from both a process (exploring and making choices) as well as an adaptation



(derived from identity statuses) perspective. The outcome revealed that individuals who possess a wider set of adaptability resources achieved higher levels of commitment and exploration, which in turn fast-tracked their identity formation. Career adaptability and vocational identity are therefore related, which infers that a *coherent identity may very well be the reward for investigating the adapt-ability resources* (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012:752). The researchers however also determined that lower levels of career adaptability contribute to increased levels of anxiety regarding an individual's career trajectory (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). Since a strong awareness of one's skills and competencies is associated with a high level of career identity, individuals are also likely to exhibit an increased knowledge of the specific job requirements needed for a particular job. This knowledge enhances the achievement of career goals and will promote direction in their search for a new employment opportunity (McArdle *et al.*, 2007).

Thomas and Feldman (2007) have also given particular thought to identity formation related to the school-to-work transition and were interested in the responses generated by the different expectations held by each role. One example of this is the difference in how successful performance is evaluated in both contexts, given that students are expected to be passive during class whilst workers are expected to be active participants. The motivation behind establishing a confident work identity therefore relates to the concept of adaptability, suggesting that people who present with a high level of career adaptability are more inclined to assimilate and implement changes in their identity.

### **3.5.2. Employability**

Where the industrial revolution celebrated “employment”, the post-modern world prefers “employability”. Employability requires the development of competencies that will hopefully lead to improved self-knowledge and development (Duarte, 2009). A person can however be employable without being employed. This statement emphasises the role that the individual can play and focuses on the following three distinct aspects: adaptability (See: paragraph 3.4.), career identity (See: paragraph 3.5.1.) and human and social capital. The researchers continue to elaborate on the concept of employability by suggesting that employable people will not be psychologically harmed if they should lose their jobs and are even prone to seeking out more high-powered or advantageous opportunities for re-employment. This response to unemployment demonstrates a *work specific proactive adaptability* (Fugate *et al.*, 2004:32).

### **3.5.3. Coping and career resilience**

Lewis (1997) sees coping behaviour as a person's response to possible incidents that they may be experiencing within his/her environment. Super (1980:291-293) calls these contingencies *decision points*

since they serve to describe events that require some form of adjustment. These decision points or *career dilemmas* (Santos, 2004:31) may include shedding an old role for a new one – as in the case of moving from high school to a tertiary institution; retirement; getting married; starting full-time employment or even taking on a part-time job (Super, 1980).

Successful transitioning between these different roles and contexts necessitates the development of adequate coping mechanisms. These coping skills should be geared towards promoting career resilience, which is the ability to respond to unpredictable circumstances. Career resilience is fostered by attitudes and emotions such as looking on the bright side of things; taking responsibility for oneself; adjusting one's goals and of course feeling good about oneself (Kidd, 1996) while coping behaviours such as self-congruence of choices and the awareness of alternatives complement career resiliency (Seifert, 1993)

Rottinghaus *et al.* (2012) comment on research completed by London (1998) which suggests that people's coping behaviours, as mentioned above, are influenced by both cognitive and affective variables as well as environmental factors. Coping and adjustment behaviours could therefore be affected by the *occupational reality and the demands of occupational socialisation* (Seifert, 1993:372). School leavers may therefore be in for a rude awakening when their career hopes differ from their expectations held about the world of work (Thomas & Feldman, 2007). Seifert (1993:372) however, is confident that young people who have managed to effectively master coping behaviours at the start of their careers, will be able to do so again throughout their *continuous or discontinuous life-long career*.

King (2002:114) is also optimistic about the role that change can play in an individual's life and suggests that the anxiety and tension brought on by changes are likely to stimulate the development of several adaptive behaviours or mechanisms. She makes use of Crites' model (in King, 2002-115-116) to review the types of responses individuals demonstrate when they are expected to cope in a given situation. The first behaviour of this kind relates to a person's willingness to persist in a task and may result in *acquiescence* or *compliance*. The second coping mechanisms that may be observed, involves a more active approach in which *manipulation (changing the environment)* or *compromise (changing self and the environment)* are mobilised (Crites in King, 2002-115-116). Another adjustment mechanism that may develop is an *integrative* response where the various factors are balanced out and harmony is achieved.

### **3.6. PERSONAL FACTORS THAT IMPROVE CAREER ADAPTABILITY**

In the next section, reference is made to the factors that are reported to be positively associated with career adaptability. These factors are discussed across two headings based on whether they are associated with aspects that are within the person's (or at least within their immediate environment) (See: paragraph 3.6) or organisation's (See: paragraph 3.7.) control.

### **3.6.1. Personal adaptability**

O’Connell *et al.* (2008) considered the various factors likely to increase personal adaptability. Their research findings show that gender plays a role in personal adaptability, since women appear to be more adaptable than men. Attention was also given to factors within the external environment, specifically human capital factors (*the intrinsic value of an employee’s knowledge and skills*) (O’Connell *et al.*, 2008:250). Furthermore, the authors also reported that education, employability and managerial support appear to influence personal adaptability.

### **3.6.2. Career self-management**

Pollock and Slavin (1998) argue that agency is the core ingredient to psychological well-being. It therefore makes sense that career self-management should be viewed as a life-long skill used to increase a person’s sense of control during times of career uncertainty (King, 2002). Agency has been closely linked to protean career tendencies previously followed by self-employed or contractual workers since it places the responsibility of updating one’s skills, searching for job opportunities and marketing one’s skills in the individual’s hands. King (2002:118) acknowledges that certain conditions, including *salary progression, skill development, contract renewals or a reduction in working hours* are beyond an individual’s control and may in turn limit a person’s control over his/her career choices.

### **3.6.3. Social support**

Parents play a critical role in assisting their adolescent’s career development since career choice is one of the first career developmental tasks an adolescent has to navigate (Young, 1994). Adults, in general, however can also provide a connection for adolescents to move more comfortably from the familiarity of school to the unfamiliar context of work. In doing so, adults are able to contribute to adolescents’ level of career readiness for transitions that may demand adaptive responses. Support in this capacity can be offered in either an *emotional* and/or *instrumental* form (Phillips *et al.*, 2001:212). This is an important consideration to keep in mind since young adults attach meaning to the smoothness of this transition in terms of their future career challenges and self-efficacy (Thomas & Feldman, 2007).

Consulting with others regarding career choice is considered most beneficial when the discussion involves sharing information about the decision process itself as opposed to the specific career choice. Adolescents may nonetheless feel inclined to ask others for information or advice. This process is viewed as advantageous, provided that the ultimate decision is based on their construction of the career world

(Savickas & Porfeli, 2011). This complements Rhodes' (2002) efforts in promoting the role of mentors in adolescents' lives. Mentors can assist adolescents in assuming responsibility for their choices as well as developing their sense of agency (Arnett, 2004).

The idea of mentorship is in line with Blustein's (2004) suggestion that adolescents who report having a reliable support base demonstrate higher levels of self-esteem, efficacy and coping. Career development therefore does not take place in isolation (Richardson, 2001) and is certainly not restricted to adolescence. Individuals are after all also required to manage social relationships as part and parcel of meeting the demands imposed on them by their jobs. Blustein (2011) also acknowledges the overlapping nature of work and relationships and argues that they are likely to influence and shape one another positively or negatively depending on how adept a person is at balancing both. The protean nature of jobs is benefited when *tangible social supports* are offered (Scott 2003:334)

There is thus a strong connection between increased career adaptability and improved social support (Kenny and Bledsoe, 2005; Creed *et al.*, 2009; Hirschi, 2009). These findings support earlier research findings by McArdle *et al.* (2007) that reflected the positive effect of social support on clients' self-esteems largely due to the encouragement and motivation they received from others throughout the period of unemployment. As early as the sixties, Rosenberg's (1965) notable research has demonstrated that an individual's family is also likely to influence his/her interpretations of his/her self-perceptions. It is therefore of considerable value to negotiate the degree of involvement parents' should vest in their adolescents' career development as well as reflecting on their intentions and perspectives on careers (Young, 1994).

#### **3.6.4. Self-esteem**

Savickas and Porfeli (2011) believe that adaptability is key to ensuring the successful implementation of a person's self-concept into his/her career roles. This occurrence is attributed to the self-regulation strategies inherently linked to the concept of career adaptability. People can therefore feel potentially good about themselves if they are able to successfully manage career demands that may come their way (Duffy, 2010). Core self-evaluations reflect thoughts people hold about their worth, competence and abilities and is directly related to their level of job performance, satisfaction, achievement and well-being (Judge & Bono, 2001).

McArdle *et al.* (2007) suggest that employability (See: paragraph 3.5.2.), which includes pro-activity, adaptability and a stable career identity, may soften the blow to one's self-esteem in the case of job loss. The reason for this lies in the idea that individuals are encouraged to define themselves as opposed to relying on the organisation to do it for them. In doing so, employable people have not attached their

identity to a specific career and will therefore not feel like the job loss resulted in a loss of self. This realisation is likely to increase a person's career adaptability and will provide them with a sense of ease during career transitions.

Personal care work, which Richardson (2002; 2012) regards as work that involves caring for oneself, family members, others and the community, can also act as a contributing factor to enhance a person's self-esteem during market work transitions. This is significant, since people who present higher on self-esteem also tend to be more discerning when it comes to choosing their career. They strive to seek out job opportunities that are in line with their personal goals as opposed to someone with who is lower on self-esteem that will most likely accept whatever offer comes their way (McArdle *et al.*, 2012).

Adolescents who present with high levels of self-efficacy also tend to hold high career aspirations and are likely to experience less anxiety about the future because they are self-confident (Goldenberg, Andruszyn & Iwasiw, 2005). This tendency is best understood alongside the attribution theory (Weiner & Graham, 1999). This theory focuses on the view a person holds about their success and failures, suggesting that a high self-esteem is associated with individuals who attribute their success to internal causes, whereas a low self-esteem is associated with people who attribute their failures to internal causes. More recently, Janeiro (2010) has reported that people's self-regard can be traced back to the perceived degree of control they exercise over their career outcomes.

### **3.6.5. Career optimism**

Rottinghaus *et al.* (2005) state that optimistic and adaptable people are shown to have higher academic aspirations; experience less discomfort with regard to their future career plans and tend to pursue more career-related activities. Optimism relates well to Savickas' (2005) concept of career concern, since it encourages individuals to consider their future career. This process is bound to be more enjoyable if people adopt an optimistic outlook, which is the embodiment of physical health, happiness and adjustment. Duffy (2010) reports that employees with a sunny disposition exercise a larger degree of personal control over their lives, which in turn heightens their adaptability. McArdle *et al.* (2007) share this sentiment and believe that employable people with an optimistic attitude are likely to see unemployment as an opportunity as opposed to a threat.

### **3.6.6. Proactivity**

Previously, Super and Knasel (1981) considered that career adaptability could be observed in an individual's ability to take pro-active steps towards managing their careers. In recent times, Creed *et al.*

(2011) confirmed this link and suggested that adolescents who struggle to be proactive are also less likely to be adaptable and might, as a consequence, opt for more traditional career choices. This becomes problematic when one considers the changing nature of the current and future career world – thereby implying that these individuals are bound to find themselves at a likely disadvantage.

Factors that improve re-employment include *self-efficacy, problem focused coping behaviour and internal locus of control* (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe & Hall, 2007:248). The development of an internal locus of is associated with improved career planning, social knowledge, knowledge of the work attitude and better career choices (Patton, Bartrum & Creed, 2004). Employable people who have adjusted to unemployment due to their adaptability are also more likely to engage in more goal-directed behaviour (McArdle *et al.*, 2007).

### **3.6.7. Self-regulation**

Self-regulation is the ability to interpret and encourage feedback; demonstrate social skills and display emotional control (Porath & Bateman. 2006). Creed *et al.* (2011) emphasise the importance of self-regulation as an effective coping skill, have statistically correlated, and included it as a career adaptive strategy. The career construction theory also postulates self-regulation as an adaptability resource and attaches the four Cs to it (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

A career adaptability model suggested by Creed, Fallon and Hood (2009) also highlight the role of self-regulation. Their model focuses on aspects such as self, career exploration, career planning and decision-making. Based on its inclusion in several career adaptability models, self-regulation seems to be the most universally accepted coping strategy. Part of its appeal may be found in its inclusion of the *dimensions of optimism, control and confidence*. Optimism boosts coping mechanisms that enhance adaptability, which contributes to higher levels of *well-being and career management* (Rottinghaus *et al.*, 2012:126). Apart from factors that are within the individual's capacity to control, there are also a number of organisational factors that are likely to enhance a person's career adaptability.

## **3.7. ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS THAT IMPROVE CAREER ADAPTABILITY**

As stated in the previous section (See: paragraph 3.6), attention was first given to the personal factors considered to exercise a positive influence on the development of a person's career adaptability. In the next section (See: paragraph 3.7.) the organisational factors regarded to have an influence on a person's career adaptability, are conveyed. The inclusion of these factors in my discussion of career adaptability is

intended to highlight the accessible nature of career adaptability incentives and the efforts that can be made to foster its development on an organisational level.

### **3.7.1. Frequent exposure to transitions**

It is believed that employees who are exposed to frequent transitions are likely to improve their level of adaptability since those who remain at one job for long periods of time tend to be less flexible. This statement infers that individuals are likely to benefit from varied career experiences. Clients should, therefore also be motivated to become more accountable for their choices and develop a sense of agency (O’Connell *et al.*, 2008). Individuals are also likely to improve their career readiness by participating in *work-based learning and exploration* (Phillips, Blustein, Jobin-Davis & Finkelberg White, 2001:211).

### **3.7.2. Balancing organisational demands**

Organisations can assist employees by being more aware of the factors that contribute to career adaptability, namely: to keep work demands within reason and to offer a managerial level of support to employees (O’Connell *et al.*, 2008).

### **3.7.3. Expanding one’s knowledge base**

Brown *et al.* (2012) suggest that people are likely to adapt better when they have made an effort to expand their knowledge base. This suggests that individuals who have completed a form of educational training have gained universally applicable benefits from it, including improved or different ways of thinking. This process enhances an employee’s ability to transition successfully and of course become more adaptable – provided he/she regularly updates (*reskills or upskills*) and re-contextualises his/her knowledge.

### **3.7.4. Interacting with others in different contexts**

Another organisational component that is likely to improve career adaptability is centred on the employees’ capacity to engage and interact with a number of contexts and a variety of people. These interactions develop adaptability in a number of ways. Firstly, they elicit reflective and meta-learning through mentoring and peer support. Secondly, they afford individuals the opportunity to find their place in the larger community. Lastly, they provide employees with a means of participating in the learning and

development of others at work – which contribute to an improved understanding of their own learning and skills (Brown *et al.*, 2012).

### **3.7.5. Receiving counselling**

Working with a career counsellor may serve to strengthen a person's internal locus of control and heighten his/her self-determination. Career counsellors are encouraged to assist their clients in achieving a higher level of career development by *systematically helping* them to eradicate perceived career barriers (internal or external difficulties) and turning their attention towards realistic career alternatives (Seifert, 1993:364).

### **3.7.6. Educational opportunities**

The implications of the research study conducted by O'Connell *et al.* (2008) suggest that certain interventions can be designed to enhance personal adaptability. The first consideration is to encourage individuals to advance their education and update their job related skills, since it directly influences their level of adaptability by enhancing confidence in the marketability and value of their skills and competencies. Thomas and Feldman (2007) also suggest that career interventions should include questions *surrounding role saliency and the expectations that each role entails. The importance of interventions on both an organisational and an educational level will be discussed in further detail below.*

## **3.8. CAREER ADAPTABILITY INTERVENTIONS**

The above discussion of the personal and organisational factors influencing a person's career adaptability reiterates its changing nature. Given that a person's career adaptability can be improved, a number of career interventions have been designed to promote its improvement in a focused and strategic manner. Below is a short discussion of how career interventions can be shaped to achieve this goal, followed by an example of one such intervention.

### **3.8.1. The significance of career intervention**

According to Kidd (1996), career interventions are seemingly taking on a more educational and developmental approach. At that time already, the focus was on shifting from the traditional belief of viewing success and satisfaction as the beacon of an efficient career decision-making process towards



proactive career management and career-decision making skills as well as career resilience. These changes, as mentioned before, are likely to hold several repercussions for the field of career counselling. For this reason career interventions should become a *key component of education, training and employability strategies* (Council of European Union in McMahon, 2006:13) and even more so governmental policies since it will enhance the employability of the work force and contribute to higher standards of living (McMahon, 2006).

Career interventions should therefore investigate the implementation of programmes that will serve to instil a secure sense of self and a spirit of optimism in the minds of the future career force (Kidd, 1996). Hirschi (2011) furthers the latter intention by suggesting that career interventions should acknowledge the role that perceptions of personal and environmental factors play in a person's career development. The last-mentioned author also proposed that adolescents should be provided with sufficient information about their careers.

Williams (in Eggerth, 2012:68) views the *counsellor as an educator* and believes that the yardstick for successful career counselling is based on meeting the clients' need for receiving helpful techniques and insights to navigate their way through life's challenges. This philosophy is in line with the person-environment correspondence theory (Lofquist & Dawis, 1991) that regards career counselling as a problem-solving approach. This theory also emphasises a practical approach to managing dissatisfaction with one's environment (including work and personal contexts) and suggests that a person should be encouraged to apply several techniques in an effort to increase the fit between his/her environment and his/her personal drives. This process is likely to incur the following steps: modifying one's environment; adjusting to one's environment; modifying one's re-enforcement requirements to match those of the environment and, lastly, finding an alternative environment (Eggerth, 2011).

#### **3.8.1.1. Teaching the test**

Savickas and Porfeli (2011), advocate the use of a standardised adaptability test as a means of enhancing adaptability. "Teaching the test" refers to an open discussion of the results once the client has completed it. Specific attention is given to the role of concern, control, curiosity and confidence in an effort to engage the client in a self-reflective process aimed at improving their career adaptability. Career counsellors are encouraged to reveal the underlying reasoning behind the various items included in the test and explore the client's specific answer in further detail by encouraging self-reflection. This interactive process creates an opportunity for the counsellor to encourage insightful attitudes and allows adjusted behaviours to take root.

### 3.9. ADOLESCENCE

Now that the various techniques and interventions associated with career adaptability have been discussed, attention can be turned to the receiving end of these efforts, namely the clients (or in this case, the research participants). In the next section, I will aim to provide a brief overview of my research participants' current developmental phase so that the constructs of life-design and career adaptability are further contextualised. Reference will be made to specific career theories that have focused on adolescence as well as some prominent other features of this particular phase that I regarded as relevant to my study.

#### 3.9.1. Adolescence and career theory

Adolescence marks a period of significant career development and its associated career tasks – of which the most notable is probably the focused attention given to the exploration of different career options and decision-making (Skorikov, 2007). Successful management of these tasks contribute positively to an adolescent's level of career maturity, which enhances his/her ability to cope with the *psycho-social demands of transitions into working life* (Seifert, 1993:355).

Super's (1980) life-span-life space career development theory provides a substantive account of the developmental tasks associated with various life stages. During adolescence, the stages of exploration and establishment are encountered. Five developmental tasks are presented, namely (Super, 1980):

- *Crystallisation*: this stage occurs between the age of fourteen and eighteen and refers to the educational preparation for a prospective career;
- *Specifying* and
- *Implementing* a vocational preference;
- *Stabilising*; and
- *Consolidating* in a career.

The majority of educational career programmes presented to the South African youth are based on the traditional approach outlined above. The relevance and usefulness of these programmes are however questioned given the unpredictable nature of the career world and the diversity of the South African population (Maree, 2004; Maree, Ebersöhn & Molepo, 2006; Maree, 2009). Kuijpers *et al.* (2011) also question adolescents' neurological ability to make long-term career decisions at their current age level. A closer look at the neurological development of adolescents indicate that they are not yet capable of making *conscious and informed choices* as their pre-frontal cortex (the centre for decision-making) is still growing

(Gladwell in Kuijpers *et al.*, 2011:22). The combination of short-term thinking combined with a lack of accurate information brings the purpose of traditional career guidance under scrutiny. Efforts are therefore being made to establish career guidance interventions that will allow learners to utilise *career competencies* to meaningfully integrate career information into actions. Skorikov (2007) and other theorists (Creed, Muller & Patton, 2003; Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005; Germeijs & Verschueren, 2007; Patton & Creed, 2007; Bryce & Anderson, 2008; Hirschi & Vondracek, 2009; Janeiro, 2010) view this career preparation as a critical developmental task of the adolescent years and encouraging efforts are therefore being made to research adolescent career development and the processes involved in preparing them for adult careers.

One of the most heralded theories shaping the above research endeavours is Super's life-span, life-space approach to career development (Super, 1980). He identified two stages of development that adolescents were likely to encounter on their career journey, namely exploration and establishment. During these phases Super (1990) expected the following career development tasks to take place, firstly that the adolescent should begin to establish consistent vocational preferences, followed by a further narrowing down of their occupational choices and lastly, formulating their career goals and engaging in long term career planning.

Ginzberg's (1952) model is very similar in that it also proposes a two-phase model for career development in adolescence. He also distinguishes between young adolescents (11 to 14 years of age) who are not yet aware of realistic constraints and therefore have tentative choices in mind based on their interests and older adolescents (14 to 24 years of age) who progress towards more specific decisions. Nurmi (2004) expands on these two models by characterising the second phase of career development in adolescence as a period in which adolescents are becoming increasingly more engaged in intentional self-development and self-determination.

A study by Usinger and Smith (2010:285) reiterates the role of self-development processes by suggesting that adolescents moreover require an *internally derived sense of self before they actively pursue career exploration*. Through data analysis the afore-mentioned authors were able to distinguish certain internal characteristics associated with career exploration. Of particular relevance to my study was the identification of an internal factor displayed by some of the respondents described as *being in control of their lives regardless of what life brought them* (Usinger & Smith, 2010:285). This characteristic hints at what Savickas (in 1997a:254) considers a core component of successful career preparation, namely career adaptability. The last-mentioned term refers to *the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role* and successful mastery of vocational transitions (Creed, *et al.*, 2003; Hirschi, 2009).

### **3.9.2. Adolescence and culture**

A distinction should be made in terms of the cultural expectations placed on an adolescent with regards to decision-making. Savickas and Porfeli (2011:364) mention that *looser cultures* tend to allow adolescents more freedom and space for self-expression. *Tighter cultures*, on the other hand, clamp down on adolescents' ability to make their own choices and may even expect them to follow careers that hold cultural or family significance. Hodkinson and Sparks (1993) urge career construction counsellors to continuously be aware of a client's family background and culture.

### **3.9.3. Adolescence and self-concept**

The career construction counsellor strives to enable an individual to implement his/her self-concept in work roles across the various career transitions he/she is likely to encounter. Adaptability acts as a harmonising agent, since it helps to achieve a balance between an individual's needs and the opportunities that are offered by the current activity or external environment. Successful adaptation is achieved when a person feels satisfied, successful and more developed (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Adolescents are likely to benefit from using their *self-concept related attributes* as a touchstone against which to measure their career choice. The value of this process however relies heavily on the assumption that sufficient self-knowledge has been collected (Seifert 1993:362). In order to understand the role of adolescents' self-concepts with regard to career development, particular mention will be made to a study conducted by Usinger and Smith (2010).

The above-mentioned study is of particular relevance since it embodies and demonstrates the application of career construction theory and the readiness of adolescents to engage in career counselling. The study suggests that although all adolescents are to some degree actively engaged in constructing their career, they diverge into two distinct groups based on their interaction with the world. Internally driven adolescents demonstrated a clear sense of self and appeared to be more in charge of their lives. The control they exercised seemed to heighten their career exploration tendencies and reflected the self-confidence they had in their ability to experiment and problem-solve career related issues. This group reflected the theory of career construction accurately. The first mentioned group was further sub-divided into those learners interested in finding their place in the world and those that were focused on creating a sense of self. The former group seemed more intent on using their career as a means of meeting their personal goals, whereas the latter group of adolescents appeared to be self-reliant and focused on using adverse situations as a driving force in propelling themselves forward.

Externally driven adolescents on the other hand tend to rely on outside influences (such as significant others, cultural expectations and experiences) to validate and define themselves. The adolescents described in this group are determined to alter their life themes in order to create a new life trajectory – suggesting a slightly different take on the implementation of the career construction theory. The second group was also sub-divided according to six distinct behavioural tendencies displayed. The first group consisted of participants who seemed to have pushed self-awareness to the point of self-absorption and bravado, which only seemed to mask their underlying doubt, fear of failure and lack of self-efficacy. The second group of participants seemed riddled with confusion and inconsistency with regard to their career choices. The third group of participants displayed tendencies that could be described as “floating”, since they demonstrated a general avoidance of others and a reluctance to engage in self-reflective activities. A fourth group of participants was denoted by their anger towards the world, which contributed to an emotionally driven intention to refuse contact with others and avoid self-definition. The fifth group of participants displayed behavioural tendencies that reflected a general state of feeling overwhelmed and powerless against the world. The observed behaviour of the last group revealed individuals battling to envision a future-self within their current framework and existence.

#### **3.9.4. Adolescents and skills development**

A study by Creed *et al.* (2011) reported that adolescents who prefer structure, routine and order were considered to be better suited to the more traditional careers (synonymous with the previous wave). They also reported, true to form, that individuals who were known to plan less were likely to prefer the rapidly changing nature of the so-called “new economy careers”. Career construction counsellors stand to gain from keeping the afore-mentioned conclusions in mind when working with adolescents, especially those that prefer structure, routine and organisation, since they are likely to experience great difficulty in adjusting to the demands of the current career world without sufficient preparation, (Roenkae & Pulkkinen, 1995). The focus of career intervention efforts should therefore be directed towards *planning for change* as opposed to *planning for a career* (Creed *et al.*, 2011:383).

Azevedo (1999) highlights the importance of transferable skills as crucial in planning for the inconsistent world of work. Santos (2004:32) considers these transferable skills as being *socially and psychologically derived* and highlights the following non-trainable skills as useful in improving a person’s career adaptability: creative thinking, social adjustment and open-mindedness. Seifert (1993:362) suggests that career counselling during the last two years of schooling should therefore offer activities that centre on the following aspects of career development:

- Career planning and exploration: encouraging adolescents to adopt a decisive attitude towards their career choice – one in which they are able to integrate aspects of self-concept clarification.
- Value orientation: learners should be asked to weigh up social and economic drivers against the benefits of self-realisation. Activities should serve to uncover the intrinsic values of career choice and its potential influence on the enhancement of their self-concepts.
- Specific choice orientation: activities should be geared towards initiating long-term thinking aimed towards the consideration of realistic and possible alternatives.

Adolescents also stand to gain from interventions aimed at developing the following five career competencies suggested by Kuijpers and Scheeren (2006:306):

- Capacity reflection: taking note of the capabilities required in pursuing a specific career choice;
- Motivation reflection: considering the values that are helpful in eventual job performance;
- Work exploration: investigating opportunities;
- Career directedness: creating coherence between work and one's capabilities and
- Networking: connecting with others who are able to promote one's career development

### **3.10. ASSESSING CAREER ADAPT-ABILITIES**

#### **3.10.1. *The Career Adapt-abilities Scale* (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012)**

Career adaptability is perceived as the metaphorical “new kid on the block”, which justifies the call by Rottinghaus, Buelow, Matyja and Schneider (2012) for papers and research studies aimed at conceptualising, measuring and evaluating career adaptability. The *Career Futures Inventory-Revised* is one such technique, since it explores various aspects of career adaptability, such as *positive career planning attitudes* and *general outcome expectations* (Rottinghaus *et al.*, 2012:123). Another specific reference is made to Parson's Person-Environment Fit model (Parsons in Rottinghaus *et al.*, 2012) and his tripartite approach of acknowledging the self, the environment and the interaction between these two factors. A third assessment technique is the *Career Adapt-Adaptabilities Scale (CAAS)* (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Brown *et al.*, (2012:760) propose that:

*Existing progression measures that capture individuals' learning and work destinations should move beyond a once-off snapshot approach in order to build and extend the body of individuals' career trajectories and career adapt-ability competencies. By so doing,*

*emphasis could be placed on the value of capturing and disseminating stories of career adapt-able competencies more effectively.*

As the name *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale* (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) suggests, it is a psychometric device designed to measure career adaptability. The development of the test involved collaboration between researchers across thirteen countries and demonstrated that even though reliability estimates differed, the internal consistency estimates for the four subscales (concern, control, curiosity and confidence) ranged between *acceptable to excellent* (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012:661). The four career adapt-abilities, namely concern, control, curiosity and confidence constitute the four measurable sub-scales of the *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale* (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). These adaptability resources were previously discussed as part of the career construction theory (See: paragraph 3.4.3.) and the model of adaptability (See: Table 3.1.). Maree (2012:738) investigated the validity of the CAAS for South-African use. His statement below motivates the inclusion and applicability of this measure to South African clients:

*Here is a pressing need for assessment instruments that can be administered to all South Africans to assist them to make viable career choices. This includes the need for instruments that can assess young people's career adaptability and enable career counsellors to help such people in particular become more capable of adapting to changing learning, studying and work contexts. The CAAS-South Africa is seemingly an ideal instrument that counsellors can use to assess their clients and help them acquire the skills referred to above. Based on the results reported here, the CAAS-South Africa can now apparently also be used by researchers and practitioners to measure adaptability resources among students.*

### **3.10.2. Qualitative assessment of career adaptability**

Several research studies (Ebberwein *et al.*, 2004; Hartung & Borges, 2005; Savickas, 2008) have also been initiated to qualitatively assess career adaptability. One such study was reported by McMahon *et al.* (2012:763) who suggested a coding, scoring and/or rating method that can be applied to a client's story. This method consists of three levels of analysis, namely: *external* (factual recording of transitions); *internal* (exploring emotions and reactions), and *reflexive* (interpreting material to create meaning). The qualitative means used to explore the career adaptability of the participants involved in my study, will be discussed in the next chapter.

### 3.11. ADAPTABILITY AND LIFE-DESIGN COUNSELLING

Before concluding this chapter on career adaptability, a brief reflection of how it relates to life-design counselling suffices. Narratives help to sustain meaning and continuity during times of transition, since stories are a way of recording life lessons that have been learned in the past and can subsequently be recalled to manage an individual's current challenge. Stories therefore reveal an individual's career adaptability tendencies and serve to strengthen his/her self-healing by recalling the relevant script needed to cope with the specific situation (Savickas, 2011a). Ibarra and Lineback (2005:2) summarise the relationship between adaptability and life-design counselling as follows:

*Without a compelling story that lends meaning, unity and purpose to our lives, we feel lost and rudderless. We need a good story to reassure us that our plans make sense – that, in moving on, we are not discarding everything we have worked so hard to accomplish ... it will give us motivation and help us to endure frustration, suffering and hard work.*

People are therefore encouraged to engage in contemplative thinking focused on getting to know themselves from the inside-out. This is best achieved through the use of narratives. It is, however seemingly difficult for a person to separate him/herself from the story and to look at his/her life from an outsider's perspective, largely due to the fact that people generally don't make an effort to engage in meaningful reflections about their thoughts or behaviours (Savickas, 2003). Attention should nonetheless be given to developing the clients' ability to *hear the whisper of recurrent themes in the events that reverberate around them* (Kelly, 1955:6) because that is how they will be reminded of the continuity in their lives which will, in turn, serve to reaffirm their ability to adapt to change (Del Corso & Rehfuss, 2011).

From the above it is clear that adaptability is central to life-design since narratives are likely to encourage individuals to adapt to the various expectations and transitions prescribed by the different contexts they form part of (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). Del Corso and Rehfuss (2011) agree with Savickas' view and add that narrative theory is instrumental in achieving the goals envisioned by post-modern career theories, since it creates a platform for the counsellor to elicit stories that can help clarify the purpose and meaning of a client's life story. The aim is to improve the clients' sense of who they are and how they can adapt to the context and go about planning their future chapter.



### 3.12. CONCLUSION

There is a well-known Chinese proverb that says the wise adapt to circumstances, as water moulds itself to the pitcher. This insightful proverb highlights the very nature of career adaptability. It also demonstrates the importance of flexibility and adjustment when an individual is confronted with the circumstances characteristic of the changing working environments described in this chapter. These changes signify the rise of the so-called protean or portfolio career – which encourages individuals to take charge of their own careers, since they can no longer rely on the company to provide them with a career identity. Reluctance or inability to change is likely to threaten “survival” in this post-modern career world. Some people are expected to adjust with ease and others are bound to experience more difficulty with this aspect.

The degree to which employees display career adaptability can be quantitatively measured through the use of the *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale* (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011). The afore-mentioned assessment technique is aimed at assessing an individual’s level of career concern, curiosity, control, confidence and co-operation. These five functions of career adaptability can also be qualitatively explored as a means of reflecting a person’s ability to govern him/herself and exercise self-agency. This chapter also reflected on various personal and organisational factors that are likely to influence a person’s career adaptability. Career counsellors were encouraged to further their understanding of alternative career assessment and counselling techniques and to extend these to educational programmes in an effort to prepare learners for the trying times ahead. I subsequently also provided a brief overview of the learners’ current developmental phase to serve as a backdrop for the later analysis and interpretation of my findings.

In concluding this chapter, I can’t think of a more appropriate way to do so than quoting the words of one of my favourite authors, Dr Seuss (1990:3), who accompanied me on my journey from school to university. I have found myself pulling my tattered copy of *Oh! The Places You’ll Go* (Seuss, 1990) from the shelf whenever I sensed that something was about to change and have always found great comfort and inspiration in these wise words:

*You have brains in your in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You’re and your own, and you know what you know. And you are the guy who’ll decide where to go.*



## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

Research is an intricate process requiring *an explicit, disciplined, systematic approach to finding things out, using the method most appropriate to the question being asked* (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2007:6). In this chapter, I will describe the overall landscape of my study and the systematic approach I followed to best explore the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context. I will also detail the steps involved in carrying out my study with *as much caution, rigour and compassion as the circumstances would allow* (Kemmis in Bassey, 2003:25), whilst in the same breath acknowledging that inquiries may not develop according to plan and that an emergent plan, supported by sound logic, is often preferred above one that is too articulate and specific (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004)

I will also present my chosen mode of inquiry based on my desire to understand and make connections between the data (Alrichter & Holly, 2005:25). I will furthermore motivate how my research design facilitated the systematic view of the phenomenon by discussing my plans to elicit and analyse the interrelatedness between constructs (life-design and adaptability), definitions and propositions (Kerlinger, 1986). Particular reference will be made to the steps I took to warrant quality assurance and ethical integrity.

With the above said, I would like to introduce my paradigmatic perspective (to follow in the next session) by reflecting on Van Maanen, Manning and Miller's (1998:v) evolving view of research:

*We live in an age of scholarly declassification. Researchers of all sorts turn away from sharply delineated concepts and types set off from one another by empty spaces and turn toward overlapping concepts and types slipping and sliding. Categories collapse, borders open, disciplines intermingle, theories blend, authority disperses, voices multiply and hodgepodge seems the order of the day. What is the proper role of the researcher? The researched? Who will speak? With what voice? How will it read and be set to type?*

As previously mentioned (See: Chapter 2, section 2.4.) the inherent features of my research study are rooted in a constructivist theoretical framework. This suggests that my approach to understanding and learning more about the world around me is riddled with subjectivity (Trauth, 2001). In response to this I have directed my research efforts away from making *abstractions* and *generalisations* and instead focused on using research methods that will rather highlight *singularity* and *happenstance*. Working from this

perspective will hopefully allow me to reflect the *unique* way in which the phenomenon being studied presented in my research attempt (Van Maanen, Manning & Miller, 1998:v)

## 4.2. PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

To further demonstrate my above-stated intentions, I will now discuss how an all-encompassing paradigm guided my interrelated practice and thinking along the following three dimensions (Grix, 2002):

- Ontology: specifies the nature of the reality that is to be studied and what can be known about it;
- Epistemology: specifies the nature of the relationship between myself, as the researcher, and what can be known, and
- Methodology: specifies how I may go about practically studying what I believe to be known.

The scope of these three dimensions ensures the development of diverse paradigms that represent my view of and relation to the world (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). As previously stated, my paradigmatic approach is primarily rooted in a constructivist approach which fundamentally rejects the idea of an absolute truth (Patton & McMahon, 1999). In accordance with these afore-mentioned authors, I believe that no researcher can observe reality without participating and becoming subjectively involved in the research process. I subsequently structured my research design so that I could be *concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behaviour* (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985:42).

### 4.2.1. Constructivist paradigm

As discussed above, a constructivist's ontology views the nature of reality as socially constructed, with a high value being attached to discourse. In essence, this paradigm suggests that reality is only known to the person to whom the reality belongs. This implies that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals and not separate phenomena from those involved in its construction. This acknowledges the existence of multiple and rational constructs that are specific by nature, but can nonetheless be commonly shared with others. These constructs and associated realities are regarded as flexible and can subsequently be adapted (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002; Bryman, 2004). Douglass and Moustakas (1985:49) so eloquently describe the complex nature involved in scientifically capturing these subtle, and often eluding, constructions as follows:

*In actually obtaining data, the tacit dimension is the forerunner of inference and intuition, guiding the person to untapped aspects of awareness in nonlinear ways that elude analysis and explanation. In this sense, the tacit is visionary. Tacit knowing operates behind the scenes, giving birth to the hunches and vague, formless insights that characterize heuristic discovery.*

Constructivist based research efforts therefore attempt to show how knowledge is constructed rather than trying to discover or find it (Schwandt, 2000). The knowledge gained from my study is therefore not facts and/or findings that depict an objective reality but rather versions of socially constructed personal worlds (Gergen, 2001).

To accurately reflect these constructions, I have placed great emphasis on obtaining trustworthy and authentic information (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The methodology offers deconstruction, textual analysis and discourse analysis as viable techniques to achieve this incentive. In an effort to generate shared meanings and gain greater insight into personal experiences, I epistemologically acknowledged and valued input from my research participants. Conclusively, this paradigm relies heavily on the interaction between me and the participants as the gateway to harnessing individual constructs (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Schurink, 1998; Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 2002). During data analysis I will rely heavily on Denzin and Lincoln's (1998) list of characteristics to guide me in extracting the various themes associated with my intended research topic as well as emerging ones.

- Constructs attempt to make sense of experiences;
- Constructs are generally self-sustainable and renewable;
- The quality of the constructs depends on the information available and my ability, as a researcher, to relate to the constructs,
- Constructs are divided into various fields;
- All constructs are meaningful and significant, unless the constructs are incomplete or do not meet the criteria for validity;
- The criteria and standards of constructs are specific to the specific paradigm and
- Constructs may be challenged if found to be in conflict with already established constructs.

#### 4.2.2. Interpretive paradigm

Ontologically the interpretive paradigm disregards the possibility of an objective reality independent of the frame of reference of the observer. As an interpretivist, I accept that reality may be comprehensible and to some extent interpretable, but never predictable or controllable. Throughout my study, the conception of reality therefore depended strongly on the process of observation whilst taking into account the descriptions of the participants' intentions, beliefs, values, reasons, meaning making and self-understanding. I furthermore followed an empathetic epistemological approach which acknowledges observer inter-subjectivity. The methodology used in my study (See: paragraph 4.4.) is predominately qualitative (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1996; Schurink, 1998; Trauth, 2001)

Since an interpretivist holds that human or social action is intrinsically motivated, I assumed the role of being a co-creator of meaning – striving to convey the social meaning of discourses and how they are maintained (Schwandt, 2000; Henning *et al.*, 2004). I therefore considered the *way* in which my participants made meaning and *what* meaning they made (Henning *et al.* 2004:24). At its core, interpretivism further holds that the concept of reality will differ from person to person depending on his/her theoretical standpoint and biases. I further acknowledged that the reality may be imperfectly grasped because the knowledge that feeding into it has been filtered through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, documents and other artefacts (Trauth, 2001).

Moreover, an interpretivist paradigm deems scientific methods and measurements fallible and as such only allows for an approximation of the truth or reality. Popper's notion, cited in Henning *et al.* (2004), of deduction by falsification motivates interpretivists to believe that multiple fallible perspectives have an increased likelihood of securing validity. This in itself encouraged me to use a range of data collection and analysis methods from a variety of sources aimed at capturing both dispersed and distributed knowledge. I subsequently also acknowledged the following fundamental assumptions of this paradigm, suggested by Henning *et al.* (2004):

- Individuals are capable of individual judgments, perceptions and agency;
- Any event or action is explainable in terms of multiple interaction factors, events and processes;
- An acceptance of extreme difficulty in attaining complete objectivity;
- To view the world as made up of multi-faceted realities that can best be studied as a whole – thereby recognising the significance of context, and
- The recognition that inquiry is value-laden and that such values inevitably influence the framing, focusing and conducting of research.

### **4.2.3. Synthesis**

In an effort to reflect some understanding of knowledge and truth, qualitative research strategies follow a constructionist and interpretive route (Bryman, 2004). The aim of social science is to produce descriptions of a social world that in some way offer a controllable way of corresponding to the social world being described. These descriptions are, however bound by a specific perspective and represent rather than reproduce reality (Peräkylä, 2011).

O'Brien (1993) perhaps describes the role of theoretical assumptions best when he draws an analogy between theory and a kaleidoscope. He explains that when the different lenses come into play the combinations of colour and shape shift from one pattern to another at the bottom of the lens; theory in another way shifts and shapes theoretical perspectives of the social world. By using the theoretical lenses of the constructivist and interpretivist paradigm, I intend to merely capture the research "pattern" that I am viewing from my angle.

## **4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **4.3.1. Qualitative research design**

A rather elementary definition of qualitative research as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994:7) is to describe it as being *words rather than numbers*, since *words can ... can be organised to permit the researcher to contrast, analyse and bestow patterns upon them*. A broader definition may be to view it as a process of systematic inquiry aimed at unmasking the meanings that people tend to attach to their experiences in an effort to make sense of them and to guide their actions (McLeod, 2004).

The emphasis in qualitative research therefore falls on meaning. Henning *et al.* (2004) further suggest that qualitative research provides one with sufficient freedom and natural development of action and representation; that is often limited in controlled quantitative research. My participants were therefore welcomed as co-researchers thereby contributing to a more insightful understanding of their context and the phenomenon under inquiry (Rennie, 1999).

It is perhaps for this reason that Douglass and Moustakas (1984) promoted qualitative research for counselling practices. Counselling professionals, including myself, usually also enjoy its capacity to lend itself to a discovery oriented approach that provides the kind of detail and depth of analysis that makes its findings relevant to practice. Qualitative research can therefore be viewed as an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of theoretical points of view (Van Der Merwe, 1996).

The qualitative researcher is distinguished from the quantitative researcher in that he/she strives to describe understanding and not only measure variables. A qualitative research study is regarded as a *creative as well as a systematic activity* (Bassegy, 2003:65). This may, however, prove to be more challenging in light of Bunge's (1996:326) belief that *it is harder to be scientific, hence objective, about human affairs than about nature*. Adopting this approach fostered a greater understanding of the connection between human behaviour and experiences (McLeod, 2004). Campbell (in Flyvbjerg, 2004:420) neatly ties up the above discussion as follows:

*After all, man (sic) is, in his ordinary way, a very competent knower, and qualitative common sense is not replaced by quantitative knowing ... this is not to say that such common-sense naturalistic observation is objective, dependable or unbiased. But it is all that we have. It is the only route to knowledge – noise, fallible and biased though it may be.*

Qualitative research is therefore a naturalist and interpretive approach to the study of social phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) since it *takes place in the natural world; makes use of multiple methods; is emergent and fundamentally interpretive* (Rossman & Rallis, 1998:9). In my study I made use of a number of methods, such as a case study, interviews, interactions, and visual texts to make sense of and interpret the meaning my participants have attached to the phenomenon being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Baxter & Jack, 2008). The qualitative research approaches pertaining to my study will be discussed, in slightly more detail, below.

#### **4.3.2. Qualitative research approaches**

There are a number of qualitative research approaches to choose from depending on the purpose of one's research. Based on the parameters and intention of my research study, I have drawn ideas from intervention, descriptive and, explorative research to guide my data collection and analysis plan. The three approaches will be briefly discussed, before more attention is given to the predominant case study approach I have used in my research design. I also discuss the choice of using a collective case study to achieve my research goals.



#### **4.3.2.1. Intervention research**

Intervention research comprises of three inter-related processes, namely: knowledge development, knowledge utilisation, and design and development. The ultimate goal of my intervention research was to expand or even create a particular theory or related concepts derived from the practical implementation of my specific intervention (Thomas & Rothman, 1994; Fraser, 2004).

#### **4.3.2.2. Descriptive research**

Descriptive studies create an opportunity for the in-depth and accurate description of a specific individual or group and the frequency within which a specific characteristic appears. It also aims to indicate the relationships between identified variables (Van der Merwe, 1996). A descriptive case study focuses on the description of a particular intervention and the context within which it occurs (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

#### **4.3.2.3. Explorative research**

Explorative studies aim to explicate central concepts and constructs on top of adding new insights to relatively uncharted terrain. It also often generates priorities for further research by creating new hypothesis about already established phenomena (Van der Merwe, 1996). An explorative case study leaves room for unexpected and unplanned outcomes (Yinn, 2003).

#### **4.3.2.4. Case study**

Case study based research has played an important role in the history of counselling and psychotherapy (McLeod, 2004). The descriptive and elaborate nature of a case study suggests that it cannot be viewed as a single coherent form of research but rather a research approach rooted in several theoretical perspectives (Henning *et al.*, 2004). A simple definition of a case study is to describe it as a detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena or a single social unity. Since a case study also serves to clarify any blurred boundaries between a phenomenon and the context – the unit usually has clearly identifiable boundaries (Punch, 1998; Flyvbjerg, 2004; Payne & Payne, 2004). My sample criteria bounded my case study to Grade 11 learners within an independent school setting (See: paragraph 4.4.1.). Different types of case studies can be distinguished, of which the following are relevant to my study (Sternberg, 1985; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000):

- Intrinsic case studies: the researcher attempts to understand the specific case better. The particular and general characteristics of the case are of relevance;
- Instrumental case studies: a specific case is studied to gain greater insight or to redefine a generalisation. The case is merely a means of facilitating a better understanding of something else, and
- Collective case studies: the focus is on various cases in an attempt to study a phenomenon or population.
- Educational: a case study aimed at facilitating discourse between educators.

The integration of five intrinsic case studies, comprising of five Grade 11 learners selected from an independent school, suggests that my case study also meets the criteria for being a collective case study (See: paragraph 4.3.2.5.). In addition to this, my case study can further be viewed as being both an instrumental and educational one, since it attempted to facilitate and inform a better understanding of the possible effect that life-design counselling might have on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context.

I decided to make use of a case study approach because the focus of my study involved “how” and “when” questions, which inferred that I wanted to obtain a better understanding of the contextual conditions pertaining to the phenomenon being studied (Yinn, 2003; Baxter & Jack, 2008). Several characteristics associated with a case study approach, such as its assumption that social reality is created through interaction with particular contexts and histories, complemented my research question and qualitative research design. It was also an effective means of capturing the complexity of social activity reflecting the generated meanings that the participants in my study brought to these settings (Scetch in Henning *et al.*, 2004). I also utilised the flexible nature of the case study approach to create room for a more naturalistic observation of the participants, with less control over their behaviour and the amount of data being collected (McLeod, 2004). This approach afforded me the opportunity to focus more on the *process* rather than *outcomes*, the *context* rather than a *specific variable* and in *discovery* rather than *confirmation* (Henning *et al.*, 2004:140).

Case studies are also believed to hold application value, as indicated by McLeod’s (2004) finding that in comparison to large-scale statistical studies, the detailed analysis of individual cases offers information that is immediately applicable to counselling relationships. Adelman *et al.* (in Bassey, 2003:23) also referred to this advantage and regarded *case studies* as *a step to action*. Payne and Payne (2004) emphasised the unique importance that a case study holds as opposed to a sampled one, since it contributes to a better understanding of an individual’s knowledge ability and also the reasons for his/her actions across

a wide range of contexts (Flyvbjerg, 2004). McLeod (2004), however seemed sceptical that I, as a researcher, would be able to draw inferences from single cases to the broader population.

As a consequence, I reported my findings (See: Chapter 6) along the lines of Stake's (1994) suggestion that my case study is not intended to make generalised statements about the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school. Instead, my case study should focus on generating concepts or propositions that lend themselves to further inquiry. I also observed the following criteria of a case study tabulated in Table 4.1. (Stake, 1994; Punch, 1998; McLeod, 2004) and indicated how I applied it in my study.

**Table 4.1.: Criteria guiding the process of my case study**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Application</b>
Significance:	My study holds meaning or impact because it focuses on a case that is unusual, revelatory or of general public or theoretical interest.
Completeness or wholeness	My case report is intended to provide the reader with enough insight and understanding of the case as a whole.
Providing sufficient contextual information:	The participants were involved for a period of four months, which seemed to provide sufficient contextual information. The subjective nature of life-design counselling elicited information about the participants' family; school life; political views; career aspirations, interests, economical and, financial circumstances; social concerns; academic achievement <i>etcetera</i> .
Seeking patterns of data to develop the issues.	I familiarised myself with the concepts of life-design counselling and career adaptability by conducting a literature review. Later, I carried out a literature control to compare my findings with the existing knowledge base.
Consideration of alternative perspectives:	I weighed up and indicated the merits and values of alternative interpretations and explanations based on the available knowledge I gathered from my study and other findings from various relevant research studies.
Supplying sufficient evidence:	I endeavoured to collect data from multiple sources using qualitative data collection techniques. Data generated from the pre- and post-interviews as well as the group life-design sessions

Crystallisation:	I crystallised the results of my case study by using a range of data collection techniques, including individual pre- and post-interviews, observations, transcriptions and audio-recordings of the group life-design sessions, post-modern life-design activities and the participants' research journals to enhance triangulation. Data analysis and interpretation was further informed by my understanding and knowledge of the research process as well as literature sources relevant to my study.
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(Compiled from: Stake, 1994:103; Punch, 1998:153; McLeod, 2004:114)

#### **4.3.2.5. A collective case study**

As mentioned above, my planned research design made use of a collective case study since five instrumental cases were integrated to generate a greater understanding of the similarities and differences between them (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Zucker, 2009). To achieve the previously stated goal I assimilated the details from the multiple cases, conducted a thematic analysis and then interpreted the themes (Yinn, 1994). This method seemed to provide ample opportunity for the constructs of life-design counselling and career adaptability to be studied from multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2007). It is hoped that the use of this approach will initiate other research efforts to further explore the possible links between concepts and/or enhance generalizability by increasing the number of group participants (Hancock & Algozine, 2011).

### **4.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The next section documents the methodology I employed in my research study. It follows a sequential order by starting with a description of the sampling procedures, followed by an overview of the various data collection methods used, including a roll-out of the schedule, and concludes with an in-depth explanation of the various data handling methods considered.

#### **4.4.1 Sampling**

Effective sampling is just as important in qualitative as in quantitative research, although they may differ in their approach. Qualitative sampling is likely to use deliberate rather than probability sampling. I also made use of convenience sampling since I selected participants from a convenient setting (Maree & Pietersen, 2010). I subsequently decided on non-probability sampling to indicate that the selected

participants were unlikely to be representative of the larger population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). All Grade 11 learners, attending the selected school, were presented with the opportunity to participate in the research study. Five participants were then sampled from the group of learners showing an interest. In an effort to enhance greater diversity, the inclusion of the five learners was based on gender and race criteria. The sample consisted of two female participants who were respectively white and black, and three male participants who were respectively white, coloured and Indian. Although the participants were purposely selected for *their potential to yield insight from illuminative and rich information sources* (Patton, 2002:40). the sample group was not intended to be representative of a cohort and cultural specifications were not included as part of the criteria To promote a better understanding of the qualitative data to follow, a brief exposition of each participant has been provided in Table 4.2., below.

**Table 4.2.: Description of participants**

Participant number and name	Gender	Home language	Race
1.	Male	English	Indian
2.	Male	English	Coloured
3.	Female	Afrikaans	White
4.	Female	English	Black (Zulu)
5.	Male	English	White

Purposive sampling also allowed me to set boundaries by devising criteria that would meet the specific purpose of my study (Punch, 2005). In order to capitalise on the afore-mentioned technique, I had to firstly establish which aspects of my conceptual framework and research questions I would have liked to see emerge from the data.(Miles & Huberman, 1994). The selected participants met the criteria in the following ways:

- They were Grade 11 learners.
- They attended an independent school.
- They were willing and informed participants.
- They participated in an individual pre- and post-interview
- They participated in eight life-design counselling sessions;
- Their parents were informed of the purpose of the study and written consent was given, and
- The life-design counselling process and goals were explained to the participants before they agreed to participate in the research process.

#### 4.4.2. Data-collection strategies and plan

My data collection plan is summarised in Table 4.3. (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2009), below. The specific data collection strategy is listed in the first column, followed by a description of how it applies to my study as well as its relevance to a specific research question indicated in the last column. I then provide a brief description of the data collection arrangements and time schedule (See: Table 4.4.), before detailing the specific data collection strategies used in my research design, namely interviews, research journals, post-modern career counselling techniques and the Career Construction Interview.

**Table 4.3.: Multi-method data-collection plan**

<b>Data-generating activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Method of documentation</b>	<b>Relevant research question</b>
Co-constructive discussions during group life-design sessions.	The selected sample of participants was required to participate in group life-design counselling sessions.	Audio-recording, verbatim transcriptions and video recordings.	To what extent are the current career counselling interventions aimed at counselling adolescents addressing their idiosyncratic career counselling needs?
Observations	Notes of the participants' behaviours were made during the group life-design counselling sessions	Audio-recording, verbatim transcriptions, as well as written notes.	How does culture impact the utilisation of life-design counselling?
Individual interview	A semi-structured interview was conducted with participants at the start of the research process. This was followed by an unstructured post-interview at the conclusion of the research process.	Audio-recording and verbatim transcriptions	
Research journal	I kept a journal during the research study in which I reflected on the various stages of data collection.	By hand or computer	
Post-modern techniques and activities completed	During the life-design counselling programme, the participants were	Collecting the completed activities.	

during the intervention counselling programme	required to complete activities such as a collage, life-line, life-story and earliest recollections (See: Chapter 1, Table 2.3. and Paragraph 4.4.2.3.).		
Participant journals	The selected participants were requested to write reflective notes on their participation in the life-design counselling sessions.	By hand or computer	What possible implication does this study hold for the application of life-design counselling?

(Adapted from Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2009)

The participants were invited to participate in eight life-design counselling sessions. These sessions were offered during school time in the assembly period. Permission was obtained from the headmaster to excuse the participants from the assembly. The duration of these sessions was approximately 45-60 minutes and stretched over four months. The sessions were offered in a classroom at the undisclosed research setting. The participants were provided with the time schedule below. Various changes (already incorporated on the presented schedule) had to be made to the original planning due to unplanned circumstances, such as the length of time required to complete the planned activities. Attendance of these sessions was also irregular, due to illness or other obligations. It is therefore important to note that not all the participants were present at each group session.

**Table 4.4.: Data collection schedule**

Date	Participants	Activity	Homework
<b>Semi-structured individual pre-interviews</b>			
12-16 February 2013	All	Individual interviews of 45-60 minutes. Semi-structured interview	None
<b>Group session 1: problem needs to be defined by client and counsellor</b>			

18 February 2013	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steve Jobs Video</li> <li>• Explanation of Life Design</li> <li>• Participants will be asked to discuss their specific career problem</li> <li>• The counsellor's role and form of assistance will be discussed</li> <li>• Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How can I be of assistance to you?</li> <li>○ Activity to be completed:</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Who do you admire? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How are you like _____?</li> <li>○ How are you different from _____?</li> <li>○ Who would you like to pattern your life after? _____?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Three earliest anecdotes</li> </ul>	Reflection journal
<b>Group session 2: clients explore current SIFs</b>			
4 March 2013	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family genogram</li> <li>• Favourite magazine/newspapers/webpages and why?</li> <li>• Favourite book or movie</li> <li>• Tell me the story – what happens in the story</li> <li>• Favourite saying</li> <li>• Favourite thing to do with your free-time</li> <li>• Favourite subjects at school</li> <li>• Who or what has influenced you the most so far?</li> <li>• Special skills/talents</li> <li>• Strengths/weaknesses</li> </ul>	Reflection journal
<b>Session 3: widening the perspectives of the client</b>			
11 March 2013-	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 biggest successes</li> <li>• 3 biggest failures</li> </ul>	○ Reflection journal



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life line</li> <li>• Life story: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Title of book</li> <li>○ Headings of various chapters</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Collect pictures for collage activity</li> </ul>
<b>Session 4: client places existing problem within his/her revised story</b>			
18 March 2013	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation of life-life activity ✓</li> <li>• Continuation of life-story chapter design</li> <li>• Life-line</li> <li>• Matching these with initial problem</li> <li>• Writing future career chapter</li> <li>• Adding future events to life-line</li> </ul>	Reflection journal
<b>Session 5: client places existing problem within his/her revised story</b>			
25 March 2013	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collage activity</li> <li>• Matching these with initial problem</li> </ul>	Reflection journal
<b>Session 6: client places existing problem within his/her revised story</b>			
13 May 2013	The Scientist and The Executive were absent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group discussion of completed life-design activities</li> <li>• Matching these with initial problem</li> <li>• Writing future career chapter</li> <li>• Adding future events to life-line</li> </ul>	Reflection journal
<b>Session 7: client places existing problem within his/her revised story</b>			
20 May 2013	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group discussion of completed life-design activities</li> <li>• Discuss emerging themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete activities</li> <li>○ Reflection journal</li> </ul>
<b>Session 8: identify activities to actualise his/her own identity and discussion of what needs to be done</b>			
27 May 2013	The Executive was absent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group discussion of completed life-design activities</li> <li>• Selection of new life motto as a means of revising the story</li> <li>• Discussion of what needs to be done.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Acting on discussed plans.</li> <li>○ Reflection journal</li> <li>○ Schedule individual session</li> </ul>

Individual interviews following the group sessions			
20-31 May 2013	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interviews following conclusion of sessions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reflection of the life-design counselling programme</li> <li>○ Discussing life-design activities</li> <li>○ Following up on short-term planning</li> <li>○ Discussing future planning</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reflection journal</li> <li>○ Hand in completed file</li> </ul>

#### 4.4.2.1. Interviews

Silverman (2013) acknowledges the role of interviews as part of a contemporary cultural trend to make sense of our lives and gain knowledge of our authentic personal selves. Interviews in its various forms of news interviews, talk shows and documentaries have enabled exceptional insight into subjectivity, lived and voiced experience (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997).

In my study I included the interview as a valuable qualitative data collection method, because it created room for accessing clients' perceptions, meanings, interpretation of situations and constructions of reality (Punch, 2005). During my study, the pre- and post-interviews acted as social encounters in which accounts of a participant's past or future actions, experiences, feelings and, thoughts could be harnessed. I simultaneously maintained two types of perspectives during participant interviews. The first perspective involved viewing the interview-data-as-resource, which included the collection of data that reflected the participant's reality outside of the interview. I also focused on viewing the interview-data-as-topic which involved looking at the reality that has been co-constructed between the participant and me (Rapley, 2004).

Moreover, I employed the interview technique as a means of describing and understanding the central themes associated with the participants' personal world. As part of my research design, the individual pre-interview was based on a semi-structured interview format – which left room for further probing and exploration of the participants' answers. It also created a framework that served to keep the interviews focused and to the point (Opie, 2004). An interview schedule was drawn up (See: Annexure A) to shape the interview process and integrate the research questions in an effective manner.

The post-interview met the criteria for an unstructured interview since it followed a non-standardised, open ended and in-depth format of interviewing (Rapley, 2004). Participants were asked to reflect on their experience of life-design, group work and the various post-modern career counselling activities they had completed. I also familiarised myself with the following seven aspects associated with an unstructured interview: the importance of accessing the setting; understanding the language and culture

of the participant; deciding how to present myself; locating an informant; gaining trust and lastly, establishing rapport (Fontana & Frey, 2005)

#### **4.4.2.2. Research journals**

The research journals served as a relatively valuable source from which continuous interpretation and analysis could be unearthed about the participants' and my experience of the research process (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh, 2005). The participants' research journals provided a general account of their activity and further served to clarify concepts or ideas. To some extent the journals also helped me to draw connections between various accounts and other pieces of information to promote the formulation of new hypothesis or connect experiences to existing theories or concepts. These authentic and personal documents were used in conjunction with other data to contribute to triangulation (Payne & Payne, 2002).

#### **4.4.2.3. Description of the post-modern data collection techniques employed in my study**

##### **(i) Career Interest Profile (Maree, 2010)**

The participants were able to identify and rate their career preferences using the *Career Interest Profile* (Maree, 2010). Their responses were discussed in an informal manner and the data was qualitatively analysed.

##### **(ii) Life story: chapter outline and title**

The participants were asked to provide a chapter outline depicting the various phases in their lives. They were also required to provide a title for their life story (Cochran, 1997). These headings provided meaningful thematic information for data analysis purposes.

##### **(iii) Collage**

My participants were asked to make a collage to visually represent the various facets of their lives. Their collages comprised of photographs, pictures, words, quotes and symbols (Cochran, 1997).

##### **(iv) Experiences of success and failure**

The underlying motivation for asking participants to share their experiences of success and failure with each other was to elicit their strengths and abilities. The information was subsequently utilised at a later stage of the research process to co-construct and re-authorise phases or self-defeating patterns in their

stories. Particular attention was given to the emotions and thoughts they might have attached to the particular experience (Cochran, 1997).

**(v) Genogram**

Adler (2013) is credited with the idea of exploring the role of family members in an individual's life. Participants were asked to compile a graphical representation of their family members to represent the *cast of characters* or *character types* that are likely to play a part in their lives (Cochran, 1997:76).

**(vi) Lifeline**

Participants were asked to plot negative and positive milestone experiences on a personal time line by respectively placing a dot on the lower or higher end of a sheet of paper. This activity represents a visual *flow of a person's life* and could potentially reveal meaningful thematic information related to the purpose of the intended study (Cochran, 1997; Brott, 2001)

**(vii) The Career Construction Interview (Savickas, 2011c)**

The Career Construction Interview (CCI) shaped the content of the group life-design counselling sessions, the pre- and post-interviews, and the post-modern life-design activities. The CCI therefore generated the bulk of the qualitative data rendered for data analysis purposes (Hartung & Taber, 2008). The participants were expected to complete several activities as part of their participation in the CCI, these included: a description of the participants' role-models; their favourite magazines, books and/or movies; a life motto/s they believe in; a description of hobbies, as well as a list of their favourite and least favourite subjects at school (Savickas, 2011c). Participants were also asked to describe their three earliest memories because these recollections are bound to reveal past and current life themes (Cochran, 1997).

#### **4.4.3. Data handling procedure**

In this section a number of data handling procedures are described. Although they are discussed under separate headings, I integrated elements of each during the data analysis process. I begin by introducing the two overarching models (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Creswell, 2003) I combined to direct my efforts. I also elaborate on specific techniques and models, such as those discussed under content analysis and data coding, to document my thorough attempts at enhancing the quality assurance of my data.

#### 4.4.3.1. Process of data analysis

Miles (1979:590) refers to qualitative research as an *attractive nuisance* since the attraction to the richness of data weighs up heavily against the large databases of information. At the cost of carrying out a true analysis, I had to carefully navigate my way through the large amount of data generated throughout my study. Qualitative research does, however offer some flexibility when it comes to data analysis practices; provided that it is carried out in a systematic, disciplined, apparent, and descriptive manner (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

#### 4.4.3.2. Steps followed in data analysis

For the purposes of my study, I implemented the data-analysis strategies suggested by both Creswell (2003) and McMillan and, Schumacher (2001). The decision to use two data analysis approaches was intentional, in the hope that it would most likely contribute to quality assurance. I also provide a brief description of how content analysis was used in my study to supplement my efforts.

##### (i) Creswell's approach

In the following table (See: Table 4.5.), I integrated Creswell's (2003:191-195) model with my specific actions to demonstrate the six steps I followed in analysing my qualitative data.

**Table 4.5.: Creswell's data analysis approach**

Steps	Application in the research process
Step 1:	I organised and prepared the data for analysis by typing the verbatim transcriptions of the pre- and post-interviews and group life-design counselling sessions. I also sorted and arranged the data according to type
Step 2:	I read through all the data to develop a general feeling for the information and then reflected on its possible meaning. I made notes in the side margin – which proved to be helpful.
Step 3:	I proceeded to make a detailed analysis of the coding process. The information was then organised into portions to which meaning could be attached. The data was further sorted into categories.
Step 4:	Next, I used the coding process to provide a description of the participants and their background, as well as generating themes and categories for analysis. The themes constituted the main findings that were gained from the study and will be discussed in Chapter 5 (See: Chapter 5, Tables 5.4.; 5.5.; 5.6.; 5.7., and 5.8 for a more detailed exposition of these themes). The themes describe the participants' perspectives and are supported by relevant quotations and evidence.

Step 5:	In Chapter 5, I indicate how the descriptions and themes were displayed in the qualitative narrative. I also provide a description of the chronological events and a detailed description of each theme (with sub-themes, quotes and various perspectives of the individuals).
Step 6:	The final step left in the data-analysis process was to reflect on the interpretation and meaning attached to the data. In this step I aimed to answer the following question: ‘What lessons were learned?’ My answer to this question was based on my personal interpretation of the research findings or the assumptions that were drawn from the comparison of the various findings and the information gained from the literature studies or theories (See: Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). .

(Adapted from Creswell, 2003: 191-195)

### (ii) McMillan and Schumacher’s approach

In addition to analysing my data according to the six steps described above (See: Table 4.5.), I also relied on McMillan and Schumacher’s (2001: 467-468) approach to design a classification system according to which I could code my topics and categories. The previous authors encouraged me to slowly sink into my research data by first reflecting on the anticipated difficulties and sub-questions arising from my primary research question; before turning my attention to the research instruments used. This was followed by an investigation of the themes, concepts and categories previously used by other researchers. Once I had completed the afore-mentioned steps I was able to compile a list of pre-determined categories. I then proceeded to reflect on my pre-existing knowledge to see if I could possibly generate any new topics that might potentially develop into abstract categories.

### (iii) The combined data-analysis approach

As stated previously I followed both Creswell (2003) and McMillan and Schumacher’s (2001) data analysis approaches. A description of the combined data analysis process is displayed in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6.: Data analysis process**

Steps	Description	Application in the research process
Step 1:	Obtaining a holistic image	In order to obtain a holistic image, I made a careful study of all the available data.
Step 2:	Generating themes	In order to generate themes I searched for themes and compiled topics from the data. The topics were identified by asking: ‘What is the data about?’
Step 3:	Comparing topics to avoid duplication	To avoid duplication, I compiled a systematic code list. I then listed topics and compared them with one another. The

		goal was to avoid duplication and to arrange the topics in order of importance.
Step 4:	Undertaking trial run with the preliminary classification system.	I allocated codes to the data. I encoded the topics and put them to the test. I attempted to correlate the topics with the data to ensure that new topics were not hidden.
Step 5:	Verifying the organisational system.	I analysed groups of data and compiled categories. I also identified themes that often recurred, as well as themes that were viewed as important. Topics were then organised into relatively discrete categories. I also grouped the subcategories and categories together under overarching themes.

(Adapted from Poggenpoel, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Creswell, 2003: 191-195)

#### 4.4.3.3. Content analysis

Henning *et al.* (2004) suggest that content analysis is often a preferred choice amongst researchers since it is easy to access and it works on one level of meaning – namely the content of data texts. In my study I aimed to indicate the meaning of written and visual sources by matching it to pre-determined, detailed categories and then quantifying and interpreting the outcomes. Content analysis of my data also acknowledged attitudes, values and motivation and focused on discovering the meaning behind the word-symbols. I also attempted to demonstrate the difference between manifest content (actual words) and latent content (implicit messages that can be interpreted).

The process saw me examining choices, words, sentences, stories or images that were allocated a high or low emphasis value. The research topic was then divided into specific categories that were regarded as mutually exclusive, independent and all-inclusive (Payne & Payne, 2004:52). I then followed Berg's (2004) suggestion that the frequency of entries in each category should be counted to enhance pattern formation. I also made sure that the patterns reflected the literature and theory related to the study, as well as an analysis of the findings. The entries that could be counted were similar to those mentioned above, namely: words, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts and semantics.

#### 4.4.3.4. Data coding process

##### (i) The McMillan and Schumacher approach to data coding

Coding qualitative data is a complex and continuous process (Payne & Payne, 2002). To ease the process I selected a technique proposed by McMillan and Schumacher (2001) which begins by sub-dividing

the data into smaller units or topics before grouping them together in larger units to form categories. To facilitate this process I made use of coding symbols and labels to organise and conceptualise the detailed components into patterns (Payne & Payne, 2002). Once I had established a few pre-determined and emergent categories, I further divided the data into smaller sub-categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Some of the codes derived from the data required little inference beyond the piece of data itself (descriptive coding), whereas others required me to identify patterns and pull the material together into smaller and more meaningful units (inferential coding) (Punch, 2005). The latter inductive technique allowed me to use open-coding to gain a global impression of the content.

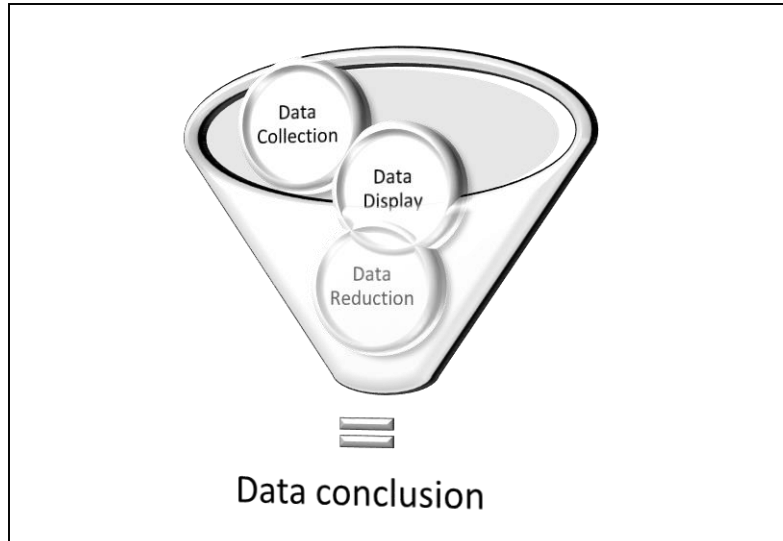
#### **4.4.3.5. Development of an organisation system from the data**

##### **(i) The Miles-Huberman approach to data coding**

The Miles-Huberman framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994) is a workable approach to organise data. The approach consists of three main components, which I implemented in my study in the following way:

- Data reduction (continuous): Initially, I edited, segmented and summarised the data. In the middle stage, I performed associated activities such as finding themes, clusters and patterns. During the later stages, abstract concepts could be formed by means of reducing data through conceptualisation and explanation;
- Data displays: since qualitative data is often voluminous and dispersed, I displayed data in an effort to organise, compress and assemble information and
- Drawing and verifying conclusions: reducing and displaying data assisted me in drawing logical conclusions.





**Figure 4.1: A graphic representation of the Miles-Huberman framework** (Compiled from: Miles & Huberman, 1994)

#### **4.4.3.6. Data analysis and interpretation**

Data analysis is a continuous and cyclic process that is integrated within all the qualitative research phases. I applied inductive analysis by inferring categories and patterns from the data, which could only be applied once data collection had occurred (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Induction is the process by which specific experiences become generalised truths and facts evolve into theories. This process is central to searching for regularities in the social world. By means of induction, the data concepts identified in my study can be advanced to a higher level of abstraction from which further connections and patterns can be traced (Van der Merwe, 1996; Punch 2005).

### **4.5. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

#### **4.5.1. Validity and reliability**

Reliability refers to the sustainability of research findings whereas validity refers to well-grounded, precise and correct research practices and processes. Both have a bearing on quantitative research since they contribute to defining and strengthening the soundness of the evidence, which further enhances the generalisability of the research findings (Lewis & Richie, 2003). Evidence of reliability attests to the goodness or quality of the research and suggests that the research is likely to yield similar results should it

be repeated in a similar situation. Validity on the other hand refers to the relationship that exists between a claim and the results of the data collection process (Scaife, 2004).

Lewis and Ritchie (2003), however raise a valid point when they suggest that the origin of validity and reliability is rooted in the natural sciences. The epistemological basis of qualitative research therefore complicates the consolidation of the term validity in terms of how it is understood in quantitative research. Instead, I was encouraged to show that the findings are not just an idiosyncratic result from one unique case, but actually carry relevance and applicability to other cases (McLeod, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln (1998:287) subsequently argue for the use of the alternative terms *credibility* or *transferability* instead of *validity*. Assuring the validity, credibility and transferability of my study's findings asserted the highest priority in my research process. Validity in a qualitative research process is aimed at establishing whether the findings from my study are in fact accurate depictions of my, the participants and the readers' perspectives (Creswell, 2003:195). In as far as I could tell, I had effectively employed triangulation to maintain the afore-mentioned factual accuracy (McLeod, 2003).

I further attempted to enhance the plausibility of my qualitative data in a number of ways. Firstly, I discussed the procedural details of my research process (See: Chapter 1 and 4). Secondly, where relevant I attempted to argue theory from data to demonstrate my arguments and ensure that my findings are logically presented. Thirdly, I tried to contextualise the study within its historical, social or cultural location by accessing relevant and useful knowledge. Lastly, I made an effort to form a meaningful relationship with the participants to prompt disclosure and the expression of relevant data (McLeod, 2003). The table below (See: Table 4.7) details my efforts:

**Table 4.7.: Suggested techniques to enhance validity during data collection and analysis.**

Technique	Application in the research process
Triangulation	I used various sources of information to collect data and draw inferences. Sources included: the participants' journal, group sessions, individual interviews, post-modern career activities, field notes, verbatim accounts of the individual interviews and group sessions, a literature study and a critical text study.
Participant-involvement	The participants were offered the opportunity to check whether findings and inferences were accurate.
Use of rich, deep and meaningful descriptions to report findings.	I attempted to provide a rich description of the data (See: Chapter 5) in an effort to provide the reader with an element of shared experience.
Indicating the researcher's prejudices.	I engaged in self-reflection activities to engage in an open and honest narrative with the reader.

Presenting negative/competing information.	The reality of life is that not all perspectives are in agreement. By mentioning contradicting information the credibility of the study is enhanced.
Extensive time periods in the field of research.	I was involved with counselling sessions on a weekly basis over a four month period. By spending more time in the research field, I developed an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The credibility of the study should subsequently have been enhanced.
Peer-feedback.	To enhance the accuracy of the data, I approached an external coder and my study promoter to overview the research process and review the questions or ask if something seemed unclear.
External reviewer.	An external reviewer overviewed and assessed the entire project.
Mechanical records of data.	Accurate and relatively complete records were achieved by means of audio recordings, completed paper-based life-design counselling activities, research journals and verbatim transcriptions.
Language of the participant: verbatim feedback	Verbatim-feedback reflecting the language usage of the participant was regarded as valuable data (See: Annexure B).
Selective use of data should be avoided.	Data did not serve to falsely verify findings.
Assumptions should be supported by sufficient evidence.	I attempted to avoid generalisations that could not be traced back to supportive evidence.
Avoid subjective interpretation.	I committed myself to maintaining objectivity despite the subjective nature of research.

(Compiled from: McMillan & Schumacher, 1997: 407-409; Creswell, 2003: 196-197)

#### **4.5.2. Qualitative component: crystallisation, trustworthiness and triangulation**

##### **4.5.2.1. Crystallisation**

Lincoln and Guba (1994) hold that multiple constructed realities can be studied holistically within the interpretive domain. I followed through on this statement, based on my decision to collect data from multiple sources using various qualitative methods. Richardson (in Janesick, 2000:392) proposes that crystallisation serves as an enhanced alternative to triangulation. He goes on to describe crystallisation as a *better lens through which to view* the components of qualitative research. Crystallisation is based on the concept of a crystal, which *combines substance with an infinitive variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionality and various angles of an approach*. Although, crystals are not amorphous they are likely to grow, change and alter. This supports the idea that the substance of what one

sees when viewing a crystal is dependent on the way one holds it when viewing it up to the light or not (Janesick, 2000:392). Crystallisation therefore presents researchers with an opportunity to gain *deeper, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic* (Richardson in Janesick, 2000:392). To promote the trustworthiness of my study, crystallisation was facilitated by involving the participants, an external coder and my study promoter. Hodder (in Lincoln & Guba, 1985:114) supports my initiative to facilitate crystallisation through exploring *multiple and conflicting voices, as well as differing and interacting interpretations*. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise that multiple constructed realities must be studied holistically within the interpretive domain.

Krefting (1991) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002) believe that data must be reported in a balanced way by maintaining an authentic approach aimed at making that which is currently unknown, known. Data generates new knowledge, which in turn leads to new research actions. My aim was therefore to perform authentic research by focusing on a ‘new’ approach to utilising life-design counselling as a means of enhancing the career adaptability of learners within an independent school context. In my study I used the following strategies (See: Table 4.8.) to facilitate internal validity:

**Table 4.8.: Strategies to facilitate internal validity**

Strategy	Application in the research process
Crystallisation and Triangulation:	Various sources and methods were utilised to compare findings. As indicated I have involved various persons in the research process. I crystallised the results of my study by using a multitude of interpretations, thereby facilitating triangulation.
Data control	Data and findings were verified by the participants. The participants were actively involved in the research process and contributed to the interpretation of the data.
Long-term observation	Data was collected over a period of four months.
Peer review	My study promoter, colleagues and an external coder were involved in the research process.
Collaborative research	The case study depended on the intensive involvement of the participants.
Confirming research predispositions:	I have clearly indicated my predispositions, position, theoretical orientation, sampling procedures and the social context of my study beforehand.
Research audit:	I performed a research audit to the extent that I indicated my work method and how data was to be collected, categories were to be identified and how decisions were to be made.

(Adapted from: Merriam, 1998; De Vos, 2000; Neuman, 2000).

Replication of my study may prove to be complex and it is unlikely that the same results will be achieved, since *human nature is never static* (Merriam, 1998:205). I have, however made a concerted effort to achieve trustworthiness by limiting, as far as possible, my own predispositions during the interviews and group life-design counselling sessions. I relied heavily on the support and opinion of my study promoter and external coder.

#### 4.5.2.2. Trustworthiness

As stated above, replication of a qualitative study may prove to be difficult; since constructivists believe that no single reality can be captured in the first place and replication is therefore a futile goal to pursue (Hughes & Sharrock in Bryman, 2004). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) therefore suggest that the terms ‘trustworthiness’, ‘confirmability’ or ‘dependability’ be used instead of reliability. Bryman (2004) and Denzin and Lincoln (1998) describe four aspects of trustworthiness that I have applied to my study and detailed in the table (See: Table 4.9.) below:

**Table 4.9.: The application of the four aspects of trustworthiness in my study.**

Aspect	Description	Application in the research process
Credibility	This component recognises the existence of several possible accounts of an aspect of social reality. The acceptance of a researcher’s account is dependent on the credibility of his or her findings. This emphasises the role of good practice in addition to submitting research findings to members of the social world in an effort to evaluate whether the investigator has understood the social world correctly. A study can be regarded as credible when the descriptions and interpretations from the participant’s environment and his/her experiences are accurately depicted.	I submitted the findings to the participants, an external coder and my study leader to verify whether their experiences were accurately depicted.
Dependability:	Qualitative research is often limited to the study of small groups or individuals. This differs from a quantitative approach that is focused on breadth. Depth, on the other hand, is achieved through a qualitative approach aimed at accenting contextual uniqueness or the significance of an	I acquired information from a variety of sources, including verbatim transcriptions of the individual interviews and the group life-design counselling sessions; the participants’ journal entries, the post-

	aspect being studied in the social world. Geertz (in Bryman, 2004) therefore encourages researchers to produce a thick description of details or accounts of a culture.	modern life-design counselling activities and the verification of data by the participants and others.
Transferability:	Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and groups. Qualitative research is not focused on the applicability of the findings, but rather the researcher's sufficient presentation of descriptive data so that a comparison can be formed with other contexts. Lincoln and Guba (in Bryman, 2004:75) suggest that researchers should adopt an auditing approach to establish the merit of research in terms of trustworthiness. Researchers should therefore ensure that complete records of their phases of the research process are reserved for use by others, such as peer researchers. This guarantees that proper procedures are being and have been followed, which in turn can help to justify and support theoretical inferences drawn from the data	I have attempted to present the descriptive data as sufficiently as possible. I have kept complete records of the various phases of research, which can be utilised by peer researchers. I have also worked closely with my study promoter to guarantee that the proper procedures have been followed. I called upon the services of an external coder and the participants to verify inferences drawn from the data.
Confirmation:	Although absolute objectivity is not the aim of qualitative research, it is nonetheless good research ethic to demonstrate that the researcher has acted in good faith and has not allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations to contaminate the research process and the findings derived from it.	I worked closely with my study promoter to ensure that good research practices were followed. I also made use of an external coder to verify findings.
Neutrality:	Neutrality as a trustworthiness criterion requires that both the research process and the results be free of prejudice.	I involved the participants, an external coder and my study promoter to evaluate whether traces of prejudice have been excluded.

(Adapted from: Guba in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 279-288)

Lewis and Ritchie (2003) hold that the reliability of findings depends on the likely recurrence of the original data and the way it is interpreted. They also propose several requirements for maintaining

trustworthiness. I subsequently made an effort to familiarise myself with the qualitative research features likely to enhance the consistency, dependability and replication of my study (See: Table 4.9.).

I also integrated Lewis and Ritchie's (2003) suggestion to further ensure trustworthiness by making an effort to display an unbiased approach to the sampling procedure, consistently carrying out field work, making a systematic and comprehensive analysis of my data and supporting my interpretations with evidence. I also demonstrated reflexivity by revealing which procedures led to which particular set of conclusions (Bryman, 2004). Another technique I applied was to carry out internal checks to verify the quality of data and its interpretation. Trustworthiness can also be reflected in the systematic consideration of competing explanations or other interpretations of data (McLeod, 2003). In following these requirements for trustworthiness, I have hopefully promoted and ensured the soundness of my study (Bryman, 2004).

#### **4.6. ETHICAL ASPECTS**

Ethical practice lies at the heart of social research and goes hand in hand with my moral stance. It stretches beyond professional standards and technical procedures to include respect and the protection of the consenting participants (Payne & Payne, 2002) Basic ethical principles that were adhered to during this study included beneficence (showing goodwill and generosity) and fidelity (which indicates loyalty and trustworthiness). Abiding by the afore-mentioned ethical and moral rules ensured that I served in the participants' best interest. I also committed myself to acting in good faith and respecting the participants' right to autonomy (McLeod, 2004)

The above principles relate to the three main issues Ryen (2004) raised in ethical research discourse. I avoided these three pitfalls by following ethical code regulations, such as informing the participants and their parents of the research purpose and nature of their involvement before obtaining written consent. I also assured the participants of complete confidentiality by protecting their identities, recognisable details and the location of the research. I also maintained a sense of trust between myself and the participants.

To enhance ethical practice I kept a research journal to motivate regular methodological and ethical reassessment (Miller & Bell, 2002). Based on the assumption that the subjective nature of my study might have triggered personal and social transformations, I also made a point of monitoring the participants' emotional and psychological states before, during and after the research practice (Creswell, 2003). I therefore made every effort to engage in self-reflection practices; be aware of predisposed theoretical assumptions, and maintain continuous awareness of the participants' personal preferences (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Based on the above steps, I believe that I have taken great care to honour my responsibilities as a researcher; report the findings truthfully and treat the participants with dignity (Bassey; 2003).

#### **4.7. PLACE OF RESEARCH**

Life design counselling sessions with the participants were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere in a classroom at the school. The duration of the sessions was approximately 45-60 minutes. The individual interviews were conducted in a private office. The ethos of the independent school used in my study is based on Christian principles. Currently, 1200 learners are enrolled stretching from Grade 000-12.

With regards to career education, the school offers annual career assessments to all Grade 9 learners to assist with subject choice. Career education modules are offered as part of the Life-Orientation curriculum and focuses on the development of career specific skills, such as drawing up a curriculum vitae; preparing for a job interview and applying to tertiary institutions. This specific module is offered during one of the three terms and is compulsory for all learners up to Grade 12.

#### **4.8. ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) suggest that during the research process the researcher's role is of the utmost importance. The roles that I assumed responsibility for were the following:

- To explain to the participants and their parents the purpose of the research and to obtain informed consent for their participation and the recording and transcription of the research sessions<sup>1</sup>;
- To ensure that the facilities and the equipment were in good working order and the research venue was comfortable;
- To create an atmosphere that spoke of warmth, and where interruptions were limited;
- To ensure that sufficient opportunity was given to the participants to review the interpretation of the data to clear any misunderstandings;
- To analyse and interpret the data;
- To consistently reflect on my role of psychologist versus my role as researcher
- To adhere to the ethical standards (ethical code) as specified by the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Annexure B



#### 4.9. SUMMARY

Chapter 4 discussed the paradigmatic framework, mode of inquiry and methodology associated with my research design. I located my research study in the constructivist/social constructivist/interpretivist paradigm (See: Chapter 2, paragraph 2.4 and Chapter 4, paragraph 4.2.). I also discussed the use of a collective case study as my main mode of inquiry and detailed my multi-method data collection plan and subsequent data analysis procedures. I also referred to the ethical aspects involved in my study and depicted my role as researcher. I concluded with stating the limitations of my research findings.

This chapter was intended to display the *intertwined process involved in the conceptualisation of a research problem, the investigation and the interpretation of the findings and their application in the world beyond study* (Kemmis in Bassey, 2003:25). It also served as a basis from which to launch my personal intention to ultimately embody the following descriptive research goal (Newman in Hoffman, 1993:1):

*Now we are going to make a new path. So you can take a shovel, you take a ground-  
'haker', you take a hairpin. If all you got is a hairpin, you take a hairpin and you start  
digging. And you dig in all directions: up and down, in and out, right and left. Not a  
straight line. As a matter of fact, it is the quickest way to the wrong place. And don't  
pretend you know where you are going, that means you've been there, and you are  
going to end up exactly where you came from.*



## CHAPTER 5: REPORTING OF THE RESULTS

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

As described in Chapter 4 the intended research study is aimed at studying the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context. Fieldwork involved the purposive selection of five suitable research participants. They attended weekly life-design counselling sessions as a group, where they were required to complete the described post-modern life-design activities and engage in reflective conversations about their own and each others' life-design process. Data were also collected from the semi-structured individual interviews conducted at the start of the research process and open-ended individual interviews conducted at the conclusion of the research process. The semi-structured individual interviews included questions related to exploring the participants' view on the influence of life-design counselling on career adaptability (See: Annexure A). Participants were also encouraged to keep a reflection journal to document their experiences throughout the research process.

The data collected during the discussion, interview sessions were transcribed for qualitative data analysis purposes, and the findings are presented in this chapter. A brief overview of the data analysis process is provided below in an effort to introduce and facilitate the presentation of the data to follow. Data will then be presented according to the themes and sub-themes that emerged during each of the three data collection phases. Discussion of these findings at the hand of existing literature will follow in Chapter 6.

### 5.2. FINDINGS FROM THE DATA ANALYSIS

#### 5.2.1. Description of the data analysis process followed

According to Patton (2002:514) data analysis involves going on *mental excursions*, experiencing *multiple stimuli*, *side tracking* or *zigzagging*, *changing patterns of thinking*, connecting the dots between *the seemingly unconnected* and *playing at it*. Patton further (2002:544) believes that all these processes are ultimately intended to *open the world to us in some way*.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) and, Creswell (2003) offer a practical means of unlocking the world that Patton (2002) referred to in the above paragraph. This process involves a careful study of all the available data in search of themes with the eye on compiling topics and organising a code list consisting of both pre-determined and emerging themes. With this in mind, I intended to make use of coding to correlate the topics with the data, whilst at the same time identifying any emergent topics. I then analysed the groups of data and compiled categories by identifying the themes that occurred the most, as well as the themes that


were viewed as theoretically important. Topics were then organised into relatively discrete categories that lent themselves to overarching themes.

Whilst sifting through the data, it was vital to acknowledge that existing literature has already identified career concern, career control, career curiosity and career confidence as the underlying tenets of career adaptability (Savickas, 2005; Savickas & Porfeli, 2011; Rottinghaus *et al.*, 2012). Establishing the four Cs as pre-determined themes is therefore justifiable, especially when one considers that the planned research study is, after all, intent on studying the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school setting.

In saying this, I am however also very cognizant of the fact that a qualitative approach, in principle, steers away from matching existing theories to a specific hypothesis. Instead, a qualitative approach relies on inductive reasoning – a process that allows the data to *speak for themselves by the emergence of conceptual categories and descriptive themes* (Newton Suter, 2012:345). This was achieved by adopting a data analysis procedure that made allowances for themes that reflected the participants’ meaning of their experiences and realities of the concept being studied. Newton Suter (2012:346) suggests that these themes are usually found *imbedded* in a conceptual framework that consists of *interconnected ideas* that can subsequently be interpreted and explained at the hand of existing literature and theoretical knowledge





The themes and sub-themes indicated in the pages to follow, therefore, constitute both pre-determined and emerging categories. As a point of reference, Table 5.1. provides a detailed overview of the five participants, indicating the specific colour code that has been allocated to them. The use of colour is intended to help the reader track each participant’s contribution in the presented findings. The participants have also been given a descriptive pseudonym for anonymity purposes.

**Table 5.1.: Description of participants**

Colour code	Participant number and name	Description of participant <sup>12</sup>	Type of assistance indicated	
	1.	2. The Duty Fulfiller	The Duty Fulfiller has been so named due to his responses depicting him as a loyal and dependable person. He also displayed a strong obligation towards his family and was committed to his goals and doing the ‘right thing’.	<i>“Since I was young, I’ve always been sure about what I wanted to with my life and what career I wanted to choose. I had back-up plans for what I would do for most things. I wanted to become a doctor, and if that didn’t work out, I would pursue actuarial science. If that didn’t work out, I would become an</i>

<sup>1</sup> All names have been changed for anonymity purposes

<sup>2</sup> (BSM Consulting Inc., 2004).

				<p><i>architect. But as I am getting older, I'm starting to doubt the careers which I want to pursue due to the workloads. I need help in order to make sense of what I want to do and make the right choice" (1;H1;(i)).</i></p>
	3.	4. The Executive	<p>The Executive has been so named due his responses depicting him as a very driven and decisive person who presents as a natural leader. He also presented as someone who develops contingency plans and attaches high importance to financial success.</p>	<p><i>"I know what field of work I want to go into, but I'm not sure what specific job field I want to go into. I really enjoy engineering, but I'm not sure if I want to go into mechanical, civil or industrial engineering and I hope you can help me and guide me into the best career field for me" (2;H2;(i)).</i></p>
	5.	6. The Scientist	<p>The Scientist has been so named due to her responses depicting her as a person who values knowledge and competency. She seemed interested in understanding the world around her in a very strategic manner. She also seemed dedicated to finding solutions to problems.</p>	<p><i>"To help me find what I am good at and then help determine what career path I should take that I will be happy in and that will meet my needs and satisfy me in the long run. To prepare me for my career and everything involving my future" (3;H3;(i)).</i></p>
	7.	8. The Giver	<p>The Giver has been so named due to her responses depicting her as a person who is interested in caring about others. She demonstrated a good understanding of others' feelings and came across as a very caring and sensitive person.</p>	<p><i>"You can be of use by helping me find who I am, where I am coming from and where I want to go. This could help me because if I know who I am, it will help me know what I want. I know that as time goes by there's more that I will learn about myself. If I have an understanding of why I'm going through everything I'm going through in my life – then I won't hold grudges or any other negative emotions. If I know where I want to go, I can start planning and stop stressing" (4;H4;(i)).</i></p>
	9.	10. The Idealist	<p>The Idealist has been so named due to his responses depicting him as someone who takes an interest in serving humanity in an attempt to make the world a better place for others.</p>	<p><i>"Help me see what route to take with my career, whether it is to go straight into teaching or to study fine arts then teaching" (5;H5;(i)).</i></p>

### **5.2.2. Themes and subthemes identified from the qualitative data analysis**

During document analysis, nine general themes consistently emerged across all the qualitative data sources. Additional themes that were unique to a specific phase of the data gathering process will be stipulated and discussed where applicable. The following seven main themes were identified: Career adaptability and the four Cs (pre-determined codes); parental/familial/significant others' influence on the participants' career trajectory; financial and economic considerations; the value of time; components related to emotional intelligence; adolescent development and, school-life.

Each theme is introduced with a tabulated description of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide the coding process. The decision to include or exclude data was determined as follows: firstly, an overview of the research data was gained by reading through it multiple times; the data were then divided into categories, clustered together and coded. Any discussions, sentences or phrases that did not seem to contribute any meaningful value or depth to the study were considered irrelevant and subsequently excluded (See: exclusion criteria).

### **5.2.3. Discussion of the qualitative data analysis results**

The five participants were asked to join in on eight group sessions. These sessions were utilised for the completion of the various life-design activities. The discussion of the data generated during these sessions will be integrated throughout this section and will include themes drawn from the transcriptions of the group sessions and the individual interviews. Reference to the various life-design activities completed during these sessions are included as part of the participants' reflections and input.

The themes and sub-themes are presented according to the three main data collection phases, namely, results from the qualitative data analysis of the individual semi-structured interviews (before the group life-design counselling sessions were initiated); results drawn from the qualitative analysis of the life-design counselling group sessions and, qualitative analysis of the participants' post-interview

The particular session from which the theme was derived as well as the source documents are referenced according to a five-digit coding system explained below in Table 5.2. It is hoped that this layout will contribute to a greater sense of cohesion in the discussion of these sessions. The various responses from the participants were also grouped together to better compare the diversities and similarities that may exist between their career journeys. This also allows for the flow of dialogue between the participants to be observed. It also practically illustrates the value of social constructionism, since the contributions from each participant appears to have enhanced joint meaning making within the given social context.

Alternatively, the presentation of the data generated during the individual post-interviews has, however been split according to each participant's contributions. This will hopefully serve to reflect the individual's experience of the life-design counselling process. Once again reference will be made to the discussion of the completed post-modern life-design counselling activities as mentioned during these interviews. In addition to this, the responses from some of the participants' reflection journals and social media status updates were included.

**Table 5.2.: The four-digit coding system used to reference data (transcriptions)**

Participant number	Source	Session	Page number <sup>3</sup>	Line number
1: Participant 1	A1: Individual semi-structured interviews, specified according to each research participant:	0	1-10	1-205
2: Participant 2	A2: Individual semi-structured interviews, specified according to each research participant:	0		
3: Participant 3	A3: Individual semi-structured interviews, specified according to each research participant:	0	1-13	1-198
4: Participant 4	A4: Individual semi-structured interviews, specified according to each research participant:	0	1-25	1-230
5: Participant 5	A5: Individual semi-structured interviews, specified according to each research participant:	0	1-14	1-165
1-5	B: Discussion from 18 February 2013	1	1-3	
1-5	C: Discussion from session 4 March 2013	2	1-10	1-428
1-5	D: Discussion from 11 March 2013	3	1-12	1-205
1-5	E: Discussion from 13 May 2013	6	1-11	1-230
1-5	F: Discussion from 20 May 2013	7	1-5	1-100
1-5	G: Session 27 May 2013	8	1-11	1-224

<sup>3</sup> Page numbers indicate the total number of transcribed pages for the particular source.

1-5	H: Source documents: post-modern life-design activities completed during the group sessions: (i) Workbook (ii) Life-story chapters (iii) Life-line (iv) Collages (v) Success and failure experiences (vi) Earliest memory (vii) Role model (viii) Family genogram (ix) Reflection journal (x) Personal motto (xi) Interests		n/a	n/a
1: Participant 1	I1: Open ended individual interviews	9	1-17	1-328
2: Participant 2	I2: Open ended individual interviews	9	1-24	1-299
3: Participant 3	I3: Open ended individual interviews	9	1-14	1-164
4: Participant 4	I4: Open ended individual interviews	9		
5: Participant 5	I5: Open ended individual interviews	9	1-19	2-228

Now that the referencing system has been explained, I will proceed to present the results of the qualitative data analysis as generated from the data collected.

### 5.2.3.1. Theme 1: Career adaptability and the related sub-skills.

Table 5.3 provides a more in-depth layout of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide the coding process for theme 1.

**Table 5.3.: Theme 1 Responses related to career adaptability and the related sub-skills based on the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012:357).**

<b>Theme 1: Responses related to career adaptability and the related sub-skills based on the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) (Savickas &amp; Porfeli, 2012:357).</b>	
<b>Inclusion Criteria</b>	
<b>1.1. Career concern</b>	
<b>Description of career concern</b>	<b>Examples of participants' responses</b>



<p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to an individual's capacity to be future-orientated by displaying a sense of importance in being prepared for the future and an awareness of vocational developmental tasks and occupational transitions. A general attitude of planfulness, anticipation, awareness, involvement and orientation. Specific attention was given to phrases that demonstrated: planning for the future; a realisation that today's choices affect their future and optimism about the future.</p>	<p><i>"I actually have given much thought to my future, I have quite a few back-up plans"</i> (1;0;A1;1;4).</p> <p><i>"I want to make decisions now, so that I don't drop out and waste six years"</i> (1;0;A1;2;20).</p> <p><i>"You are now building towards your future and you have to make sure that you achieve your goals now so that you can achieve the goals you have set for later"</i> (2;0;A2;3;27)</p>
<p><b>Description of lack of career concern</b></p>	<p><b>Examples of participants' responses</b></p>
<p>Any phrase, sentences or words that refer to career indifference, planlessness and pessimism about the future.</p>	<p><i>"It's scary, because everything is happening so fast and I'm meant to change and know what I am doing, but ja ... it's all happening too fast"</i> (3;0;A3;1;23).</p>
<p><b>1.2. Career control</b></p>	
<p><b>Description of career control</b></p>	<p><b>Examples of participants' responses</b></p>
<p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the individual's capacity to take responsibility for constructing a career through decisive, assertive and conscientious efforts. Any evidence that the individual is taking disciplined, deliberate, goal-oriented and an organised approach in performing vocational developmental tasks. Specific attention was given to phrases that involved independent decision-making, intra-personal willpower; autonomy and standing up for their beliefs.</p>	<p><i>"I have to get 80 for Physics and Maths"</i> (1;0;A1;10;200)</p> <p><i>"I want to apply everywhere that is good with medicine. The best is UCT and then I basically want to apply for overseas"</i> (1;0;A1;5;90).</p> <p><i>"This is the year where you start applying to universities – you have to make sure that your marks are high"</i> (2;0;A2;3;27).</p> <p><i>"I just had to take responsibility and put the effort in ... I remind myself that everything I do now is going to help me with my future"</i> (2;0;A2;4;39).</p>
<p><b>Description of lack of career control</b></p>	<p><b>Examples of participants' responses</b></p>
<p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to an individual's reliance on chance or luck, indecisiveness – enacted as confusion, procrastination or perfectionism.</p>	<p><i>"Well, I am thinking of something to do with Science, cause I am really interested in it and stuff like ... ja, it's like really interesting and then last year, I thought of becoming a pilot and then maybe doing something with Science with it and then maybe something like a medical person who goes and helps people"</i> (3;0;A3;1;5).</p>

	<p><i>“I don’t actually know what to do ... so, I want to figure out if I should carry on or if I should tell my parents that I don’t want to do architecture” (4;1;B;1;19).</i></p>
<b>1.3. Career curiosity</b>	
<b>Description of career curiosity</b>	<b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>
<p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the individual’s capacity to take initiative in learning about the world, being open to new experiences, inquisitive exploration and reflection about the fit between self and the work world.</p>	<p><i>“My mother’s friend is a doctor and I went to him for about two days and I really enjoyed it” (1;0;A1;1;10).</i></p> <p><i>“Like, this year, I am talkative – I am not going to ignore my artistic side and I am actually going to take a few workshops and I am going to draw more often ... I’m trying a new idea for my canvas, because I only have the one left that I haven’t used” (4;0;A4;7;94).</i></p> <p><i>“There are actually a few people that I have spoken about it it ... and uhm ... and with their ... because it is very different career paths and stuff ... because there is like everything, like chemical engineers and everything in there. I’ve spoken to them and it looks like something I will be able to do and be happy to do” (3;0;A3;6;129).</i></p>
<b>Description of lack of Career curiosity</b>	<b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>
<p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to career unrealism, naiveté about the work world and inaccurate images of self.</p>	<p><i>“The only thing I can say ... the only thing that pops up is artistic” (4;0;A4;16;201).</i></p> <p><i>“The person I wanted to shadow, wasn’t available” (4;0;A4;12;162).</i></p>
<b>1.4. Career confidence</b>	
<b>Description of Career confidence</b>	<b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>
<p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the individual’s capacity to anticipate success in solving complex problems involved in career decision making and occupational choice. In general it refers to a sense of self-efficacy and confidence that one can successfully execute behaviours needed to cope with challenges and overcome obstacles in making and implementing choices.</p>	<p><i>“At that time, I was very uncertain and I didn’t know what I was actually letting myself get into, and I was really scared if it would help me in the end and if I would be good at it. But, I also knew that in the end ... if like for a few months I didn’t like, I could change” (3;0;A3;5;107).</i></p>

	<p><i>“I would probably have tried to change again ... or make it better and then see if it doesn’t get any better ... and then make another plan” (3;0;A3;5;101).</i></p> <p><i>“You can never predict what is going to happen. I am comfortable with it; nothing that a person can control” (5;7;F;4;70-72).</i></p>
<b>Description of lack of Career confidence</b>	<b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>
Any phrases, sentences or words that refer that show career inhibition and a lack of confidence to act on his/her interests and aspirations.	<i>“I don’t mind hard work, but I don’t think I am necessarily going to enjoy studying for thirteen years straight” (1;0;A1;2;18).</i>

**i) Results from the qualitative data analysis of the individual semi-structured interviews (before the group life-design counselling sessions were initiated)**

**a. Career concern**

The five participants experienced mixed levels of career concern. The Duty Fulfiller, The Idealist and The Executive collectively displayed a clear sense of ‘planfulness’ as suggested by the use of words such as: *“back up plan” (1;0;A1;1;4)*. Planfulness, in the The Duty Fulfiller’s case, was described as *“... a nice thing to fall back on, if it comes to that”(1;0;A1;3;52)*. The Idealist’s response to whether he had given some thought to his future was: *“Yes, in quite great detail” (5;0;A5;1;2)*. All three also indicated a natural anticipation and preparation for future events: *“Life goals for example: getting through matric and going to varsity and getting a proper job ... are things you have to do in life anyway” (5;0;A5;4;64)*; *“Yes I have to know what lies ahead so that I can prepare for it. I am a realist ... I probably should have started learning Java [a computer programming language] and things like that from when I was ten” (2;0;A2;1;11)* and *“Like actually, a lot of engineering responds to my life, like chemical engineering, because I am good with chemistry. Mechanical engineering, because my father owns a workshop and I like working with cars and stuff like that – I know what things look like in the car” (1;0;A1;9;186)*.

Thought had also been given to the choice of tertiary institution: *“I want to apply everywhere that is good with medicine. The best is UCT and then I basically want to apply for overseas” (1;0;A1;5;90)*; *“What I say is that if someone has to employ someone and it says Stellenbosch or Unisa on your resume, then the guy who studied at Stellenbosch is going to get the job ... I don’t know if Tuks offers the right programme for me” (2; 0;A2;2;11)*, as well as the necessity of these steps in ensuring a bright future: *“I need to get varsity entrance ... with a matric certificate entrance you are sort of on the brink of not being*

*hired. You'll get very basic jobs for the ... as they would say now – a 'household engineer'" (5;0;A5;3;50).*

The Giver and The Scientist, also indicated that they would like to go to university: *"Yes, I am going to go study, definitely. It is not that I am being forced to; I want to study to accomplish something and know that I have that behind me. Having a degree is always something to fall back on, always something that supports me"* (3;0;A3;2;43); *"Yes, I want to go to Stellenbosch"* (3;0;A3;3;65) and *"Ok, there was like this point, where I was like ... 'Ok, I am going to go to university, I am going to work hard and get my money'"* (4;0;A4;9;120). Yet, they both seemed to be surprised and even frustrated at the lack of preparation and planfulness they appeared to be experiencing in regards to designing their future career journey. This is of particular significance when viewed in the light that both female participants ordinarily regarded themselves as being well prepared and organised: *"I have like pension, savings, holiday expenses for my future – set."* (4;0;A4;8;106) and *"I am not used to it and I want answers and I'm not getting any"* (3;0;A3;6;115). This discrepancy seemed to have triggered additional feelings of frustration: *"I don't want an excuse – that's why it is like so irritating that I don't have so many excuses for my career and it's like why didn't I know?"* (4;0;A4;10;132); *"Yes, people say I am very well prepared and I don't even have a career that I can go into"* (4;0;A4;8;108) and *"Everyone around me seems to be knowing what they are going to be doing and I'm still sitting here and I still don't know what I am doing"* (3;0;A3;1;7).

The Giver seemed to have difficulty in recognising the progress she had already made towards envisioning herself in a future perspective, as noted by her planfulness in the following statement: *"I just want to go to Cape Town and do photography. I just like want to go and travel and just take pictures. I don't want to go shop and get the pictures, I want to take the pictures of Cape Town. I just want to go live in Cape Town. Everyone runs in Cape Town and I like doing exercise. I love, I just love Cape Town. I told my mom, like I'm coming back, like it's done! I've never set my mind to anything else, but Cape Town. It doesn't matter what I study, I am going to study in Cape Town"* (4;0;A4;6;66).

Even though The Scientist, exhibited less of a future perspective than the other four participants: *"I can't come up with anything that I am interested in or that I think I will be good in. So I don't know what I am going to do yet or what I am going to study"* (3;0;A3;1;3) – she was nonetheless able to sketch the rough beginnings of a future perspective: *"My career is also going to determine how I am going to live and like what husband I am probably going to get and how my family is going to be and my life in the end is going to turn out ... you live, you work for half your life, so it is going to be a big part"* (3;0;A3;4;85).

Perhaps, statements like the one above, as well as the rigid view she held on career change: *"Because, if I'm going to go and study something ... that's what I am going to do then ... it is basically going to be set for life, if I carry on. But still, it is going to make a big difference"* (3, 0; A3; 5; 89), that

immobilised her ability to make career decisions and/or plan for her future. Both female participants, however offered valuable insights: *“At the same time I’m like don’t get angry ... just stay calm and relax. Ja, it is going to take some time”* (4;0;A4;10;132) and *“Yes, it’s scary, but if I still don’t know what I want to do, then I will still choose something and then I will just see. It is not that big of a deal ... ja, at the end, I am happy and I wouldn’t look back and regret anything that I did”* (3;0;A3;7;149).

**b. Career control**

The three male participants appeared to have taken more decisive and planned steps towards designing their future career journey. They also exhibited a greater awareness of the current investment they had to make as a means to an end: *“My father told us things will come to you, if you go for it – so if we want something, we have to do something in return”* (1;0;A1;4;68) and *“Well first I wanted to become a programmer, so I came to this school because they offered computer programming”* (2,0,A2,1:3). The Scientist further summarised career control well in saying that: *“Everything has steps to it and at the end of it you always get your answer and I can like look at it from a different angle and see the bigger picture ... I like that about it”* (3;0;A3;6;113). Some of these ‘steps’ have been outlined below.

Career control seems to be strongly associated with, what the participants seemed to view as one of the first steps in their career journey, namely making subject choices at the end of Grade 9. The Idealist explained it as follows: *“Kids these days have to decide what they want to do, coming into Grade 10 or at the end of Grade 9. You have to actually sit and think about it – it’s not just an everyday choice of what am I going to wear tomorrow”* (5;0;A5;4;74; 142).

With this likely prospect in mind, all participants demonstrated a strong consideration of the possible career options attached to both the choice of and achievement in specific subjects: *“I was actually going to take EGD, but it didn’t help my APS – it wasn’t a university recommended subject, so no.”* (1;0;A1;6;122); *“When we have to like do our subject choice in Grade 9 ... then you have to make sure that you have chosen the right options, because if you didn’t, you wouldn’t be able to go into a specific career”*(2;0;A2;1;9); *“I’m good at Maths, so maybe I can go into actuarial science ... and I like EGD, so maybe I can go into architecture”* (1;0;A1;1;8); *“First I wanted to take Physics and I wanted to take Bio, because, I wanted to become a doctor. I didn’t need it, but I knew I had to take it.”* (1;0;A1;3;46). The Duty Fulfiller (who indicated a desire to pursue medicine, but started to doubt this decision based on his perception of the workload) demonstrated an increased sense of career control with his suggestion that he *“... could break up everything also and work towards one goal”* (1;0;A1;10;202). The Idealist also offered the following words of wisdom: *“Sit, study, learn, pay attention ... and you work your butt off to get yourself your varsity entrance. Everything your teacher actually tells you to do ... and it sounds like*

*she doesn't know anything, but they actually do. There is a reason why they have degrees and diplomas and honours etcetera"* (5;0;A5;8;132).

The Scientist also drew a connection between her choice of Science and Biology as subjects to a possible career trajectory: *"With Science, you can invent new things and you can change lives and find solutions, so it's all about solutions again and fixing problems"* (3;0;A3;8;153); *"I wouldn't mind working in a lab and finding out answers to things. I think solving problems – that is what I like doing"* (3;0;A3;8;155) and *"I like Biology, because we are starting to learn more about humans and stuff ... the plants are a bit boring, but it's quite interesting how everything works"* (3;0;A3;8;172).

The Giver also utilised subject choice as a platform for asserting her personal preferences: *"Like school has been emotional, because everything has been connecting to this, like every single subject"* (4;0;A4;15;197); *"I can become an architect and apparently they need Physics –so I dropped Business, because there is no way I was going to drop Drama. So I dropped Business for Drama"* (4;0;A4;1;8).and *"Then I fought for Drama – it is like the only artistic subject I could take"* (4;0;A4;1;8).

The Scientist displayed an awareness of the steps and urgency involved in designing a goal-oriented career: *"I would rather go and find out more for myself, before I make the decision, because, I know that if I know more, then I would make a better decision in the end"* (3;0;A3;4;81) and *"Lately, I have been thinking about it more, because, soon, I have to give in my application to university"* (3;0;A3;7;139). The Scientist described herself as someone who plans ahead of time: *"I plan stuff, but when it comes closer to the time, then I am more lenient. I always finish my stuff on my time and for myself I know that I want to get it done, but there isn't really a time period to it"* (3;0;A3;7;143).

The above suggested career indecisiveness, perfectionism and, confusion were however also evident in her discussion of subject choice in Grade 9: *"At that time, I was very uncertain and I didn't know what I was actually letting myself get into, and I was really scared if it would help me in the end and if I would be good at it. But, I also knew that in the end ... if like for a few months I didn't like, I could change"* (3;0;A3;5;107). The Scientist seemed to have continued on this path of uncertainty and did not refer to any active steps taken towards collecting further career information, most likely due to the time pressure she described experiencing: *"It is happening so fast and I'm meant to change and know what I am doing, but ja ... it's all happening too fast"* (3;0;A3;1;23). The Giver did, however indicate by Session 3, that she was making progress: *"I'm at a point, where I feel ready to almost decide what my career is going to be"* (4;3;D;1;2)

### c. Career curiosity

Three of the five participants, namely The Duty Fulfiller, The Executive and The Scientist demonstrated varying degrees of initiative in making a conscientious effort to learn more about career and

study options. Their responses therefore reflected their efforts in asking career questions or listening to conversations about careers: *“My father’s cousins, they went to university, because they came from the rich side of the family. So they tell me about these kinds of things. So, I listened when they were talking to my brother ... my brother got a lot of advice and stuff and so, I was listening”* (1;0;A1;4;76); *“Well, I have been starting to research now, but I’m not really finding much that can help me”* (3;0;A3;2;39). *I’ve been talking to people from different career areas and finding out what they had to study to do it and everything around that”* (3;0;A3;2;41) and *“So I spoke to like my cousins and I got information from the university and I spoke to my dad”* (2;0;A2;1;9)

The Duty Fulfiller and The Executive also grabbed at opportunities to experience the world of work first hand through job-shadowing: *“Yes, he [referring to the doctor, he was job-shadowing] let me sit in on four surgeries. And then he asked if I wanted to control it, and I was like: ‘No, I don’t want to kill the person’ ... so I was a bit scared. I said: ‘No, it’s fine’ and I just sat and watched the screen”* (1;0;A1;9;170) and *“I learned the most, when I actually went with the doctor”* (1;0;A1;9;182). This experience seemed to provide both participants with a clearer and more realistic idea of what they could expect going forward: *“Because what you see in pictures and what you actually see in real life are two different things ... it’s more interesting to look and see what they are doing. It’s not like ‘Grey’s Anatomy’ and all these shows”* (1;0;A1;9;1172).

Both The Giver and The Scientist had only made a slight attempt at job-shadowing: *“The person I wanted to shadow, wasn’t available”* (4;0;A4;12;162) and *“I’ve been with my parents to their work, because there are like a lot of areas in there. I’ve seen what they actually do and stuff, but I haven’t actually gone to like specific jobs or careers”* (3;0;A3;4;75). The Idealist argued that he did not have to speak to someone in his interested career field: *“I am quite certain of what I want to do in my life and what I have to do”* (5;0;A5;8;140) and *“I haven’t really set myself up for being anything else besides a teacher, because I don’t think I will do fairly well in any other sort of environment”* (5;0;A5;5;84). The Idealist did however display some career curiosity when he mentioned his preference for comparing himself to specific people in a particular career field and then: *“... placing yourself in what sort of environment you need to be. I am not like this person ... but I know this friend and this type of person is doing quite well in this environment and he is quite a lot like me”* (5;0;A5;9;144).

He also encouraged the further development of career curiosity by making the following suggestion: *“We need to be able to do things like career evenings – have people come in and say ‘This is what my career is and this is what needs to be done and this is what I do and this is who I help or don’t help’. But, this needs to be done from a younger age ... younger than from Grade 9 and 10, so that you can set yourself up and understand ... ‘Ok, I kinda liked what that job said, and what they do, but I*

*definitely like what happened in this job and what I need to do'. So, it's finding what situations you are comfortable in, but also adapting to slight changes in that environment"* (5;0;A5;8;138).

Participants also utilised real-life experiences to explore the fit between self and the work world, by seeking out different opportunities to test their skills, interest and/or knowledge: *"Well, when we are building our new house, I would look at the plans and I was also fascinated about that and I had ideas about what we could do. And, I also asked my father if I could redesign my room and extend it onto the balcony"* (1;0;A1;7;144); *"A couple of years ago, one of our snakes passed away and I thought 'let's go cut it up and see what happens inside an animal'"* (5;0;A5;5;82); *"What interests me every time I cook – I try and do something new – it must have a challenge"* (3;0;A3;2;37); *"I always wanted to do piano lessons. So I do piano now and my mom got me like ... art ... and like painting things and a canvas. I haven't used one of the canvasses yet, but I used the other one and auctioned it off – so my artistic side is going to come out"* (4;0;A4;5;58) and *"I took the year to figure myself out and last year I also made it come out a lot. I picked the colour for my room, you can ask my mom. I picked purple, purple, purple – it's my favourite colour. And they bought me a camera last year, so I've been taking a picture of like every flower in the garden"* (4;0;A4;7;100).

Although, the two female participants' responses reflected that they were making a slight effort towards exploring career options, it was also noted that they were not as actively involved in the process – as indicated by the following statements: *"Anything artistic and music, but I haven't looked into them"* (4;0;A4;1;2); *"I think because I don't know what I want to do ... I don't know if there is something else that I would like more or be better at"* (3;0;A3;7;131) and *"It's only going to happen later, so there is no point in researching it right now"* (4;0;A4;1;6). Both The Scientist and The Giver were nonetheless able to acknowledge this short-coming: *"I think maybe because, I do not know enough yet and I have not experienced enough yet, to know that I would want to go and do something yet"* (3;0;A3;3;51); *"I think I would rather go and find out more for myself, before I make the decision"* (3;0;A3;4;81) and *"I have to start, I have to explore, because if I don't, it makes it even more difficult"* (4;0;A4;12;160).

The afore-mentioned realisation was followed up by a number of statements indicating that they were intending to seek out, plan or engage in various career exploration opportunities: *"I don't get out of the house much. I am going to be more sociable, because that is part of my plan this year – academic and social. So that I can get out and take pictures, because, I also want to take pictures in the night – so I can have a change of scenery"* (4;0;A4;7;100); *"I know that I might not go out often and I may not know the realities of life, but I am able to ok ... like take this and put it into your life and stuff"* (4;0;A4;17;176) and *"I've always been more mechanical or technical, I think I have opened myself up to most of those areas and I have explored more and I think I'm fine with it now"* (3;0;A3;6;125). This



realisation lead The Scientist to believe the following: *“Now that I know I can find my future and I can find ideas of what I can do, I feel a bit more certain and not so scared anymore”* (3;0;A3;9;187).

*d. Career confidence*

The five participants varied in their display of career confidence, as well their belief that they possess the ability to overcome obstacles or cope with possible challenges that may come across their path. The Idealist’s career confidence is illustrated by the statement that he is: *“... amped to become a teacher”* (5;0;A5;2;22). The Duty Fulfiller shared The Idealist’s excitement and career certainty: *“I see myself in medicine. Ever since, I was little – it was all I wanted to do. And I still like it, it is not like I stopped liking it”* (1;0;A1;7;146), but seemed to lack confidence in his ability to work towards the achievement of his career goal: *“It is just the workload that is making me doubt”* (1;0;A1;7;146); *“If my marks aren’t good ... what do you think I should do, cause with medicine, I can say all that and ja ... but if I don’t actually get in, then that’s going to be the problem”* (1;0;A1;10;198).

The Giver, instead, felt capable of achieving high marks and experienced confidence in her abilities: *“I pass, I like seeing more than 75 – but I just don’t work for it. But, this year, I’m working on it. Cause it comes naturally to me, to be able to achieve, because I am naturally smart”* (4;0;A4;1;20); *“Learning comes easily to me, I find it very easy ... I get things very quickly – it doesn’t matter what subject. I just find it easy to learn”* (4;0;A4;2;24). In saying this, The Giver was, however also able to acknowledge the flip-side of the coin by stating: *“I realise that I can’t have that attitude, not everything comes that easily even if you are smart”* (4;0;A4;2;22).

The Duty Fulfiller also seemed to realise this and concluded that: *“If you are passionate about it ... you will be good at it and you will be successful. Always wanting to do better – that’s ambition”* (1;0;A1;8;150). He was also able to rely on a previous success experience to boost his career confidence: *“In Grade 10, my marks dropped from like 80 to 60 ... and then I got it back up to 80 – now all the marks are up to 80”* (1;0;A1;8;156). After acknowledging his ability to work hard at achieving the marks he wanted, he was able to confidently declare: *“... I will still pursue medicine, if all else fails with medicine, then I will only consider something else”* (1;0;A1;9;190).

Although, The Duty Fulfiller seemed to have his heart set on medicine, he demonstrated career confidence by comparing adaptability to his favourite sport: *“So without being able to adapt or think quickly on my feet ... I think that applies to most things in life ... even in soccer. You receive the ball and you don’t see someone coming, then you have to adapt to the situation, think of your options ... are you going to turn this way?”* (1;0;A1;10;194). The Scientist, also decided to view the possibility of ‘failure’ in a similar light: *“I think I would learn out of it [failure] and see that maybe that isn’t what I was supposed to be doing, but that I should look for more options and find something that I actually*

*have to do ... and then see from there explore and see what I should do” (3;0;A3;3;61) and “I think I would try and put all the ideas together and then actually find what works and find a solution and make it work in the end” (3;0;A3;9;179).*

Both The Scientist and The Giver were aware of the fact that the above is easier said than done and seemed to rely on the following coping mechanism: *“I basically told myself that it is going to be a new beginning, and it is a new page and that I must start from the beginning and make everything right and just carry on from there” (3;0;A3;5;101); “So I was ok, its fine ... you’ve got your whole life ahead of you ... you can start anew” (4;0;A4;5;58).*

The Executive, The Idealist, The Scientist and The Giver nonetheless recognised the contributing role that the past plays in shaping their future: *“Always look at it and find the best part of it and grow on from there and then just let it be ... all things in the end turn out right ... you just have to stick through all the hard times and then try and see the best in it ... carry on, but also keep that [other experience] with me” (3;0;A3;5;105).* and *“It’s just that the stuff you go through will just help you to be able to deal with stuff. Like just don’t forget about it, but you know ... you don’t have to use it to become who you are” (4;0;A4;5;58).* The Idealist emphasised these experiences as priming opportunities that served to enhance a person’s ability to cope with new situations and change. He had come to rely on the attitude of: *“You’ve got to adapt, you’ve got to change and adapt ... by becoming who you need to be in order to succeed” (5;0;A5;6;108) and has been “... doing it since Grade 1” (5;0;A5;6;112).* His take on change and possible changes in the future came down to the following logic: *“Leaving school and going into varsity and into teaching, I feel like it will be another experience, it will be just like going from pre-primary, to primary and from primary to high school and from high school and so on and so forth – it is just different environments” (5;0;A5;5;94).*

All five participants’ demonstrated a keenness towards finding and committing to a specific career trajectory: *“I think in the beginning, I’d be 100% sure and I’d stick to it” (3;0;A3;2;47).*, but at the same time, they also appeared to be confident and open towards exploring *“A new opportunity to do something else and find something that interests me more or my path leads me in a different way” (3;0;A3;2;47).* Perhaps The Idealist’s perspective on change would be wise to consider, after all: *“There’s no point in getting yourself ... over-excited ... no ... nervous for something – you’ve been there before. So it is going to be something that is going to be built into your life for the rest of it, so you might as well ... get on with it and stop being a little ‘wuss’ about it” (5;0;A5;8;136).* The Executive, The Duty Fulfiller and The Giver, respectively seemed to share the last-mentioned sentiment: *“I see it as being thrown into the deep end having to swim” (2;0;A2;3;37); “I think when there is doubt, decide what I really want to do and how I actually have to do it and then do it” (1;0;A1;10;198) and, “If I am not going to do it, no-one else will” (4;0;A4;8;106).*

ii) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the life-design counselling group sessions**

a. ***Career concern***

Over the course of the various group discussions, the five participants jointly discussed aspects related to career concern. Based on the participants' responses, progression seemed to occur as noted from the start of the sessions towards the end. All five participants demonstrated an awareness of the pending career decisions ahead of their future career path.

The Scientist and The Duty Fulfiller, demonstrated a particular awareness of how their current career decisions were seen to have an impact on their future career path: *“Well, I think that everything that you do every day is going to predict your future. And by looking back, you can basically see where your life is leading to and what is going to happen. But, you never know what is going to happen, so it can go both ways”* (3;1;B;3;75) and *“No, that’s stressful ... what if you can’t get in and then you can’t study what you wanted to study and then like you had a plan and then your plan is ruined”* (1;5;F;2;28).

The Giver, on the other hand did not seem to be very concerned with planning or considering the future, as evidenced by her reluctance to mention a future event on her time line: *“Then I didn’t do the future part, because the future will come. Whatever happens, happens”* (3;6;G;7;138). A similar level of planlessness was also noted with regards to career planning in some of the answers received by The Scientist, The Duty Fulfiller, The Executive and The Giver in response to the question: ‘How can I be of assistance to you?’. Examples of their responses were: *“I actually don’t know what I want to do yet and I actually don’t know what career I want to go into, so I am really confused at the moment. So, I really want to know what will suit me and what I should do in the future”* (3;1;B;1;21); *“I’m really confused about what I want to do after school. First, I wanted to become a doctor, but actually we do the work in Bio and it’s actually a lot of work and I’m starting to doubt whether I want to spend my life studying”* (1;1;B;1;7); *“I don’t know which field I want to into, if it is mechanical, civil, industrial ... so I hope this programme will help me to make up my mind”* (2;1;B;1;15) and, *“Ok I don’t know what I actually want to do. Because, the career I’m taking is actually for my mom, because I actually want to go into art. So I want to figure out if I should carry on or if I should tell my parents that I don’t want to do architecture”* (3;1;B;1;19). The Idealist and The Giver’s reflection of the feeling associated with planlessness is indicated by the following statements: *“I know where I want to go in life and what I do ... and it was like a whole weird thing, not knowing what to do and which route to take”* (5;5;D;1;14) and *“I was also scared because I didn’t know what was going to happen”* (3;2;D;4;66).

Towards Session 4, the participants started to display more certainty in their ability to prepare for future vocational tasks as noted during the collage-making activity: *“Ok ... I have decided ‘bio-molekulere tegnologie’. Ok first I am going to study medical, but that is if my marks are good enough and then I am going to specialise in nano-technology and make those tiny-teeny stuff for the body parts and then I am going to be able to reconstruct like that tiny snail like structure in your ear ... or cells to help fight cancer”* (3;7;F;1;2) and *I am very happy ... it’s exciting to know that there is something that I would like”* (3;7;F;1;5); *“So, I decided probably civil ... ja, I’ll go into civil and then study at Tuks. Oh and I also ruled out Stellenbosch and decided to go to Tuks. Stellenbosch is a bit far and I don’t think that I am self-disciplined enough to look after myself”* (2;7;F;1;16); *“I know exactly what I want to do: graphic design with film studies and then afterwards do a diplomacy in teaching. That way, if teaching isn’t for me, I’ll go into graphic design.”* (5;4;E;12;228) and *“I know what I want to do. I have back-up plans and stuff. So, now it’s just up to me get the marks, so that I can actually get in”* (1;5;D;1;8).

The Executive’s life mottos also revealed his attitude towards preparing for his future career: *“Train hard, fight easy’. I think that applies to all sport and school”* (2;5;D;3;90); *“If you work hard at school, you are going to have an easy life”* (2;5;D;3;92); *“If I do not want to push myself at practice, then die on the rugby-field”* (2;5;D;3;94). The Duty Fulfiller displayed a similar attitude: *“Life and success – if you don’t work hard, you are never going to be successful”* (2;5;D;3;91).

#### **b. Career control**

The Scientist’s anecdote about riding a bike for the first time: *“I remember, is getting my first bike. Everyone was on the farm and me and my sister both got it for Christmas ... and we were like really small, but then we like learned how to ride them. And then we have like a big road and ... we said, ‘we go this way’ – like how a real road would, so that we don’t bump into each other, because we couldn’t really ride it. But, then she got angry with me for trying to make rules and say that we have to make rules and then she drove onto the other side and then she drove into me”* (3;2;C;7;121) was compared to her career journey: *“So, it is still new, she is still on her way to learning something new about her career”* (2;2;C;8;144) and *“Because it is difficult, you are still learning how to do it”* (1;2;C;8;143).

The other participants further utilised the above recollection to discuss The Scientist’s tendency to think before she acts. The Executive indicated that The Scientist might be relying on luck or chance: *“Maybe she just had guts and thought she is not going to move”* (2;2;C;8;141). Others recognised her need for planning as a responsible action: *“I think because ... you made rules and it went wrong, it actually wants you to enforce it a bit more on yourself ... so that things don’t go wrong again”* (5;2;C;8;131) and *“You [The Scientist] try something new, but you have to try it in a certain way. That’s why you have to go to college and you want to experience it”* (4;2;C;9;146).

This discussion also spurred on personal reflections of their approach to unfamiliar situations: *“When I rode a bike, I just took the bike and rode on it wherever but I fell, but there were no rules. We didn’t make rules”* (4;2;C;9;146) and *“My first memory about getting a bike, wasn’t about rules, it was about performance ... about how fast I could drive, or how to get from A to B faster. If I can do a wheelie or not”* (2;2;C;8;147).

Perhaps it is The Executive’s driven need for performance that motivated him to look at how his current choices were likely to affect his future. This was particularly noted after he watched Steve Jobs’ graduation speech during Session 1: *“The future that holds him ... is just based on the choices he [Steve Jobs] makes and how he worked towards it”* (4;1;B;2;149). He also provided an example to show his dedication in working towards his career goals: *“Yes, because Thursday night all my friends went to Spur, but then I’ve got AP Maths – so I can’t go”* (2;2;C;1;10). The Duty Fulfiller demonstrated a similar awareness by suggesting that: *“I am finding my feet with medicine. Now, I want to do it. I am trying to get my marks up so that I can do medicine, because if I don’t get accepted then I have to go and do architecture ... or something else”* (1;4;E;4;79). He also mentioned the steps he had implemented to support his career ambition: *“I’m going to work ... ok firstly I am going to stop playing XBOX ... so then I can focus more on my work”* (1;4;E;4;81) and *“Yes, so I just have to get my marks up. I’m quitting hockey now”* (1;4;E;4;71).

Taking control of one’s career decisions depends on a person’s ability to make decisions independently of others. The Giver appeared to battle the most with this specific aspect, as suggested by the following two statements: *“I just do what they [parents] tell me. I really ... I don’t want to go to UP, but my mom told me that I am”* (4;4;E;10;207) and *“They [parents] said: ‘Hey you guys are going to Tuks’ and I said: ‘Ok, that’s cool’. I didn’t say a word”* (4;2;C;6;110). One of her life story chapters, reflected the difficulty she experienced with pleasing her parents and was titled ‘Masks’ – *“... because I started to be what everyone else wanted me to be”* (4;6;G;8;152). This was in contrast to The Idealist’s description of his role model who: *“... stood up for himself. It takes courage, not only to stand up for yourself, but to also stand up for those around you”* (5;6;G;1;16). In addition to this, he also mentioned that his father has encouraged him to *“... choose my own course ... he isn’t going to take me to open days. If it is something that you really enjoy doing ... go search it up yourself, that way you are choosing things that you enjoy and things that you think are interesting instead of you having exactly what my mother does ... ‘Ok, well you like this, that and the other ... but, why don’t you try this, because it is more money?’”* (5;4;E;11;214). The Executive also reflected in Session 3 that his life motto of ‘YOLO’ (an acronym for, You Only Live Once) has inspired him to: *“First of all to do things that make me happy. I don’t like to please other people”* (2;2;C;2;48). The Duty Fulfiller shared a similar attitude: *“I don’t expect someone else to get it for me. If I want something, then I must go and get it myself”* (1;4;E;11;216).

The Executive also offered the following reflection on The Giver's career indecision after listening to her earliest anecdote: *"She is reflecting on how her parents have decided what career she must do and which subjects she must take ... so that's playing through ... that she doesn't make decisions for herself"* (2;2;C;1;35). The Giver demonstrated an improved ability to make decisions on her own: *"Yes, I think like the decisions are now like more mine than theirs. Before, I needed a gap year, because I really didn't know where I was going"* (4;4;E;1;24); *I think I am getting smarter about my career ... because I know myself"* (4;2;C;1;2) and *"I'm at a point where I feel ready to almost decide what my career is going to be. Uhm ... certainty, I've had a lot of certainty, because basically I have known who I was ... I just haven't been certain if it was me or if it was who people want me to be – it is actually clarified"* (4;3;D;1;4) and *"I guess it's just like I should start seeing things from what I have to give and not necessarily what I can do for others the whole time ... it doesn't always help you to concentrate on everyone's lives and not your own"* (4;2;C;3;49).

These realisations culminated in The Giver's life story title: *"'The Reveal of a Gift' ... it's my life story ... it's just of all my struggles of what I want to be and being what everyone else wants me to be ... just becoming and being me is the greatest gift I can offer the world"* (4;6;G;8;148). The Giver's

indecisiveness, also shone through in the other participants' noted difficulty in choosing their favourite mottos; music and reading material: *"I don't read newspapers or magazines"* (4;3;D;1;22) *I have a variety in everything I listen to ... I can't have a favourite"* (4;4;D, 5;157).

### c. Career curiosity

The Scientist's life story, titled "Metamorphosis" related well to the concept of career curiosity: *"And then, now ... I am still like a worm because I'm still not ready and I'm still not grown up yet. So, I'm still on my path to find what I am"* (3;6;G;30;137). The following comment confirmed her desire to explore different options: *"So you can experiment a little bit, you don't have to only be set to one thing and only*



The front-cover of The Giver's life-story

*listen to one thing and then do that – you can do anything you really want” (4;2;C;5;79) and “If I don’t know what I want to study yet, then I can go and study anything I want to and if I feel that, that is not the way I should be going into, then I can change and then I can re-study and do what I want ... so that I can like find exactly what I am good at” (4;2;C;5;81).*

The Idealist also reflected on the role of curiosity when he shared his earliest recollection with the group. This resulted in an open discussion about the value he has seemingly attached to exploring his surroundings and/or observing a different way of doing something: *“Well, because he like went and poked the animal and stuff, I think that part like fascinates him, maybe he should like do something nature or medical related or stuff” (3;2;C;10;173); “It’s curiosity about what he loves doing. He was curious about his passion and he wanted to learn about it and that’s why he went to go play in the intestines” (2;2;C;10;182) and “His story, his childhood story ... is like ok, he is curious ... he doesn’t mind getting his hands dirty” (4;2;C;12;202).*

All five participants shared or reflected on various efforts aimed at exploring or investigating career options: *“Mom is taking me to UP open day, this Saturday” (4;4;E;10;208); “I went to this lady and then she also asked me a few questions and then she said that she has been researching about that stuff, because she is close to the university and then I was hooked the first time I heard about it” (3;5;F;1;4) and “Yes, I’ve been reading the study guides from the university. With all the different things that you can go and study and what you can become afterwards ... and then a few medical magazines and there’s this one university magazine and then each month they have a few courses and what you can become afterwards ... they are on the internet” (3;5;F;1;8).* The Executive’s responses also showed that he had investigated options for studying abroad: *“It is expensive, but compared to our school fees ... a bit more expensive per year. But also there you still have to get your own books and stuff ... so you only pay for your semester and accommodation – so all in all ... much more expensive” (2;5;F;3;40).*

The participants also demonstrated a willingness to explore their surroundings or look for new opportunities to grow from as a person, during a discussion of their favourite television shows and reading material: *“I want to do an exciting job ... new stuff ... if you think about it. Ok I am just getting this from ‘Grey’s Anatomy’, but it looks exciting. It looks like an exciting job, so I don’t think I will ever get bored of it”; “I don’t really buy magazines, but ‘Speed and Sound’ would be my favourite, because I like cars, it’s the only thing that interests me. It’s about cars basically” (1;4;E;4;67); “I don’t really have time to like buy magazines and read them, but if I do buy – it would probably be Elle. I do follow a couple of blogs ... like Luckypony – it’s a lady who posts about interior decorating and fashion and stuff” (3;3;D;2;30); “Magazine wise – it is either Sunday Times or Top Gear” (5;3;D;2;40); “I like reading FHM or Men’s Health, because it’s like got a balance about everything that guys are interested in, like*

*cars, fashion and music and stuff ... so it's like a balance or combination of everything* (2;3;D;2;46) and *"I don't read, I am more of a person who ... I go do it"* (4;3;D;2;24).

The Idealist and The Executive responses also reflected an increased interest in additional career fields: *"Ja, I still want to go into the engineering field, but I am also considering a field with more social activities ... to bring that in, in some way ... and also some architecture"* (2;3;C;1;16) and *"I know which route to take and I know which would be the best, but I am also thinking if I should go into agricultural work also"* (5;3;C;1;14).

The participants' choice of activities pursued in their free-time, also served as an indication of their curiosity in seeking out new opportunities to grow from. The Executive, for example described his love for cooking. The Duty Fulfiller affirmed The Executive's cooking ability as follows: *"This guy is good with cooking ... everything he cooks is so nice. When he brings lunch and he cooked it, it's nice"* (1;3;C;8;319). The Executive also indicated his enjoyment of sport: *"I like chilling with friends and sports – I love my sports. Like any opportunity I can get I will do it. Like I love Touch, even though it isn't a proper guy's sport, but I still love it. Because it is like your fitness levels have to be up there* (2;3;C;8;325). The Duty Fulfiller, on the other hand, shared his preference for playing X-Box games: *"It's just fun and you never get tired of it. It is something that I can play for like two days straight. It's a challenge. I just walk up the road. It's like a challenge and it is exciting ... I don't know how to explain it – I just like it. Like sometimes you just like something, you can't explain it* (1;3;C;6;240) and *"Ok, I play actually a lot of games. But, mainly FIFA and Call of Duty"* (1;3;C;6;239).

#### **d. Career confidence**

Career confidence was especially noted in the reflections the participants offered with regards to their earliest recollections, life-mottos as well as the life story chapters. The ability to problem solve or demonstrate self-efficacy was captured in The Duty Fulfiller's reflection on The Scientist's earliest memory: *"I think it shows that on her career path, she is going to have challenges ... like when her sister bumped her, but she is still going to get back up and ride the bike again and stuff ... so I don't think much is going to stop her from getting what she wants in her career"* (1;2;C;10;167).

The Duty Fulfiller also displayed an encouraging attitude towards his career uncertainty: *"Yes, it is going to take time. You have to be patient, but it is something that you are going to have to do – if you are going to be successful"* (1;5;F;4;65). The Idealist seemed to rely on his life motto to help him through uncertain times: *"You never know what is going to happen in the future. 'Hakuna Matata' ... I am comfortable with it. Nothing that a person can control"* (5;5;F;4;72). This seemed to be in line with The Scientist's belief that *"No matter what you do, you can always make something better out of it and in the end. Everything will work out the way it should"* (3;1;B;82;45).



The Idealist tended to think that the confidence was most likely linked to the fact that they “... *have been doing it for the twelve years before that, so what’s the difference?*” (5;4;E;2;33). He therefore believed that since “*You felt the feeling before ... you can pinpoint where it’s coming from and what you can expect from certain situations*” (5;1;B;3;79). His role-model Oscar Pistorius, served as an example of someone who has shown determination in overcoming obstacles since: “... *he ran against able-bodied people to prove that just because he is disabled, doesn’t mean that he is out of the game*” (5;6;G;2;16).

From a more personal perspective, The Scientist was able to reflect, once again, on her earliest memory of riding a bike for the first time to illustrate the enlightening value of past events: “*One event, I’ve already shared it with you guys, was when me and my sister were on the bicycles and when we had the accident. And I think also, I have learnt out of that a lot. Remember, I wanted to only have us drive on the one side, but she wanted to drive on the other side and then on purpose she drove on my side. But, that also taught me that I should listen to other people more and sometimes I must not just do what I want, but I must also let them do what they want to do*” (3;6;G;5;80) and “... *now I realised what I did wrong and then what I actually learnt out of it. Because, I’ve never really been in a situation like that again*” (3;6;G;5;82). The Duty Fulfiller, however believed that his earliest memories did not necessarily hold the same value for him: “*Well, I’ve like only had good memories, so for me it doesn’t really help me with my future – but, it’s like nice to remember. Unless it is beatings ... I used to get beaten a lot, I was a naughty child*” (1;6;G;5;186). When asked about his success and failure experiences, The Duty Fulfiller was nonetheless able to offer the following: “*I think it helps you to learn from your mistakes and figure out your skills and see what you are good at and what you are not good at ... and it can actually benefit you in the future. Like, let’s say I’m not very good with cricket – I won’t become or pursue a career in cricket*” (1;1;B;3;69).

Career confidence was also observed in the participants’ descriptions and reflections on the title and final chapter heading of their life-story: “*Metamorphosis, because I have been growing and maturing since I was little ... then there’s lots of things that build up and lots of stages in my life and each one has a different heading of ‘Metamorphosis’*” (3;6;G;7;128); “*My butterfly comes out when I start my family and I’m actually like an adult and I think then I would be who I actually am ... and be settled and stuff*” (3;6;G;7;132); “*Life is a lot like different pieces of art ... it has its good moments – like an artist ... they have their good art works and they have their bad art works*” (5;6;G;7;142); “*‘Final Presentation’ – it is how your past has affected you and how you are now and what you need to be in order to be the person that you are*” (5;6;G;8;144); “*‘The Reveal of a Gift’ ... it’s my life story ... it’s just of all my struggles of what I want to be and being what everyone else wants me to be ... just becoming and being me is the greatest gift I can offer the world*” (4;6;G;7;148).

Career confidence was also indicated by the participants' expression of self-confidence and acceptance in making career-related decisions: *"I am sure of myself and I don't really care about what other people think"* (1;6;G;8;158); *"... because I want to know about my future and stuff and I've also started not caring about what other people are thinking about me. So I've also started to focus on myself and not other people"* (3;6;G;8;160) and *"When you know yourself ... you don't care too much about what other people think anymore ... obviously everyone cares what people think, everyone does. I don't care who you are ... everyone cares ... it's just that you don't accept it anymore"* (4;6;G;8;162).

In Session 1 the participants watched a video clip of a speech presented by Mr Steve Jobs, the man behind Apple (See: Chapter 2, paragraph 2.9.). The participants' reflection from this video seemed to present their own personal goals for achieving career confidence: *"What stuck out for me was – don't let what other people want from you or their voices like lower yours and that whole 'stay foolish and keep hungry' and stuff"* (4;1;B;8;141); *"If he didn't get fired and he didn't have that ambition ... then he wouldn't be like where he was. He wouldn't have let Pixar become so rich and so happy"* (1;1;B;2;49). Jobs' ambition also stood out to The Executive, who suggested that *"... we need a lot of ambition. And he also shows that it doesn't matter what the situation he's been through, the future that holds him is just based on the choices he makes and how he works towards it"* (2;1;B;2;49).

The Scientist's statement to the group, offered a very suitable description of career confidence: *"It doesn't really matter, if you change your mind. If you know that you are going into the right direction, afterwards ... after you messed up, then you know you are going to do good and you know that you are going to be successful"* (3;2;C;5;79).

### iii) Qualitative analysis of the participants' post-interview

#### a. Career concern

##### ▪ The Duty Fulfiller

From the start of the life-design counselling programme, The Duty Fulfiller indicated that he would like to follow a medical path. He nonetheless doubted his ability to manage the workload effectively: *"I am going to be studying for ... ok I don't want to study medicine anymore. But, I got over it. Not, I got over it. Like, I don't know what happened. I think I saw a show or ... I watched 'House' and then I got back into it"* (1;9;II;15;199). Towards the end of the process, The Duty Fulfiller seemed to have gained more confidence – as indicated by his ambition to specialise in medicine: *"I'm thinking now that I want to do plastic surgery ... I went from wanting to being a doctor, then I wanted to specialise in the heart and now I want to go into plastic surgery"* (1;9;II;1;5). He also affirmed his passion for this field: *"I like*

*medicine, I've always wanted to be a doctor, I like doctor shows and stuff like that – it's my passion” (1;9;11;5;63).*

At the same time, he was also able to demonstrate preparedness for an alternative future: *“For me engineering has always been my second choice, because like my dad teaches me about that stuff. So it's a second option, I know I will still enjoy what I do, if I don't make it into medicine ... there is still income and I think I will be happy with it, also” (1;9;11;8;99).* He also seemed intent on ensuring that his career journey, must bring personal enjoyment *“Ja. I don't want to be miserable my whole life. I have seen people who don't look happy and they just make everyone around them unhappy”. (1;9;11,12;157).*

#### ▪ **The Executive**

The Executive's career concern and preference to plan for the future was illustrated in his earliest recollection *“I just like remember the process of getting everything read, like the bakkie on the trailer, getting all the supplies we need ... like petrol, extra petrol ... tying it down. The food you need and the water ... everything you need for a day at the quarry” (2;9;19;1;16)* The pressures of achieving his goals in ensuring his future career journey, also saw The Executive taking greater care in prioritising and making decisions that were likely to benefit him in the future: *“I've been able to balance it so far. But, Grade 11 ... I have to cut more on the social. I've seen that in the first term when I didn't really reach my goal for university entrance of 75's and 80's for Maths. But, I usually balance it out in exams. Like now, two or three weeks before the exams, I won't go out at all or during the exams” (2;9;12;6;49).*

The Executive demonstrated self-awareness with regards to his future career plans and the viable options: *“I think it will involve a lot of time management. I don't know, I think I will be able to handle engineering. I think I want to do engineering, but I wonder how it will fit into my life. I'm not sure about like civil and industrial. It's not like a set work – it has like different things all the time. So like one project will take two years, another six months, another one two months ... and different things like that” (2;9;12;10;120) ;“I also think that with industrial engineering, specifically – it involves brainstorming and of course there is a people side to it” (2;9;12,10;121); “Maybe – if I study like a business degree and I can become a CFO somewhere, but I would get bored it would just be numbers and numbers and counting money” (2;9;12;13;152); “It's a desk job basically ... same thing – routine. It is big bucks, but I wouldn't be able to do that ... because I am going to be in an office – not necessarily a small one, but it's going to have people, maybe just a laptop” (2;9;12;13;154) and “Yes. I already have a plan. My plan in life is get my engineering degree, do whatever I want to do, make my money and then invest my money into property and investment – so that by the time I'm like 55 I can sit back and will have properties that will bring money and income and investments ... and work on the stock exchange and bring in money for nothing and support myself when I'm older. I wouldn't have to work at all, I will*

*just get money on the properties that I own” (2;9;I2;16;191). He also appeared more committed to work towards happiness at the conclusion of the interview: “I don’t know when that is going to happen. But it is going to happen ... it’s in the book, it’s going to happen, it is in the book!”(2;9;I2;256;21).*

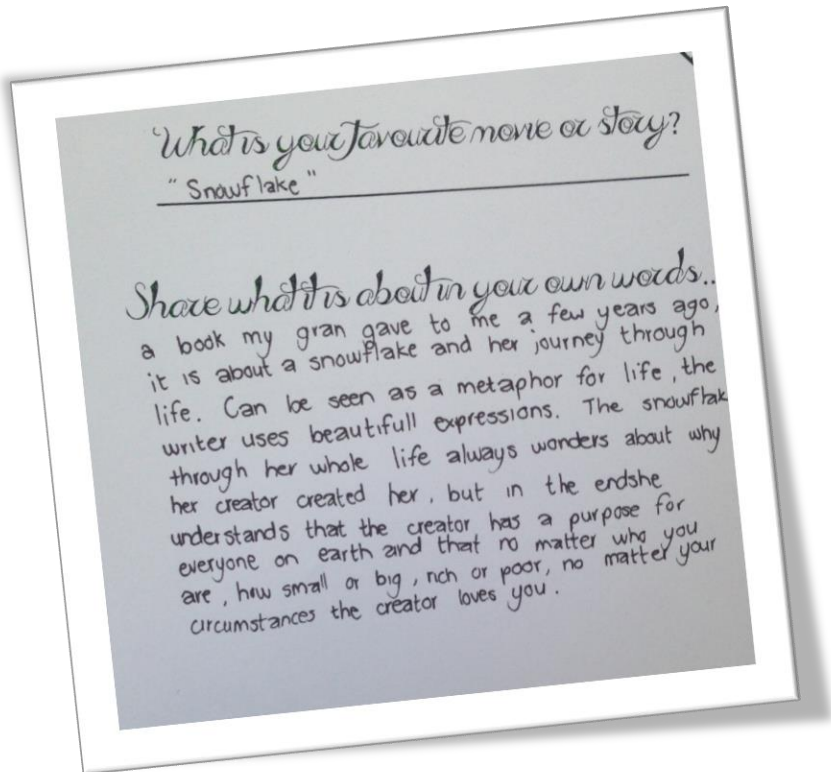
### ▪ The Scientist

The Scientist’s career concern seemed to stem from a desire to know more about her purpose in life: *“I think so, because that is always the question that comes up. Like why, what is the purpose*

*of me being on earth? Why am I here and what am I meant to do with my life?” (3;9;I3;1;4). This search for greater meaning may have been derived from one of her favourite stories to read. She was also able to reflect on the processes involved in planning her future: “Not knowing what the future would be is kind of interesting, but also in a way ... scary because, you don’t know what might come across your path” (3;9;I3;2;10).*

The Scientist’s life-story title was titled ‘Metamorphosis’. This choice was based on her ability to acknowledge the processes involved in change: *“I think ... that with metamorphosis and everything – you grow through all the processes and something might happen, but it will have a result to it and it will change you and make you who you are at the end” (3;9;I3;5;54).*

From the first session to the last interview, The Scientist seemed to exhibit a clearer direction of the career path that she would like to pursue: *“People are important, but I wouldn’t want to interact face to face with them. But, then I would like to fix other things. I like making little differences that add up to something back. It doesn’t necessarily have to be something that is noticeably, but all the little things” (3;9;I3;3;28); “I like solving problems and in science you do solve problems. So, I guess that’s where it comes from (3;9;I3;3;30); “If I find something that I don’t understand or don’t know the answer to ... I always want to find the answer. I am unhappy when I don’t find the answer” (3;9;I3; 4;34).* As noted



*The Scientist’s favourite story, depicting her desire to live a purposeful life.*

during the post-interview, she was able to start narrowing down her choices: *“Yes, I have looked at going into medicine. But, then I don’t want to do the doctor-doctor type of thing. I want to do something with engineering ... or something with like science with the physics and everything. So nano-technology – I find that really interesting, because you make or fix things for people and you get solutions to things”* (3;9;I3;5;40); *“I would be driven to do that and fix medical problems and I think I would like that”* (3;9;I3;5;42) and *“I like working on my own and doing my own thing and have my own rules”* (3;9;I3;8;76). *“Yes, I think because I like rules and I like structure and then I think that would make me want to do it”* (3;9;I3; 9;100)

*“I think I am becoming more excited about it, because my sister she also applied now and she got accepted and she is going to Stellenbosch. I think the whole thing of leaving the house, and starting my own life and doing my own thing kind of fresh out of school and you have to make your own life and your own decisions – I think I like that and it is making me a bit more excited”* (3;9;I3;10;134) *“I think at the beginning I was really scared and I was really stressed, because I didn’t know what I wanted to do and I didn’t think there was hope for me or that I was going to ever find something. But, now because after the whole or half of the year, I am more at ease with it and now I know what I can do and I can finish Grade 11 and 12 and go to university and I am really excited about that”* (3;9;I3;11;136).

#### ▪ The Giver

The life-design counselling programme seemed to reaffirm The Giver’s plans for her future: *“Honestly, I’ve always known what I want to do, but at the beginning I thought I just need someone to tell me what to do ... like I’ve known what I wanted to do, but I just needed reassurance”*(4;9;I9;1:4). She also began to consider the processes involved in designing the life she desires: *“But, it’s that thing of how am I going to start a new life type of thing? I mean it took me so long to try and understand who I am”* (4;9;I9;4;18). She also began to envision a possible future for herself at the hand of her favourite blog that describes the journey of a Zulu girl from a rural farm to attending university and the experiences she encounters. The Giver seemed to identify with the main character as follows: *“She is starting university and just like what I am dealing with ... she is also very intelligent and she knows how to stand up for herself and she is going through a lot. It’s nice to know what goes on when you are being yourself and following what you know and stand up for yourself ... that no matter what – she is still her. She hasn’t changed at all. Yes to her parents, it might look like she has changed, but it is because you have the freedom to be yourself”* (4;9;I4;4;20).

▪ **The Idealist**

The Idealist demonstrated career concern and was able to lay out his future plans as follows: *“I know what I am going to do. Hopefully, if my marks are good enough by the end of next term, I can go into studying at the Open Window Academy – graphic art and film study and then do a diplomacy in teaching – then I will be able to teach more specifically – more higher than lower grades. Also, the teaching sort of gives me a sort of back-up plan if maybe graphic design or film does not do it for me. At least there is something for me to fall back on and have an income”* (5;9;15;1;4). He also revealed the importance of having a qualification of some sort: *“Life experience doesn’t give you money. It’s that little piece of paper that school gives you afterwards – that is what gives you money”* (5;9;15;12;151) and *“With a degree, you can go – well here is my diploma, give me money”* (5;9;15;12;157).

Referring to the title of his life-story, The Idealist reflected on the concept of planning before starting, using the metaphor of art: *“Art is very much an inspirational sort of thing and inspiration can come to you whilst sitting and doing an interview to you sitting behind a desk and you are bored out of hell and you start to draw a whole bunch of lines and just go with it. Art can be premeditated, on the spot done ... that’s all to do with your subconscious”* (5;9;15;5;61).

b. **Career control**

▪ **The Duty Fulfiller**

Out of all five participants, The Duty Fulfiller seemed to be the one that demonstrated the most committed attitude towards achieving outstanding academic results: *“Yes, but now I have to settle down, because it’s exams”* (1;9;11;2;17); *“Yes, because these marks are important for university applications”* (1;9;11;2;23) and *“If I don’t study I know I am going to fail. If I don’t do my work, I know I’m going to get into trouble. My dad knows that now; he knows I’m responsible to do what I have to do”* (1;9;11;4;51). This point was reiterated by his willingness to remove possible distractions from his room: *“Exam time, I took it [his X-box] out of my room because I know if I am going to get bored, I’m going to play it. So, I gave it to my mother and then I gave my laptop to my dad to keep”* (1, 13;165). This is even more commendable, when one considers that The Duty Fulfiller admitted to his dislike of studying: *“I would be very unhappy because I hate studying. I know I have to do it, but I hate it”* (1;9;11;5;65). The Duty Fulfiller’s awareness of the likely consequences associated with being unprepared for the examinations appears to have had an influence on his level of accountability: *“... because this is Grade 11. Like with my brother ... his Grade 12 marks were fine, that’s what they accepted him for, but they didn’t accept him for actuarial science because of his Grade 11 marks, so I don’t want that to happen to me”* (1;9;11;13;167) and *“I’ve always got that at the back of my head when I do my work”* (1;9;11;13;169).

▪ **The Executive**

In the following statement, The Executive reflected the responsibility he felt towards realising his future plans: *“I think the only reason I will fail in life is because of me. Everyone else has ... my dad has given me the tools, my parents have given me the tools, right schooling. So if I mess up, it’s only my fault”* (2;9;I2;14;172) and *“I must have a degree behind my name, if I have a degree behind my name, I know that my family is going to have this and this. I think that’s what I want”* (2;9;I2;15;176)

▪ **The Scientist**

The Scientist demonstrated determination with regards to goal achievement: *“It was just since I was little, I do what I want. And if I don’t succeed, it doesn’t matter what anyone tells you – you can do what you want and you will finish it”* (3;9;I3;3;20); *“I think, I make an effort to control it, but then also there are stuff that I can’t control and there are stuff that I know if I do something then something else will come out of it ... so then, I just make the steps before to get the results”* (3;9;I3,4;38); *“Yes, I think to know that I have done it and that nothing could hold me back and if there was something then I got over it and I carried on. I think that is what would drive me a lot”* (3;9;I3;8;78) and *“I must do what I can. If, I don’t – I think that I will be unhappy”* (3;9;I3;9;88). This commitment to taking charge of her future, was also picked up in The Scientist’s profile picture on a social media application:



*The Scientist’s status update on a social media application reflecting her decision to take control of her life.*

▪ **The Giver**

The Giver appeared to accept greater ownership over her future career aspirations: *“I didn’t realise how my mentality was controlled by everyone else”* (4;9;I4;8;68). She also appeared to more aware of the responsibility resting on her shoulders to work harder at achieving her future goals. Previously, The Giver reflected on her academic efforts as follows: *“I don’t want to be a thorn and stick out, so I get 60, because I have never studied in my life”* (4;9;I4;1;6). In her post-interview, however she demonstrated a greater commitment towards improving her school marks: *“I understand ... like no matter who or what – I have to get my marks up”* (4;9;I4;1;6) and *“I just know it’s that thing of ... now I am really going to have to work hard. I have never really had to work hard in my life, so either way I am going to do ... it’s just that I hope I don’t fall back”* (4;9;I4;7;56). She also displayed career control, as suggested by the following response: *“All seem doable now”* (4;9;I4;7;62).

- **The Idealist**

The Idealist seemed to have started making a conscientious effort towards improving his marks since the pre-interview: *“According to last term’s marks, I only need to increase by 2/3 APS points”* (5;9;15;2;17) and *“I think I’m setting goals without realising it”* (5;9;15; 2;19).

c. **Career curiosity**

- **The Duty Fulfiller**

The Duty Fulfiller continued to consult with others working in his desired career field in an effort to gain further insights: *“One of my friend’s father is a plastic surgeon and I spoke to him and asked him about it, what he likes about it, does he enjoy his work ... is he happy with it and is it what he expected. He said he used to work in the ER ... now he has his own practice so that he can be with his family instead of being in the ER 24/7 and even though that was exciting, he prefers to work from home. So I also want to be with my family and stuff”* (1;9;19;1;7). He also demonstrated a willingness to continue consulting with others, after the post-interview in an effort to explore other careers in the medical field: *“Yes, I would – so long as they are comfortable”* (1;9;19;19;225).

He was also able to relate his preference for certain areas of medicine to the study material covered in his favourite subject, Biology: *“If I like what I read, then I will read a lot. I don’t think I will be interested in everything, like I don’t like kidneys – if we do kidneys then I want to play around. Ja, I like more muscles and heart”* (1;9;19;15;195).

The Duty Fulfiller was also encouraged to utilise his love for travel and adventure as a reminder to embrace new experiences and explore his surroundings: *“You are actually right when you say I’m just focused on that ... I don’t think about other stuff”* (1;9;11;17;231) and *“Safe ... the safe option”* (1;9;11;17;237). He also reflected on the afore-mentioned realisation, as follows: *“Like a trip is ... has an ending ... an adventure is where you go where life takes you and stuff”* (1;9;11;16;229). He advised himself as follows: *“I’m going to change my mind-set and if it gets stressful, I am going to remind myself to look at my options”* (1;0;19;22;279) and *“Ja. Because now I can explore my options and basically the stress is ... when I came in, I was thinking mostly medicine, but now I am more open to more stuff”* (1;9;11;25;310).

- **The Executive**

The Executive’s response to his collage illustrating his desire to be the boss, revealed that the responsibilities attached to being in a management position did not appeal to him: *“I guess that being a leader is too much responsibility for me. Like, I don’t ... want that unnecessary responsibility. Like,*



*being a prefect is not necessarily something I need* (2;9;I4; 9;104). The Executive’s ambition, nonetheless shone through consistently: *“Yes, I will not stay on ground level”* (2;9;I2;11;126)

▪ **The Scientist**

The Scientist was able to consider possible career options that appealed to her apparent knack for problem-solving: *“I think career-wise, I would have to solve problems, because that is what I like and then just ... I don’t know, I do something that I still like. But then I can end up helping others and solving problems”* (3;9;I3;2;14). *“Well, I think that you can compromise on a few things and you can change things and you don’t have to stick to one thing to get to where you want to be in the end”* (3;9;I3;6;64). She also reflected on her earliest anecdote shared with the group involving her first bike and unfortunate collision with her sister: *“I think that taught me that if something does happen – it’s not the end, you can recover from it. You do get up and you do move on”* (3;9;I3;6;66); *“Yes, I think so. I’ve learned a lot out of it and also I’ve learnt to tolerate a few things, so it’s a nice memory”* (3;9;I3;6;68).

She was also able to reflect on her interests and activities performed during her free-time as a means of exploring other career options: *“Ok, well that also fits into the baking. When I bake, I like to make new stuff and something. I don’t like making something that is not pretty, I want to make something that is interesting and that looks nice and tastes nice and I think fashion also links in with that”* (3;0;I3; 8;82).

Her responses, as noted during the post-interview, also suggested that she had made more of an effort to explore different career options: *“Yes, my dad actually said that he would take me to ... one of his friends does those things where they try and find out”* (3;9;I3; 10;106); *“No, he recognised it and he also said that he thinks I would be good at being a chemist and finding solutions and he knows another lady that I could go to”* (3;9;I3;10;110); *“I’ve also looked at that, but I don’t think I would be interested in it. I would do it and I think I would enjoy it – but I think it would also be a lot of the same”* (3;9;I3;10;112); *“I think I will go and research that now, that sounds really interesting”* (3;9;I3;10;114) and *“I think I will carry on chasing it. When I have something, I will try and do something more. But that is not to say – I might like what I have and stick with it”* (3;9;I3; 13;160).

▪ **The Giver**

The Giver also illustrated higher career curiosity as reflected by her improved efforts towards exploring her sense of self, values and knowledge: *“That’s why I love books, like I want to do research on random stuff ... If I don’t know stuff then I will just keep quiet and I also like take it in”* (4;9;I4;5;20) She also explored how culture would influence her in the future by referring to her favourite blog: *“So she is still true to herself, and you can see that when she goes back home ... she has to change a little, like what she wears and stuff because her dad is super traditional”* (4;9;I4;5;20). She also demonstrated a

greater awareness of the fit between self and the work environment by reflecting on one of her favourite television shows: *“It is cool to see someone out there, who is ok with being different and actually embracing it and using it not only to stand out even more, but uses it as an asset to help other people and use it as their job ... it is just amazing to see that you can use who you are and what you have and the skills and abilities that are different to other people’s to use in life and to be able to get money for it”* (4;9;14;5;28).

▪ **The Idealist**

In contrast to the pre-interview, The Idealist seemed to have made more of an attempt at gaining information about possible study options: *“It is one of the most prestigious art colleges in South Africa and also the lecturer for Fine Arts at TUT – said that I shouldn’t go to Tuks or TUT – I should go to Open Window”* (5;9;15;1;9) and *“Yes...because with graphic art ... it opens you up to the huge world of art. With graphics art design, I can go and design adverts or post adverts for Nedbank ... if you add the film study part of that I can go and make tv advertisements for Nedbank. But, most importantly what I would like to do is to do music videos”* (5;0;15;7;101).

The Idealist seemed to identify well with the main character described in one of his favourite books: *“In the beginning, Percy doesn’t know who he is. He doesn’t understand certain things, basically Percy Jackson is Poseidon’s son. He is what they consider in the book – a demi-god. So, it is basically about Percy Jackson and his life and him going through the steps of understanding who he is and where he came from and basically learning what he’s got”* (5;9;15;7;89) and *“He then learns that he ... as a person is more powerful than everyone else and he needs to use that for good and that may not be one of the easiest things to do, but still ... he does it”* (5;9;15; 7;91).

Further discussion, also revealed The Idealist’s perception of the different skills required to be successful in life: *“There are two different types of people ... there are academic people and there are people who cope. People who cope tend to do better out in the real world. So, I would say I’m more street smart”* (5;9;5;10;139) and *“The guys who are academic only know the world of their books. They don’t know experiences of how things happen in real life”* (5;9;15;10;141) and, *“Because I haven’t been able to deal with things in a textbook, I’ve learned that I actually have to experience things. How things work, how things run out there”* (5;9;15;10;143).

d. Career confidence

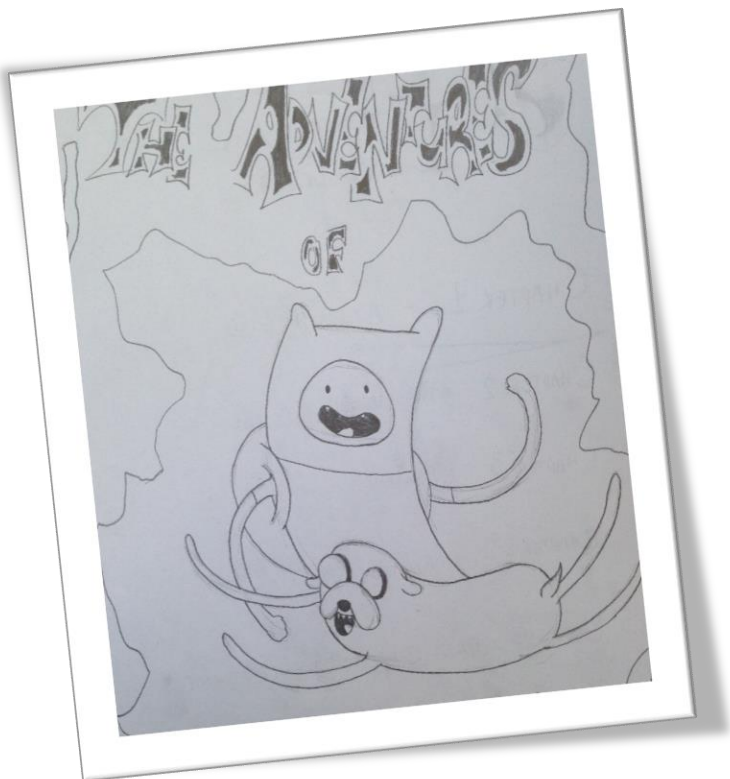
▪ The Duty Fulfiller

The front cover of The Duty Fulfiller's life-story served to reflect the confidence he has in his ability to solve problems and anticipate success: *"He is a hero and he has a magical dog that can turn into things ... and he just goes around and if there is a problem then he solves it ... but, the way they do stuff, it's a fun show"* (1;9;11;9;103). Once, made aware of the metaphor behind his chosen design, The Duty Fulfiller was able to recognise the various skills, experiences and abilities he already had in his possession: *"That's a good metaphor!"* (1;9;19;19;257).

He related the above realisation back to his favourite X-box game, 'Call of Duty' and the range of weaponry the main character has access to when waging war: *"Ja, I was thinking about that now and I was relating it to what you said it and I was thinking grenades, and skills like that"* (1;9;19;24;300). The game also served a means of reminding him that he would be able to manage the challenges that might arise on his future path: *"I can get over it and past it ... unless I die"* (1;9;19;24;304). Towards the end of the session, The Duty Fulfiller displayed a higher level of career confidence by stating: *"Yes what comes, comes ... I go with my life to where the adventure takes me ... I make plans as I get there – but I'm not going to go at it unprepared. I will have my backpack and an idea of where I want to go and what it will take to get there, but if plans change then I can adapt ... it all comes back to the backpack"* (1;9;19;25;314).

▪ The Executive

The Executive's third anecdote reflected his approach to mastering new skills, like cycling: *"I had a BMX, but I refused to learn with training wheels, so I just carried on falling and getting up and falling and getting up, until I got it right and ... I asked my dad to time me and see how fast I could do it and carried on until I got better and better"* (2;9;12;2;20). This drive was also carried through in his attitude towards life: *"I think I strive on success. Because I know I will be more comfortable going into a school tournament knowing that I'm probably one of the better players here. There's not so much pressure*



The front cover of The Duty Fulfiller's life story

*here, I probably don't have to perform as hard; even though I'm still going to play my best, I just feel like I have a backbone to fall back on ... like, experience"* (I2;9;I2;4;45). Experience also came through in a discussion about his parents' divorce: *"Basically, you can throw anything at me and I will be able to handle it"* (2;9;I2;17;211)

#### ▪ **The Scientist**

The Scientist consistently demonstrated confidence in her problem-solving ability: *"It just shows that whatever I do – it will always be right and there is always a solution to everything that I do"* (3;9;I3;1;6). She also seemed certain of future success: *"It always turns out for the best and there is always a reason for everything. So it's a good thing"* (3;9;I3;2;10); *"I think I have, coz whenever I've had a problem, I've always fixed it. And then some of those problems I've dealt with again or I've needed an answer and I knew a way to fix it much faster – that helps!"* (3;9;I3;2;12); *"I really have to know what is going to happen and I try to find the answer, but, otherwise if it is not such a big a thing or I know that it is going to come out right then I'm ok with it"* (3;9;I3;4;36) and *I think so, because it doesn't matter if it changes – as long as I get somewhere and I do something that I like in the end. If I succeed in something and do very well in something, then I think will be very happy. If I get right what I wanted to do"* (3;9;I3;5;46-48).

She also held the following view of failure: *"Failure, if I don't succeed in something, then I try to fix it. I don't like thinking about it ... I accept it and then I move on. I don't hold onto what I did wrong. It happened and it was bad ... and that's that"* (3;9;I3;6;56) and *'I think some of the things that I have failed in, I've learnt out of it. So it is not a failure anymore, because I have learnt from it"* (3;9;I3;6;60). Her life-story titled *'Metamorphosis'* also reflected her view on change: *"I think ... that with metamorphosis and everything – you grow through all the processes and something might happen, but it will have a result to it and it will change you and make you who you are at the end"* (3;9;I3;6;54).

#### ▪ **The Giver**

The Giver demonstrated improved self-value and self-acceptance: *"Just give me a little time to shine every now and then and I will be ok"* (4;9;I4;3;16); *"I haven't yet started to like stand up for myself, but in my head ... I have decided like 'No, this is not the way that I want to be treated ... I am finally seeing it"* (4;9;I4;2;8); *"I'm like finally listening to myself – I'm actually like pretty amazing – I did not know that"* (4;9;I4;5;28) and *"I can do anything ... it's just our destiny – like I can be great, just give me chance type of thing"* (4;9;I4;3;16). Her responses also suggested several practical means for overcoming obstacles: *"And I can, like when I sit down and do the work, like the projects that I finally*

*did – it’s easy ... I understand that I have to listen in class” (4;9;I4;1;6).* Furthermore, The Giver undertook to: *“... risk – you have to take a chance to become who you want to be” (4;9;I4;6;45).*

▪ **The Idealist**

The Idealist’s life-story was titled ‘*The Art of Life*’. In a comparison between art and life, he indirectly referred to career confidence: *“Life is very much a thing of art ... you draw a line and if that one doesn’t work and you erase it and you do it again. It is very much like an art work – like pencil drawings. You can’t just go and draw something and Voila – that’s amazing ... you have to draw, erase, draw, erase ... you have to constantly work forwards, to work backwards, to work forwards again” (5;9;I5;4;51); “That line is where you go ... I’ve been here before ... I know what I have to do, I have to erase what I have done before and then make a new line” (5;9;I5;4;53) and “I think life is lots of tiny little art pieces that make up one” (5;9;I5;4;55).* This view related well to The Idealist’s description of his favourite television show: *“Arrow, the guy was basically stranded and someone picked him up and he basically taught him how to survive and eventually he got off the island and he used and he basically adapted those things that he used how to survive and he basically made himself a superhero” (5;9;I5;6;85).*

**5.2.3.2. Theme 2: Family/significant other’ influence**

Table 5.4. provides a more in-depth layout of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide the coding process for theme 2.

**Table 5.4.: Theme 2: Family/significant others’ influences**

<b>Theme 2: Family/significant others’ influences</b>	
<b>Inclusion Criteria</b>	
<b>2.1. Parental involvement</b>	
<b>Description of parental involvement</b>	<b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>
Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the role of parents in influencing the participants’ choice of career. This refers to any specific advice/guidance the lack thereof; demands/pressure being placed on them and/or any expectations (directly/indirectly) being imposed on them.	<i>“And my mother, she came from a poor background” (1;0;A1;3;64).</i>  <i>“They said I have to go study and I must do something that will benefit me in the long run” (3;0;A3;3;55).</i>
<b>2.2. Envisioned family life</b>	
<b>Description of envisioned family life</b>	<b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>

<p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the expectations, obligations and/or hopes that the participants have attached to their future career with regards to their home and family life.</p>	<p><i>“I have a good job and I am providing for my family” (1;0;A1;2;32.).</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t know, I think I would struggle to like come home and think – ‘how am I going to feed my family tonight?’ or ‘If I don’t get this event my family is going to go cold tonight?’ They are not going to have electricity or have a roof over their head” (2;9;I2;11;176).</i></p>
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**Exclusion Criteria**

**2.3. Parental discipline**

Description of parental discipline	Examples of participants’ responses
<p>Any words or phrases referring to parental involvement related to discipline in any form have been excluded. The emerging main theme focuses on parental involvement and the reference to statements that mention the participants’ responses to being disciplined or the specific technique that their parents used – will distract from this focus and have therefore been excluded.</p>	<p><i>“Yes. I have been disciplined a lot ... like it helps you ... it like puts you in your place” (1;8;I1;5;90).</i></p> <p><i>“My dad used to give me an old ‘klap’ on the head for discipline. But, you’ve learned to like zone out” (5;8;I5;5;93-96).</i></p>

**2.4. Family relationships**

Description of family relationships	Examples of participants’ responses
<p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the relationship that exists between the participant and his/her parents. Reference will be made to the quality of the relationship; time spent together; the relationship dynamic; qualities that define the relationship and/or possible conflict and/or stressors</p>	<p><i>“My father, he is just more realistic and my mother is uptight. She is not like open to opinions. It is either her way or ... that’s why we clash a lot.” (1;0;A1;2;36).</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t fight with my mother, unless I think I am right ... and when I fight with my mother, I am right and most of the time my father agrees with me in the end” (1;0;A1;2;40).</i></p> <p><i>“Before, I didn’t talk to my dad. It was like when my dad came home ... ok, I went to my room to get out of his way because whatever he says hurts me – and he doesn’t know that” (4;0;A4;3;44).</i></p>

**2.5. The influence of significant others**

Description of the influence of significant others	Examples of participants’ responses
<p>Any words, sentences or phrases that mention the role that significant others have played in a participant’s life.</p>	<p><i>“Little things come from lots of different people. So there wasn’t like three main people that influenced me or that I look up to” (3;6;G;1;8).</i></p>

This includes words of motivation, support and/or guidance.	
<b>Exclusion criteria</b>	
<b>2.6. The difference in relationships that the participants share between their respective mothers and fathers</b>	
<b>Description of the differences in relationships that the participants share between their respective mothers and fathers</b>	<b>Examples of participants' responses</b>
<p>Any words, sentences or phrases that refer to the differences that exist between the participants' relationships with their respective fathers and mothers.</p> <p>Any reference to the comparisons that exist in the quality of parental relationships, as well as differences in how each parent is perceived differently, was excluded.</p>	<p><i>“My mom will like shout at me from her dizzy heights and my dad will be like: ‘Listen ... this needs to improve’” (5;4;E;8;148).</i></p> <p><i>“I would like to hear from my dad. I respect my dad, because he says when something is not right, whereas my mom would be: ‘Aghhh ...’. But also with my dad – he is willing to be the big man and look after everyone, but he is also willing to stoop down to my level and understand where I am coming from” (5;3;D;10;199).</i></p> <p><i>“I switch off when my mom starts to speak” (5;6;E;7;150).</i></p> <p><i>“My father is logical, he takes the side where he feels ok, you are making a point. My mother never ever makes her point. She shouts for like no reason. She shouts at me for my marks ... ‘Its good marks. I’m top 11 ... I’m like 11<sup>th</sup> in the grade and you are shouting at me for my marks?’” (1;6;E;8;159).</i></p> <p><i>“It was like parents evening the other day and the only thing I remember my mom saying was: ‘Pathetic’. Like all my dad did was like ... he tried to make me laugh and my dad was like: ‘Ok, just do what you do in EGD with all your other subjects’” (4;4;E;8;156).</i></p> <p><i>“I talk to my dad; not my mom. I don’t stay with my mom” (2;2;C;6;95).</i></p>

(i) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the individual semi-structured interviews (before the group life-design counselling sessions were initiated)**

a. ***Parental involvement***

Four out of the five participants regularly referred back to their parents' opinion, influence, guidance and/or support in making career related decisions. The Idealist rarely discussed the role of his parents. Parental influence regarding career decisions, was first-mentioned in relation to subject choice: *"Basically, in my head, I wanted to take Drama, Art and Visual Design – but, then my mom was ... like ... 'No' ... because, I think she wasn't going to pay for it, if I was going to like do art at university"* (4;0;A4;1;8). *"I wanted to do EGD, and my mother said: 'No, Accounting is the way'. I didn't really like Accounting. I was good with it, but I didn't really want to do Accounting"* (1;0;A1;2;26) and *"My mother actually made me do it and I said: 'No, I don't want to do it ... it's my life and I want to do EGD instead"* (1;0;A1;2;26).

Participants also reflected on their parents' past and present experiences as influential factors in planning their own career path. The first contributing aspect involved their parents' background: *"Both my parents came from really poor backgrounds. My father, he didn't have any money, his father kicked him out like at 19 and my father had to work"* (1;0;A1;3;64). Given this background, it is understandable that The Duty Fulfiller's mother *"... doesn't want me to end up like her parents and her and she doesn't want me to not have options ... she wants me to have options. She said she had missed out on opportunities"* (1;0;A1;2;30). The Duty Fulfiller perceived his mother's approach as controlling and requested her to: *"Put herself in my shoes, when she was young and think of what she wanted to do when she was young and stuff like that and she started to understand"* (1;0;A1;3;62).

The Scientist's parents' experience of university seemed to sit well with her and might have, contributed to her choice of tertiary institution: *"Stellenbosch ... my parents also said that I must go there and my sister is probably also going"* (3;0;A3;3;65); *"Because they went there and they said, they started their lives there and they experienced new things and that's like a whole new world ... so I think I would like it there"* (3;0;A3;4;67).

The third influential factor involved their parents' past and current employment or occupational choices: *"It's also like what is happening with my dad. He used to work for [REDACTED] for 17 years ... and now he has a job at [REDACTED] and he actually enjoys going to work now and he comes home happier"* (1;0;A1;7;132) and *"I think it is my dad, because he wanted to be a doctor, as well, but then he never ..."*

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<sup>4</sup> Company name omitted

<sup>5</sup> Company name omitted



*he said, that he actually regretted it. He said that he actually wanted to be a brain surgeon, but he was too scared to actually go and do it” (3;0;A3;8;165).*

Perhaps, this realisation had in some way influenced The Scientist’s father’s aspirations for her future – *“My parents say I should go into something that I feel I’m good at and that I enjoy” (3;0;A3;1;11).* They did however offer some additional guidance: *“It must be something that will benefit me in the long run ... so they won’t really let me go and do something pointless ... they’ve already said that if I can go and study something and they said that after one year, if I don’t like, I can change” (3;0;A3;3;55).*

In contrast to The Duty Fulfiller and The Giver’s desire to have had less input or control from their parents (specifically, their mothers), The Scientist was longing for more direction: *“They are also open to everything and said I must do anything that I feel I want to do ... it’s hard because they are not showing me the right direction I want” (3;0;A3;5;107).* In response to their parents’ aspirations for them, The Duty Fulfiller and The Giver responded in two different ways. The Duty Fulfiller expressed his desire for more autonomy: *“She has also accepted the fact that I am also getting older and she can’t control me” (1;0;A1;3;60)* and *“My father, he wants me, now that I am getting older ... he wants me to read like grown-up books and stuff ... and I am more into sci-fi and he doesn’t understand why I am still into that stuff” (1;0;A1;4;72).* The Giver, on the other hand, opted to acknowledge her parents’ perspective: *“I have been seeing it as – ‘you are making the decisions of my life for me’ and I was getting frustrated for it, but I haven’t been seeing it from your point of view type of thing” (4;0;A4;13;184); “I [participant speaking from her mother’s perspective] know what you can do and I’m going to push her for it, even if she hates me for it, cause I love her and I want her to succeed’ – which is where architecture comes in and stuff” (4;0;A4;13;184).* She had therefore seemingly resigned herself to following her mother’s aspirations for her career: *“You can take Drama, but that doesn’t mean you have to do Drama ... like there are so many things you can go into, like there’s even a list of things you can do after school and I was like ... ‘I could go to my mom right now and show her this quick’, but I was like, ‘No, its fine – I will go into architecture’. I was like Drama and psychology would be the perfect combination, but then I was like: ‘No – you can’t think like that, you are going with architecture’ and then I just ignored it” (4;0;A4;15;197).* Another response, however suggested that The Giver’s parents’ were open to alternatives: *“Basically, my dad was like: ‘Me and your mom can see that you are working hard and stuff’ ... and I thought that they couldn’t ... ‘We may not say it or show it, but we are giving you the green light’” (4;0;A4;17;215).*

Parental advice was also noted during the semi-structured interviews. The advice did not however centre on a specific career choice, but rather on the process involved in career decision-making: *“My father ... like he saw that I am starting to doubt and he said that I must just make the decision, he doesn’t want*

*to decide for me” (1;0;A1;3;58); “It’s like my father said, if it’s a lot then you need to break it down into little pieces and do it individually and then do it all together” (1;0;A1;8;148); “My dad wants me to be able to provide for my children ... like the way he does” (1;0;A1;2;32) and, “They suggested that I just keep on time and don’t let all the things build up and make my choices later ... ja, just keep in time and don’t let things build up because then I will struggle in the end” (3;0;A3;7;147).*

Although, The Idealist’s parents did not seem to have played a significant role in his career journey, he did mention other social influences, such as teachers: *“Even though they are older, they still respect the younger generation, because they know the younger generations are going to be our future and if we do not teach the younger generations about how things need to be, then the world’s going to turn into rubbish. The thing about teaching is there is not enough teachers in the world. Full stop. But there are also not enough teachers in the world who are really dedicated and want to teach” (5;0;A5;9;146).*

**b. Envisioned family life**

All five participants, on occasion, discussed the family life they plan to have in the future. Some of these reflections referenced their current family life and demonstrated a strong future orientation towards providing for their children – in much the same way as their parents have done for them: *“Because I like the life I live now where my parents have provided for me. I don’t want to go lower and not be able to provide for my family. I want to do better than what my parents did for me and provide for my kids” (1;0;A1;6;108).*

Other participant reflections seemed to serve as possible projections and/or ideas for raising their children differently to how they (or their parents, for that matter) had been raised: *“I think I want my children to be put in boarding – just like for one year because they have to have discipline and be responsible. And then they can come back and I’m going to put them in different stuff, so that by the time they are like middle ... end of primary school – they can be like: ‘I’m going to do this, this and this’ ... and we can take away the things they don’t need” (4;0;A4;8;106) and “I don’t want my kids to grow up in an area like that [participant referring to where his grandmother stays]. I don’t want to live in an area like that because of drugs. Because, I remember ... when I was small, we used to live in Laudium and almost every second day the lights were out because cables were stolen” (1;0;A1;8;162).*

The Idealist also indicated his reluctance to pursue a military or service-centred career, in lieu of teaching for the following reasons: *“In terms of pay-out, better life situation ... less risk of fatalities ... also being able to, if I get married in the future, to be able to go home to the wife and kids” (5;0;A5;2;30).*

(ii) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the life-design counselling group sessions**

a. **Parental involvement**

**Parents as role models/examples:** The role of parents in the participants' lives was also identified during the group sessions. The Scientist and The Duty Fulfiller listed their respective fathers as their suggested role-models: *"He grew up with very little ... he made a success of his life and he has always been like there behind me, telling me what I should do, helping me with my goals and my dreams (3;6;G;1;10)* and *"I wrote my dad. Basically, the same reason as The Scientist and also he taught me that you can make anything out of nothing" (1;6;G;1;12)*. The Idealist on the other hand, shared an opposite experience of his father's influence on his life: *"He is being a hypocrite. He is lecturing me on what to do and he is not doing the same" (5;6;G;4;177)*.

The Duty Fulfiller and The Giver also considered how the example set by their parents and/or other family members impacted their future career planning: *"When I look at what they have accomplished and stuff ... and I ask my parents how they got there, they say hard work. So. I also want to be like them when they are older and I also have to do. I don't have to do exactly what they did, but I have to like go in that same direction and strive to do better" (1;2;C;11;188)*; *"At the end of matric I am supposed to get five distinctions and an APS score higher than 37, because of my previous relatives. And now I actually have to think about all of that and I have to try and beat my parents' salary on top of that. But at the same time, I want to be happy" (4;1;B;2;33)*; *"I see my career path as something to do with a lot of Science and Maths, because of my parents" (1;2;C;3;43)*; *"Like my mom is studying. She had never stopped studying. Like right now, she is her third year of Masters ... I don't know how many things she has done" (4;4;E;3;49)*.

**Parents' opinions and expectations:** The Duty Fulfiller also discussed the value he has attached to his parents opinions: *"My parents also influence me like what I want to do with my career and stuff. They don't make me do it, but they influence me" (1;2;C;11;186)* and *"It's like my parents ... if you think about it. I really only care about their opinion and my grandparents also ... and like really close family" (1;6;G;8;163)*. The Giver also demonstrated her dependence on meeting her mother's approval by basing her decisions on her mother's expectations: *"When they don't tell you what they want you to do then that throws you off. Because, my mom ... I've been doing all of this because of them and then my mom is like ... 'Do what you want' – and I'm like 'I'm in Grade 11'" (4;4;E;10;198)* and, *"All, I get from them is disappointment ... and I don't want to disappoint them, because it really makes me feel like I am worthless" (4;4;E;10;208)*. The Idealist, on the other hand had the following to say: *"When I was younger, ja ... I thought that I had to impress them and do things for them to be happy. But, I also realised at a*

*point, that you also have to think about yourself at some point and that there's no point in chasing after something that is never going to happen" (5;4;E;11;196).*

**The degree of parental involvement:** One of The Idealist's earliest recollections told to the group, stood in further contrast to the experiences The Duty Fulfiller seemed to share with his parents: *"I think I was about 3 or 4, I crawled into the guts and stuff ... and I was sort of chewing on the guts and stuff and my parents didn't do anything. That next morning, the guys were saying that how about 20 metres away there was an impala being killed by a cheetah and my parents didn't really give a damn that any of that was happening or that I snuck out or whatever" (5;2;C;10;169).*

Reflecting on these noted differences, The Idealist had the following to say: *"Well, of late my parents have been trying to get involved with me. But, I am so used to not having them around, so it is actually irritating me that they are trying to force it on. But, not having my parents nagging me about this, that and the other of what I should do, has actually given me freely time to think what I want to do with my future and not what they want me to do with my future or anything like that. My parents' idea is basically – if you earn a salary and you can look after yourself, then you can leave the house" (5;2;C;11;198).* He believed that this approach had nonetheless served him well: *"What everyone has been saying about that whole like parent thing ... that always adds up to ... in everyone's case with over controlling parents – it leads to misery and frustration in later life. Because with your parents ... you don't know that when you are out in the real world ... you don't know what decision to make for yourself ... cause your parents have always made the decisions for you. They haven't let you screw up and try and fix it yourself" (4;2;C;3;45).* The Executive shared a similar view to The Idealist's: *"Do what you want and whatever makes you happy, because in a few years' time your parents aren't going to be there for you. Don't stop life because you want to make other people happy, because they move on and living your life and making other people happy – are two very different things" (2;2;C;5;76).*

**Parental dependence:** Another aspect related to family influence was The Duty Fulfiller and The Executive's perceived dependence on their parents: *"I don't think that I will be able to handle my money right. Because, if I know when I go down there and my parents have given me money for food, then I'm not going to spend it on food and stuff" (2;5;F;2;22)* and *"Like I wanted to go to UCT and then my mother said 'No, it's too far, how am I going to eat?'" (1;4;E;11;218).*

**Career lessons learnt from parents:** The group also had the opportunity to listen and share career lessons observed from their parents: *"You mustn't do something that you are not going to enjoy. Do something that you are going to be happy with and provides for your family" (1;4;E;7;142); "Ja, it's like my parents also said ... it is better to work for yourself than to work for someone else" (1;4;E;7;146); "My father says that I could be a janitor for all he cares ... just as long as I am happy. My mother says ... don't be a janitor, but do whatever makes you happy" (1;4;E;9;194); "Don't study too hard that you*

*don't have time for anything or anyone else, but try to figure out what you want early on*" (4;4;E;7;144); *"Owning a company. I really want that and he [her father] just reassured that it works and that you do have time for your family"* (4;4;E;7;144); *"Spend more time with the family and to do something you love doing"* (5;4;E;9;173).

The Giver and The Duty Fulfiller have also noted that their respective fathers were happier at home when they were regarded as being satisfied with their careers: *"I understand what this guy is saying. Like, my dad he was never happy with what he was doing. Now, that he started working with [REDACTED] and stuff – he actually comes home happy"* (1;4;E;6;125); *"Oh my gosh ... he is actually home now"* (4;4;E;6;126) and *"He was stressed for a while in like getting the business into place and stuff, but like right now he has just started buying stuff"* (4;4;E;7;139).

**b. Envisioned family life**

The participants also collectively shared the hopes they held for their prospective family life. These expectations seemed to be linked to their career aspirations, as derived from the following statements: *"I don't want to be miserable for every day of my life. If I have a family, I want to be able to provide for them and I want to give my kids everything that my parents give to me – and I'm going to need a lot of money for that. Yes, I have to keep up"* (1;1;B;2;27); *"I also think money helps you to support your family and gives them all the luxuries that I was so fortunate to receive from my parents. They just deserve the same that I received"* (2;1;B;2;29). The Executive also reflected on the importance of being responsible once he has a family: *"I feel like when you are going to grow up, you are going to have more responsibilities, and then ... that's why you do all the crazy things now, that you wouldn't be able to do if you are a husband or a father"* (2;3;C, 2;50).

The group also discussed their views on maintaining good family relationships. The Executive strongly encouraged The Giver to: *"Talk to your parents, cause you have to have a good relationship with your parents. Because, if you don't ... then when you have kids – you are not going to have a good relationship with them either. Because, you haven't been brought up in a household that has had like openness amongst family and stuff ... so it is going to be a never-ending cycle"*. (2;2;C;6;112). The Duty Fulfiller also felt strongly about this point: *"How would you know how to be a parent, if you didn't really have a parent, who is like a parent?"* (1;2;C;7;118). The Giver also acknowledge the importance of positive family relationships *"At some point you will not be able to deal with a certain situation, because you don't know how to do it ... no one has shown you"* (1;2;C;7;116). The Idealist, on the other hand believed that *"... it also does depend on who the person is. But, like I would not go tell my parents ... or*

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<sup>6</sup> Company name omitted

*how me and my parents are with my children. I would try and interact with all of my kids, all of the time”* (5;2;C;7;114).

**c. The influence of significant others**

One of The Giver’s earliest recollections served to illustrate the influence that significant others have exercised on her life: *“When I was in primary school or pre-school, they [her teachers] called me to sing like in a yearly concert. I don’t know how they found out that I could sing, whatever, but it’s like a lot of people in my life saw a talent that I never saw and I just go with it and I do end up being good with it”* (4;2;C;2;29). The Scientist was able to reflect on this experience and related it back to The Giver’s experienced feeling of career indecision: *“Well, she has a lot of problems with her deciding and her parents and everything, but because she is getting advice from other people it will make her choice easier, because they see what she is good at and that can maybe help her”* (3;2;C;2;39). The Scientist also discussed the influence that different people have had on shaping her life, as suggested by the description of her role-models: *“Little things come from lots of different people. So there wasn’t like three main people that influenced me or that I look up to”* (3;6;G;6;108).

**(iii) Qualitative analysis of the participants’ post-interview**

**a. Parental involvement**

**▪ The Duty Fulfiller**

The Duty Fulfiller indicated his mother as one of his greatest sources of stress regarding his future career planning: *“If I have a small problem and let’s say my mom hears about it, then she will be like come – lets go for lessons and stuff and ... I don’t need someone to take me for extra lessons when I know my work. Basically, all my stress comes from my mother”* (1;9;I9;4;49) and *“My mother is constantly putting that like mental stress on me, because I’m like, ‘I know that don’t tell me, please’. I don’t say it, because I don’t want to be rude”* (1;9;I9;4;51).

Both his parents appeared to play a critical role in organising his academic priorities: *“They forced it on me ... ja, so now my mother says I must rather read instead of playing Xbox – because that is all I do. I’m like ‘You are lucky that I’m not outside doing drugs and stuff”* (1;9;I9;10;119); *“My mother says I play too much and I work too little and she wants me to rather read and stuff, before that it used to be my dad. My dad said you have to read at least 50 pages a day and I was ... I hated reading, I hate it ... till today I absolutely hate it* (1;9;I9;9;117) and *“Before exams, I went out almost every day and then my mother started getting irritated and she said I had to study. And then I said ‘Exams are two weeks away,*

*as long as I do my hour a day, I'm fine'. So like my mother starts getting angry and then my father starts getting angry and then it gets like tense at home” (1;9;I9;11:147).*

▪ **The Executive**

The Executive regarded his father as his role-model: *“My gran used to tell me that when he was younger, he didn't really have much of a stable home, like my grandfather wasn't very responsible and my grandmother was working and he used to get the best marks in his grade and what not and he had a lot of self-discipline and also his dad bought him a car and what not, but because of the type of man my grandfather was – made him pay for rent at the age of like 17 and 18 and then he paid back for the car he got ... and when he left for varsity he had to work and study at the same time ... I think that is amazing because of the success that he is today. So I think he has been through the hardships and he understands everything and I think he understands life more than anyone I know (2;9;I2;2-3;31) and “He told that his parents wanted him to become a mechanic – and he basically told them that he doesn't want to do it and he went into the IT field rather. And he doesn't really enjoy his job, but he gets the work done and he gets the pay for it” (2;9;I2;15;178).* Whereas The Executive's father appeared to be successful in meeting his career goals, his mother seemed to have suffered more failed business ventures. These failed attempts have influenced The Executive's career decisions as follows: *“I guess I have seen like, my mom ... like she has quite a bit of money to throw around. So she's tried to bring Build-a-Bear to South Africa – that failed. She's opened up ... she's brought in Gym products, which didn't work out as well. She's done quite a few things. She is scared of failing again ... now she is trying to open up a Waka-Berry, so I don't know. She is following her dreams, but they are not successful” (2;9;I2;15;182).*

▪ **The Scientist**

The Scientist's parents have seemingly contributed to her determined spirit, as based on the following response: *“I think my parents, cause they always ... they told me if you start something, you will finish it. And just push through no matter what and then you will get to the end of it” (3;9;I3;3;22).* The Scientist's mentioned her father as her role-model for various reasons, including: *“He had made something out of nothing and ... so anything is possible in the end – if you just try” (3;9;I3;3;24).* She also reflected on her parents' ability to manage change: *“In the beginning they also didn't know what they were going to do and what was going to happen in the future and that with determination they got the results” (3;9;I3;13;158).*

- **The Idealist**

The Idealist shared his view on the influencing role that the other participants' parents apparently played in their decision-making processes: *"I don't want to say this in case I am wrong, but the way I see it, they have made their parents their role models and they have to live up to their parents' standards and what their parents think. From the very beginning, my parents have said: 'Be what you want, we don't really care – we will support you'. I actually think that their parents have said that 'It's fine you can do what you want, but we want you to this'. My parents tried to do that once, when I was trying to do my academic choice, but then my parents were helping me to decide what would be the best route for my marks"* (5;9;15;13;176).

**b. Envisioned family life**

- **The Duty Fulfiller**

The Duty Fulfiller demonstrated consideration towards his future family by emphasising the importance of being happy in one's career: *"Family life ... when they come home, they will probably come home and be like miserable. Like when they come home and you ask 'How was your day?'. They would probably say that they don't want to talk about it and they go to bed. Eat and goes to bed"* ( 1;9;19;12;159).

- **The Executive**

One of The Executive's time-line events revealed his parents' divorce. He reflected on the impact of the divorce on his envisioned family life as follows: *"I think that might affect my relationship in the future ... cause I won't be able to know a mom does this and a dad does this. It's normally like ... targets of my life; my mom did this for me and the rest my dad did this for me and grew up with these rules – the rules were not put together. So, I guess that will affect my life somehow. But, I guess that I have learned ... I've been able to cope with it, because it happened at such a young age, I didn't know any other way of living, so it didn't have such an effect on me as a person and ja, I guess I just have to adapt to it and I'm used to it – so it doesn't really bother me"* (2;9;12;2;29).

He also reflected on the hopes he held for his future family life: *"I don't know, I think I would struggle to like come home and think – 'How am I going to feed my family tonight?' or 'If I don't get this event my family is going to go cold tonight?'. They are not going to have electricity or have a roof over their head"* (2;9;12;15;176). He also listed the values that his father had instilled in him: *"I think he has been such an inspiration to me. He was the one who taught me how to ride my bike, taught me Maths, taught me how to tell time, taught me how to read, taught me basically everything. He provides for me and my sister and he is there for my mom. He will still spoil her financially and he still supports my gran"*



*and his two brothers and their children as well ... he supports, and ja, no matter what, he will support his family. so I don't know, I think that's a great inspiration to me*(2;9;I2;2-3;31).

**c. Family relationships**

▪ **The Duty Fulfiller**

Throughout the process, The Duty Fulfiller demonstrated a strong commitment towards family values: *"Yes ... don't disappoint me [his parents]"* (1;9;I9;2;15). His mother appeared to play a particularly influencing role in The Duty Fulfiller's sense of right or wrong. He also often referred to the internal conflict that he experienced when he attempted to disregard his mother's rules: *"I think I am experiencing it [partying] too much now, because I didn't before. Because my mother – she doesn't like me to go out. My father ... he says as long as I get my stuff done I can go out. My mother doesn't like me going out, because she doesn't know where I am and stuff, but I call her and I tell her where I am"* (1;9;I9;3;19).

One of the highlights on his timeline referred to the time he got his ear pierced. This event served to illustrate the difficult position he found himself in when he had to decide between his mother's wishes and the desire to be adventurous: *"With my mother, like when I wanted to pierce my ears ... I said it was going to be for my birthday and I'm not asking for anything expensive or anything and she said 'No, I said no and it's final'"* (1;9;I9;7;81); *"Ja, I always end up in trouble"* (1;9;I9;3;43.) and *"Yes, I don't want to cause trouble"* (1;9;I9;4;55). He was, nonetheless, able to understand the reasons behind his mother's actions: *"That's cause I think ... my mother grew up, basically, she had to raise my aunt and stuff. So I don't think she got to be a child"* (1;9;I9;7;87). It is perhaps this degree of insight that contributed to the following realisation: *"No, it's not that. I am close with my mom. It's just that we fight a lot ... we fight a lot, but at the end of the day we are still very close"* (1;9;I9;8;94).

The Duty Fulfiller appeared to have a very different type of relationship with his father: *"Yes, my dad is like my friend. He does all the stuff that we do basically. He taught me soccer, he used to be my soccer coach for the whole team. We spent Thursdays together ... every Sunday, we go and play tennis with him ... every day I sit and talk with him when he gets home"* (1;9;I9;12;153).

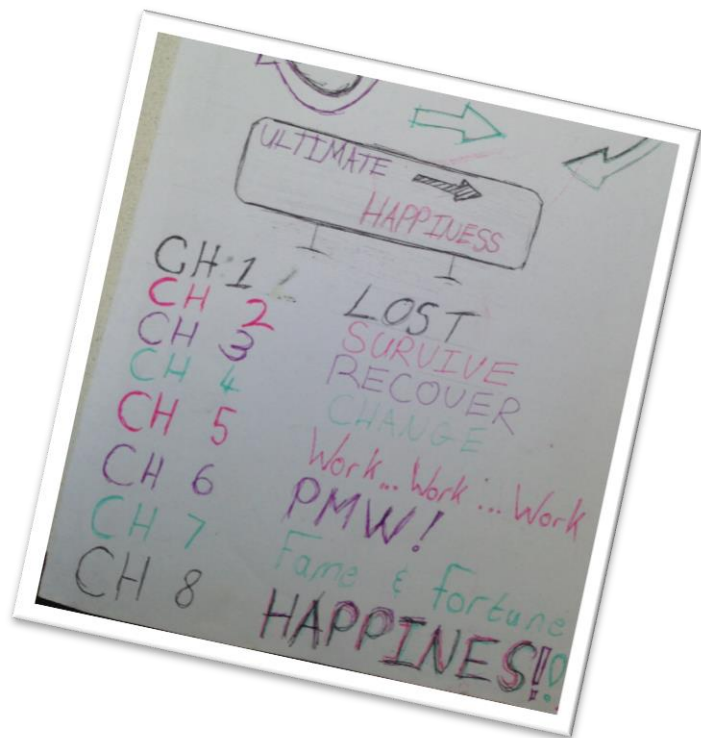
▪ **The Executive**

The Executive seemed a lot more comfortable to share details of his personal life during the post-interview. This included discussions about his family relationships: *"I think that I haven't really grown up in a household where I got to see how a proper family should be run – so when I think of family, I think of mom, dad"* (2;9;I2;2;27). The idea of family was an important aspect in The Executive's life:

*“Family is everything” (2;9;I2;3;37) and “Yes, because I think when I see my goal of success I think of family as one of my main goals and then after that I say that I think my family will be the most happiest in luxury” (2;9;I2;4;41).* In referring to his favourite television show, ‘Shameless’, The Executive once again demonstrated family values: *“Family look out for one another no matter what. No matter what they go through, even if this one steals your car or wrecks your car or whatever – you will still cover for him, look after him – no matter what”*

The reason behind his preferred choice of television programme became clearer when he revealed the following experiences: *“My mom almost died from cancer, but the thing is my dad was overseas ... she was going through chemo and she couldn’t take us to school and what not. I basically had to look after my sister and my mom – and like cover up her vomit so my sister couldn’t see it. Then after that, she just got tired of it and got fed up and just tried to commit suicide. But, she didn’t tell anybody – then I kind of had to my phone my dad and tell him” (2;9;I2;18;227).* These events were not shared during group interactions.

His life-story chapters also revealed more about the challenges that he has had to face: *“‘Surviving’ ... would probably be the time when my mom was going through rehab and ‘Lost’ would probably be the time she was going through chemo and ‘Recover’ would be the time I decided to go and settle in with my dad and ‘Change’ would be living with my dad”.* After his mother’s attempted suicide, The Executive opted to live with his father: *“I guess, it was challenging. So we thought that ja we are going to stay with him now, it’s going to be McDonalds and movies every day. And it wasn’t – it was like normal routine lifestyle” (2;9;I2;19;235).*



*The Executive’s chapter layout of his life-story:  
Journey of The Executive*

#### ▪ The Giver

The Giver continued to voice her concerns regarding her parents’ anticipated response to her intended life-design and the accompanying changes it might hold for the relationship she shares with them: *“Yes I have a limit ... not with my parents, because it that’s hard (4;9;I4;2;10).* Her responses, nonetheless

suggest that she had given some thought to what she had expected of them: *“Tell me that you see it ... say something, don’t just keep quiet, because I do not want to read your mind anymore”* (4;9;I4;4;18). She also discussed her parents perceived view of her loyalty towards the Zulu culture: *“I am really bad at Zulu ... I’m just fascinated by culture and different languages, but I don’t think my parents know that at all, like I think that my parents think I am English”* (4;9;I4;5;20). Towards the conclusion of the post-interview The Giver explained the apprehension she felt towards sharing her life-design with her parents: *“I don’t know them, so I don’t know what their concerns are. I don’t know how they are going to take it. Like I really do want them to know that I appreciate everything that they have done and it’s ok that they didn’t see everything and they don’t have to feel like the worst parents ... they can feel something, but I don’t want them to feel the worst”* (4;9;I4;5;28).

▪ **The Idealist**

During the group discussions, the other participants’ highlighted The Idealist’s relationship with his parents as a concern. The Idealist, on the other hand, viewed his family in a different light: *“Our family is not exactly the type of family – where after a phone call I say, ‘I love you mom’ and she says ‘I love you son’. We’re more like ‘Ok cool’. We very much a family who ... we know that the affection is there – we know that blood is thicker than water and we don’t need to say ‘I love you’ to assure each other”* (5;9;I5;13;172).

**5.2.3.3. Theme 3: Financial and economic considerations**

Table 5.5. provides a more in-depth layout of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide the coding process for theme 3.

**Table 5.5.: Theme 3: Financial and economic considerations**

Theme 3: Financial and economic considerations	
Inclusion Criteria	
3.1. The importance of financial security	
Description of the importance of financial security	Examples of participants’ responses
Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the importance of money as a yardstick for success and/or a contributing factor to career choice and lifestyle. Specific reference being made to money and the values attached to it.	<i>“It does make sense to me, but I have this feeling that if I am going to do something that makes me happy – it is not going to make me money either. So it is either happiness and no money or like money and the stuff that money buys – which is kind of</i>

	<i>happiness ... so money can sort of buy you happiness instead of being happy and poor. I would rather be unhappy and loaded” (2;9;12,11;174).</i>
3.2. Awareness of the job market	
Description of the awareness of the job market	Examples of participants’ responses
Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to factors related to the demand, expectation and/or changes in the job market. Any reference to employment statistics, salary information and/or government regulations that may influence their career decision-making process.	<i>“I think to have two environments you can work in ... ups your chances of being hired” (5;0;A5;5;78).</i> <i>“There is no job opportunity in South Africa for architecture” (2;9;15, 10;146).</i>

(i) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the individual semi-structured interviews (before the group life-design counselling sessions were initiated)**

a. ***The importance of financial security***

The five participants demonstrated distinctive preferences, values and/or associations with regards to their financial prospects. Two of the three male participants, namely The Duty Fulfiller and The Executive readily acknowledged the value they had attached to the potential earnings of a specific career: *“Cause medicine is something that I like and it brings in money” (1;0;A1;5;106); “Yes, money. I need a job with money that is going to provide” (1;0;A1;8;164) and “Yes, the second option is for money – it’s a back-up plan” (1;0;A1;5;10 6).*

The Executive expressed his belief that money would bring happiness, whereas The Scientist was of the opinion that: *“I have to be happy in what I do, because if you are happy then you will work harder and you will have money in the end. Money isn’t that big a deal to me. I think I could live a normal life, I don’t have to be like rich or ... I just need to be happy, have a good family and a stable home – things like that” (3;0;A3;4;87).* The Idealist appeared to share The Scientist’s view on this matter: *“I will see myself as a middle class citizen – not stinking rich, but able to live comfortably on the salary I can work on” (5;0;A5;6;104).* He also further embodied this realisation, by stating that: *“Teaching is sort of a plus for me, because it is an ok wage. Ok, I’m not going to lie – it’s not millions and millions of dollars, but teaching – you sort of give back to the kids and you help kids and all of that, but also for yourself – it gives you a sense of how life should be” (5;0;A5;5;86).*

The Giver on the other hand focused on the importance of the financial costs her parents would have to carry with regards to her future life decisions: *“It is going to take some time [to decide on a career]*

*and it may take a lot of time, but at the same time I don't want to waste their money. In general, I don't like wasting money – I always take the cheapest one. I don't like them [parents] buying expensive stuff” (4;0;A4;10;132).*

**b. Awareness of the job-market (local and international)**

Two of the male participants, The Idealist and The Executive, made projections and/or shared their understanding of the current and future career world: *“To be honest, and this may sound very racist, but young white kids in this country will not get very far ... and with BEE and all of that getting a lot more serious, it's just blown overboard, if you ask me” (5;0;A5;3;52)* and *“So not only do you have to have high marks to apply, but you also have to see if you get selected and in South Africa there aren't many job opportunities” (2;0;A2;2;11).*

Their understanding of the future career world led them to further insights and considerations. The first being that the career world is bound to be competitive: *“If someone looks at your resume ... and they see this kid has 60% in Art and this kid has 5% in Art – he is going to go for the person that is better than you ... that's a fact of life” (5;0;A5;4;74).* In addition to achieving higher academic results, The Idealist was also of the opinion that a tertiary degree was likely to add the competitive edge, as opposed to relying on luck: *“A kid can come out of Grade 12 and be a billionaire, but the statistics are very, very low. A kid needs to go to university, which I would say is a more reasonable and successful way of getting on with life, instead of sitting and thinking ... ‘Well I've got matric’” (5;0;A5;8;130).*

Secondly, he suggested that having a game plan in place was likely to improve one's chances of success in the job market: *“Certain changes you have to adapt yourself with, but you need to be political about it ... it all depends on how you play in life. Hey, it's about ‘who’ you know, no longer ‘what’ you know. A good example is Zuma. He left school with a Grade 7 qualification and he is sitting as president now ... and it is not because he went and studied politics at varsity – it is because he knew certain people. Mark Zuckerberg – it is not what he knew, but who he knew” (5;0;A5;5;101).* The Idealist discussed the implication of such a game plan and described how his association or networking with specific learners from school may improve his chances of success later in life: *“Now let's say The Executive becomes the greatest known surgeon, he can be ... ‘This is my friend’. That will eventually spread around and that will perk up the bosses' ears and if they hear it, they will say: ‘I like who this guy is – let's choose him’” (5;0;A5;7;122).* Thirdly, The Idealist and The Executive noted the benefit of diversifying one's skills or qualifications: *“I think to have two environments you can work in ... ups your chances of being hired” (5;0;A5;5;78).*

(ii) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the life-design counselling group sessions**

a. ***The importance of financial security***

The Duty Fulfiller and The Executive reflected the value of financial security. The Duty Fulfiller admired his role-model, Tony Stark from Ironman, for the following traits: *“He is brilliant, he has money”* (1;6;G;6;112). He also reflected on the tedious process involved in earning money: *“Like if I am going to be studying medicine ... all my friends are going to be earning money and I am still going to be at university, but then later I am going to show them”* (1;4;E;4;65). The Executive also attached his career choice to financial security, by suggesting that he would only follow careers that show financial rewards: *“Careers where I will make the most money”* (2;1;B;1;15) and *“There is not a social career that really makes a lot of money”* (2;2;C;1;12).

Both The Idealist and The Scientist, however, emphasised the value of happiness as an indicator of success as opposed to financial wealth: *“Success isn’t money or anything like that. Success is when you are happy with what you are doing. Getting into a job that I enjoy”* (5;4;E;6;124) and *“I think that if I’m happy then I will work harder. I will get more money in the end”* (3;1;B;2;35). The Idealist nonetheless admitted that: *“... it’s more comfortable to cry in a Mercedes than on a bicycle. And basically, money makes the world go round ... you can’t live without it”* (5;1;B;2;39).

b. ***Awareness of the job-market (local and international)***

**View of South Africa:** During Session 4 the participants discussed their attitude towards South Africa in general as well as the career opportunities available. All five of them shared a negative or uncertain view on their chances of succeeding in this country: *“This country is not going the right direction at the moment”* (3;5;F;3;46); *“People aren’t actually doing their jobs. Everyone in South Africa is fighting for one thing, instead of trying to let it grow”* (5;5;F;4;66); *“The politics, the corruption ... nothing is being done about it. My generation or my children are going to be out of this country – they are not going to grow up in this country ... it’s the same way as Zimbabwe is going”* (2;5;F;4;48); *Eish ... this country. I don’t really want to my kids to grow up in this country”* (1;5;F;3;54) and *“I don’t know if it is going to get worse, or if it is going to get better. And I don’t want my children to be ... what if I am supposed to get out of the country now and start a life somewhere else?”* (4;5;F;4;76)

**The far-reaching influence of Apartheid:** The Giver, The Scientist and The Duty Fulfiller also referred to the influence of Apartheid: *“They think we think that we know everything and that we do not consider like the past and what not. But, it feels like they are not willing to move on”* (4;5;F;4;76); *“They should just leave the whole apartheid thing behind ... because it is still coming up in some places. And*

*if everyone can just become equal and realise that they have to do what they want themselves and other people aren't going to do it for them* (3;5;F;5;80) and *“... because of the whole BEE thing. Like my mother was telling me, even though you are Indian and stuff ... it is going to be hard to get in ... so it puts us at a disadvantage”* (1;5;F;3;58).

**Hopefulness:** The Giver, The Scientist and The Idealist nonetheless displayed a degree of hopefulness: *“... but at the same time, I know we have to stay and make them realise that this could be a change”* (4;5;F;3;76); *“At the moment, I don't think that it is going really good with South Africa, but if things change for the better than I think things could get better”*; *“I think there is a future, because if we are progressing – then it will create new jobs and new areas will get explored. There is a future, but you have to work hard to get there”* (4;5;F;5;82) and, *“I am hopeful there because South Africa does need a lot more male teachers ... I am on the hopeful part, because I am a male and I want to do teaching”* (5;5;F;5;70).

**Proactive career planning:** The Duty Fulfiller and The Executive seemed to have taken proactive steps in improving their chances of success: *“But, like now, I would try and make sure that I have something that other students don't have so that I can get in easier”* (1;5;F;2;32); *“I think that IEB and AP Maths would help me ... but now I also want to go and study overseas. So, I also want to take SAT's and stuff”* (1;5;F;2;34) and, *“Engineering is the closest thing that I can get to architecture ... I said that architecture doesn't have a future in this country, unless you are like really tops”* (2;5;F;1;16).

### (iii) Qualitative analysis of the participants' post-interview

#### a. The importance of financial security

##### ▪ The Duty Fulfiller

Financial considerations appeared to influence The Duty Fulfiller's choice of career: *“If money wasn't an issue, I'd be a professional soccer player”* (1;9;I9;5;67). His career choice therefore seemed to be strongly related to the expected remuneration attached to it: *“And also money, I have to at least make some money”* (1;9;I9;6;71). The Duty Fulfiller's aspiration to be financially comfortable appeared to stem from his desire to provide for his future family: *“I just want to give my children what my parents have given to me – that's the main thing. Ja, I don't ever not want to not have money ... no, that's not a nice feeling”* (1;9;I9;6;73). His experience of growing up in a financially stable family seemed to have contributed to this outlook: *“Ja ... cause like, if like let's say if I want something. My dad would say, ok give me at least three reasons why you want it or deserve it and stuff ... and if I can then I can get it”* (1;9;I9;7;81).

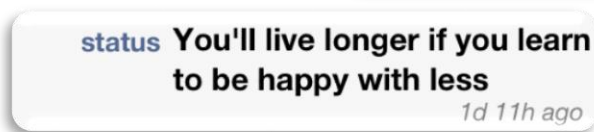
▪ **The Executive**

Financial wealth also appeared to play an important role in The Executive’s current and future plans: *“He [his father] would work hard, but then at the end of the year, we go crazy in December and spend on things that we don’t need just because we can. And being able to do that would be nice, like buying things because you can, because you don’t have a reason and it fits into your budget – it’s not going to impact you at all. So if you want a new pair of shoes, you can have a new pair of shoes. That’s what I think ... work hard, play hard”* (2;9;I2;3;39); *“So in order to make my family happy, I have to give them the luxuries they want and provide for them, just like my parents have done for me. And I think that that is only fair, because my parents have put me in good schools – crazy amounts of money for this type of schooling, buy me bikes at the age of sixteen, expensive bikes ... brands of clothes, so I think it is only fair if I do the same for my family. And the way I can do that is by being successful, getting lots of money and providing them with these luxuries. And then if my family is happy then I will be happy* (2;9;I2;4;41); *“The most important thing is to be able to provide. To get into a job, like work is not supposed to be fun, even though you are supposed to be enjoying it. But, as long as it puts out the right amount of pay, I’ll be happy then”*( 2;9;I214;174) and *“It does make sense to me, but I have this feeling that if I am going to do something that makes me happy – it is not going to make me money either. So it is either happiness and no money or like money and the stuff that money buys – which is kind of happiness ... so money can buy you happiness. Instead of being happy and poor, I would rather be unhappy and loaded”* (2;9;I2;14;174).

After the final interview, The Executive’s status updates on a social media application, revealed a possible change of heart. They also reflected the quote that he had chosen as ‘advice to himself’ during the last group session:



*The Executive’s chosen life motto*



*The Executive’s status updates reflecting similarities between*



▪ **The Idealist**

The Idealist was able to acknowledge the role that money, as opposed to street-smarts, could play in his future: *“Money ... I would be able to take care of myself comfortably, I would be able to take care of a family comfortably. Street smarts, I would still ... be able to look after a family, but not to the point where I can do it happily. With the money part, I can happily do ... I can go ‘Ok, kids, let’s go out to movies, let’s go out to a restaurant – let’s not worry about money, let’s go out and have a good time’ – that sort of thing. But, life-smarts, there are situations where you can get lots of money, but it is rare”* (5;9;15;12;55) and *“It doesn’t matter how much street-smarts you have ... R2 isn’t going to get you anywhere”* (5;9;15;13;161)

**5.2.3.4. Theme 4: The value of time**

Table 5.6. provides a more in-depth layout of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide the coding process for theme 4.

**Table 5.6.: Theme 4: The value of time**

<b>Theme 4: The value of time</b>	
<b>Inclusion Criteria</b>	
<b>Description of the value of time</b>	<b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>
Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to factors attached to the value of time. This includes any reference to time wasted, time saved, time pressure and/or time running out. It may also stretch to include a general non-awareness of time and/or any views that refer to time as infinite and continuous.	<i>“You need to have a basic idea of what you want to do in Grade 10 and then in early Grade 11 or late Grade 10, you need to know what it is that you want to do, so you can make those decisions and change subjects if you have to ... because if you do it later in Grade 11, it is basically just a waste of time”</i> (5;0;A5;4;76).

**(i) Results from the qualitative data analysis of the individual semi-structured interviews (before the group life-design counselling sessions were initiated)**

The participants also demonstrated an awareness of time in several regards. The first involved the consideration that time is both limiting and limited: *“I’m not really sure, because if I wanted to become a professional soccer player. They earn a lot, money isn’t the problem – but you won’t be able to get another job, because your time is used up”* (1;0;A1;6;118). This perspective appeared to re-enforce the

idea that decisions have to be well-made, so as to maximise the available time: *“And it’s not like after six years ... I decide, this isn’t what I want to do and then drop out – that is six years, wasted. I want to make a decision now so that I don’t drop out and waste six years”* (1;0;A1;2;20).

With regards to current time pressures, the participants seemed more conscious of expectations associated with Grade 11: *“You need to have a basic idea of what you want to do in Grade 10 and then in early Grade 11 or late Grade 10, you need to know what it is that you want to do, so you can make those decisions and change subjects if you have to, because if you do it later in Grade 11, it is basically just a waste of time”* (5;0;A5;4;76). They appeared to view Grade 11 as a proverbial ‘wake-up call’ announcing the initiation of their future career goals: *“It’s just more of a realisation of when you need to ... when it is time to sit down and work and when it is time to be stupid. You can’t do stupid or ridiculous things anymore – you would break your neck”* (5;0;A5;5;90); *“The first day I felt it [pressure], but, its actually been much easier than Grade 10”* (1;0;A1;8;154) and *“In Grade 10, I knew that I had a whole year to kind of plan and see what I want to do”* (3;0;A3;7;141). The Idealist and The Scientist, however seemed to have been caught off guard by the quick passage of time: *“It’s scary, because everything is happening so fast and I’m meant to change and know what I am doing, but ja ... it’s all happening too fast”* (3;0;A3;1;23) and *“I don’t know ... I still have the idea that I was 13 yesterday”* (5;0;A5;3;44).

(ii) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the life-design counselling group sessions**

**Awareness of time:** One of The Duty Fulfiller’s earliest anecdotes tells the story of how him and his brother lost track of time: *“I remember when my brother and I were little, we told our parents that we are just going to ride our bikes around the block and then our one friend – we met him and then he asked us to go and play soccer by his house and I think we were there for like five hours and we didn’t realise ... because we lost track of time cause we were like playing the whole time. And, our parents were actually looking for us and then when I came to the house, I got the whipping of my life ... I’ve never cried so much in my life”* (1;6;G;5;88).

**Prioritising time:** The participants seemed to demonstrate a strong consideration for the passing or value of time. This awareness of time appeared to influence their priorities in life, as suggested by the following responses: *“What I think is ... only now I started partying ... and I think I should have done that before ... because like now it’s going to mess with my mind ... I chose the wrong time now”* (1;6;G;11;223) and *“It’s good to be crazy once. You can only go to high school once, you can only do the things that you are doing now, once. So, once I feel like when you are going to grow up, you are*

*going to have more responsibilities and then that's why you do all the crazy things now, that you wouldn't be able to do if you are a husband or a father"* (2;2;C;2;50).

**Time pressure:** Some of the participants also seemed to be pushed for time, possibly driven by their ambition to succeed: *"We don't want to retire when we 60 and still be a floor manager. We would rather be 60 and retire ... up top ... CEO"* (5;4;E;4;40-42); *"You have to get there first"* (1;4;E;3;43) and *"If I am going to become a doctor then I am going to be studying for like seven years ... and then I need to specialise"* (1;4;E;3;51). The Idealist believed that the rush to get ahead was due to the environment they live in: *"Johannesburg and Pretoria ... get it done ... next thing ... finish and 'klaar'"* and *"It is all around us. Deadlines. This, that and the other"* (5;4;E;3;46)..

**Falling behind:** They also seemed concerned over the prospect of possibly falling behind: *"Do you have a time on it ... because some things take long, especially if you don't know what you want"* (4;2;C;9;163). This was further related to the idea of taking a gap year: *"I want to take a gap year, but I'm already behind"* (5;E;4;2;26); *"I had actually already set out a gap year if I was going to take that choice, so it's not like I would be sitting around – that would be a waste of time"* (4;4;E;2;24) and *"It's like a gap year is like a failure. You have missed out on that year and let's say you want to become a doctor – you are going to have to catch up on that year ... and then it is like eight years ... and then if you want to start your own business ... you can't because you are behind"* (4;4;E;2;30).

**Wasted time:** Another aspect that seemed evident with regards to time passing, is some of the participants' mention of wasted time: *"Just help me realise that the choice I should make after school is going to make me happy or am I just going to waste my time"* (1;1;B;1;11).

**Limited time:** The Scientist and The Giver both mentioned that they were not always able to explore their interests due to busy schedules and time constraints: *"I don't really have time to like buy magazines and read them"* (3;3;D;2;30); *"I think I like challenges and if I start something, I have to finish it and I put all my effort into it and then I don't have time left for anything else. I don't have much free time. I'm busy with sports and stuff and this year it's more hectic, because I am actually like studying for the first time in my life and I've taken sport this year outside of school, like Tuks and stuff. Their practices only start like only at nine at night and stuff"* (4;3;D;8;259) and *"I didn't go to senior trials ... don't have time for that stuff, So, I can't play senior and junior, because then it is going to go through the whole year and stuff ... non-stop ... and I can't do that"* (2;D;3;5;329).

**Grade 11:** The pressures of Grade 11 also seemed to be taking its toll, as The Duty Fulfiller reflected: *"Grade 11 messes with your mind"* (1;D;3;12;412); *"I never knew she was so hard working. I've known The Scientist since Grade 6, but firstly I never knew she thought she was lazy, I've always thought she was a hard worker. Maybe it is just Grade 11 that is doing that to her. But, ja ... hard working"* (1;2;C;10;411) and *"Grade 11 is ... the workload is too much"* (1;2;C;11;394).

**Making the best of time:** The Executive seemed to feel that time had a limiting component to it and that he had to make the most of his current opportunities, as evidenced by his life motto of YOLO (You Only Live Once). The Duty Fulfiller reflected on this reality as follows: *“We are never going to be young again. This is our only chance where we do stuff we can do at this stage, because when we get older, it is going to be limited”* (1;3;C;3;86). He also reflected on the relevance of this quote in The Executive’s life: *“I think it suits him, because I know The Executive and he is like that ... it suits his personality”* (1;2;C. 3: 86)

(iii) **Qualitative analysis of the participants’ post-interview**

▪ **The Executive**

The Executive identified time-management as a skill that he would like to see improve: *“Like Bill Gates said, the laziest people just find the fastest way to do things”* ( 2;9;I2;3;5); *“I guess when I get into the profession, I guess it is going to be more of a professional deadline like if you don’t do this – there are going to be serious consequences”* (2;9;I2;8;90) and *“I can study a lesson before and I will still get 80’s. It’s more about knowing your limits to leave it to the last minute – like science expo you can’t leave that to the last minute. So I will know which last minute to leave it to, but like maybe exams – leaving it to the last minute is two weeks before ... like leaving that to the last minute is crazy, that’s suicide. So I guess, you just have to know which last minute to leave it to”* ( 2;9;I2;9;90); *And some of the things I can work on. Like, I could work on time management – it’s not set in stone”* (2;9;I2;23;282) and *“Yes or through hard work ... I could say that instead of time-management I could say hard work”* (2;9;I2;2;284).

▪ **The Idealist**

One of the time considerations The Idealist consistently mentioned was his awareness of being a year older than the rest of the participants and the influence that this might have on his future career plans: *“It is second term of Grade 11 and I need to know this for end of term Grade 11, well otherwise, I can’t take another gap year – I’m already too old and a twenty year old first-year does not really work out very well”* (5;9;I5;2;11) and *“You end up taking a gap year, and being a 21-year old first year student is kind of awkward”* (5;9;I5;2;29).

### 5.2.3.5. Theme 5: Selected components related to emotional intelligence

Table 5.7. provides a more in-depth layout of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide the coding process for theme 5.

**Table 5.7.: Theme 5: Selected components related to emotional intelligence**

<b>Theme 5: Components related to emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2007)</b>	
<b>Inclusion Criteria</b>	
<b>5.1. Intrapersonal skills</b>	
<b>Description of intrapersonal skills</b>	<b>Examples of participants' responses</b>
Any phrases, sentences or words that indicate the participants' ability to understand and express their emotions, including their capacity to understand themselves, stand up for themselves and communicate their opinions assertively. Both the capacity and difficulty participants may have experienced in demonstrating the afore-mentioned competencies were considered.	<p><i>"It doesn't matter anymore – forgive everyone, it just doesn't matter anymore" (4;0;A4;5;58).</i></p> <p><i>"I don't say 'I love you' too much anymore – it's a weird thing to say, it's very awkward to say. I'm going to make myself say it, until I feel comfortable with it – fake-it until I make it" (4;0;A4;5;58).</i></p>
<b>5.2. Inter-personal skills</b>	
<b>Description of inter-personal skills</b>	<b>Examples of participants' responses</b>
Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the participants' attitude towards others and skill at interacting and getting along with them by being empathetic and/or acting in a socially responsible manner. Both the capability and inability to demonstrate the afore-mentioned skills were reported on. Both the capacity and difficulty participants may have experienced in demonstrating the afore-mentioned competencies were considered.	<p><i>"I like being myself, but I also like to have friends around me and I talk to people and finding out about everything" (3;0;A3;8;161).</i></p> <p><i>"It's not a matter of I can design to make it a better life – it is just a matter of getting people to listen" (5;9;15,15;190).</i></p>
<b>5.3. Stress management</b>	
<b>Description of stress management</b>	<b>Examples of participants' responses</b>
Any phrases or sentences that refer to the participants' ability to manage and control their emotions. This particularly pertains to their ability to manage stress and impulsive decision-making. Both the capacity and difficulty participants may have experienced in	<p><i>"Cause, then I would be in a stable place and explore it from there" (3;0;A3;4;71).</i></p> <p><i>"But, because all things turn in the end turn out right ... you just have to stick through all the hard times and try and see the best in it" (3;0;A3;5;105).</i></p>

demonstrating the afore-mentioned competencies were considered.	
<b>5.4. General mood</b>	
<b>Description of general mood</b>	<b>Examples of participants' responses</b>
Any phrases or sentences that reflect the participants' general feelings of contentment or outlook on life. Both the capability and difficulty participants may have experienced in demonstrating the afore-mentioned competencies were considered.	<p><i>"It was like the little things, but then I think I have cut them out of my life. I don't really think about them ... ever since I was little, there is nothing that was really negative" (3;8;G;3;57).</i></p> <p><i>"I don't focus on the negative a lot. I just don't ... like see the point" (4;8;G;3;57).</i></p>
<b>Exclusion Criteria</b>	
<b>5.5. Adaptability</b>	
<b>Description of adaptability</b>	
Since career adaptability is one of the main constructs being explored in my study, it has already been identified as a theme (See: Theme 1) to be explored in greater detail (See: subthemes 1.1.; 1.2.; 1.3., and 1.4.).	

(i) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the individual semi-structured interviews (before the group life-design counselling sessions were initiated)**

a. ***Intra-personal skills***

Although all five participants briefly discussed components related to emotional intelligence, The Giver's conversation seemed to be dominated by it. Due to the frequency of these comments in her semi-structured interview, this theme was added. The Giver demonstrated difficulty in expressing her emotions as well as assertively stating her opinions: *"I'm really quiet – my mother actually only realised it this year, which is kind of hurtful. I didn't say anything and I still don't say anything. I went to a psychologist and our time ended very quickly" (4;0;A4;2;30); "There's a friend, who think that I don't even have problems, which is like ... you have no idea" (4;0;A4;7;82) and "I want to be seen and I want to be noticed and everything, but at the same time ... I don't want to. I don't want people to think that I am emotional and that there is always something going on and there's always a problem, because then it's like I always have to deal with an emotion with this person" (4;0;A4;15;193).*

Her reluctance to communicate her feelings, appeared to have developed into a tendency of hiding or masking her true emotions: *"I can fake emotion. I'm very good at making people think that I'm ok and making myself believe that I am ok" (4;0;A4;2;32); "I cry, but, no one saw it ... no one sees that I cry. Everyone just thinks that I'm tired and when I'm tired, people think that I'm upset." (4;0;A4;3;38); and*

*“Like I’m a silent crier. I don’t like to make a noise at all when I cry ... like I don’t let the tears flow ... I just like absorb it” (4;0;A4;15;195).*

It also appeared as though The Giver had inherently started to avoid dealing with her own or others’ emotions: *“Sometimes I don’t want emotion, especially me ... and talk about emotions ... it’s like no thanx” (4;0;A4;7;94).* Her reluctance to communicate her emotions appeared to stem from her experiences of feeling that the responses she had received previously were: *“Cut-off ... the response is mean. I don’t want that and if that is how it is going to be, then I would rather not speak at all ... because, I know that I am going to get hurt. So what is the point of going into something if you are just going to get hurt?” (4;0;A4;17;217).*

**b. Inter-personal skills**

The Giver also demonstrated difficulty in showing empathy towards others: *“I don’t know what they are like [parents] but they can be over-emotional, it kind of irritates me ... you know ... it’s like living, like if you lived in a house filled with girls – it will be irritating all the time” (4;0;A4;7;94)* and *“I get irritated by my family members. It’s probably because I have hidden my emotions all these years and when you ask questions, I don’t really know the answer to that” (4;0;A4;7;94).*

The Idealist demonstrated a strong orientation towards adjusting his responses to people based on the situation. He was also able to relate this skill to his future career ambitions: *“If you’re a teacher in the future and there’s a kid bullying someone, you would have to be that assertive person, but to be with the person who is being bullied, you would have to be a soft, caring, kind person. You have to put yourself in different situations and be able to adapt to that situation. You can’t be ... ‘Well, this isn’t me, I don’t understand your problems and you – you’re just an idiot’” (5;0;A5;8;134).*

The Giver also described herself as being skilled at understanding others: *“I’m very good at understanding when people tell me stuff” (4;0;A4;4;46)* and *“I tell you what you need to hear. It is very easy for me to give a person advice ... it like doesn’t matter what the situation – I can give you advice” (4;0;A4;7;82).* An example of such advice is: *“There was like even a point, like when my mom irritated me because she gets angry very easily and I told her you get angry very easily and you shouldn’t” (4;0;A4;9;122).* The Giver, also demonstrated an awareness of inter-personal skills, as suggested by the following statement: *“Like some days my mom gets mad and I don’t understand, but sometimes ... I’m just like ... she is having a bad day and she is frustrated and people get frustrated and there is no need for me to take that back” (4;0;A4;18;219).*

**c. Stress management**

On occasion, The Giver referred to a previous suicide attempt: *“In Grade 8, I had my falling out”* (4;0;A4;5;58). She reflected back on that time and revealed that she had a tendency to: *“Hold onto bad things forever ... I ignore the positive ... or well I used to”* (4;0;A4;3;48). This new insight was also reflected in her belief that people are responsible for their emotions: *“You don’t have the right to snap. It is not an excuse – it is no excuse, like it’s you. You can’t blame it on something else. Like, yes there are hormones, but I’m like ... why do I want an excuse?”* (4;0;A4;10;132).

**(ii) Results from the qualitative data analysis of the life-design counselling group sessions**

**a. Intra-personal skills**

The Idealist’s individual chapter headings related well to the concept of emotional intelligence: *“Emotion Art Gives’ ... which is how things that happen in life are bad and how it affects you”* (5;6;G;7;144). This served to introduce the importance of possessing and developing intra-personal skills to facilitate the effective expression, understanding and communication of a person’s emotions. The Giver appeared to battle the most with this skill. She recalled how she, as a child, had bumped and injured her head rather seriously: *“The whole towel was covered in blood, and I don’t remember crying at all and I don’t remember making any fuss. Like, I don’t remember making anything big out of it. Like my parents just took me to hospital and I just slept on their bed”*. (4;2;D;3;51). She reflected on this recollection, by adding: *“Even though it bled a lot ... I think that is weird for a child ... I should have been crying or something”* (4;2;D;3;53). The Duty Fulfiller commented on her reflection by suggesting that The Giver: *“... doesn’t really like ... or she isn’t really aware of what is happening at that moment, so she doesn’t really process the emotions like normal people would”* (1;2;D;4;64).

The Giver also demonstrated an awareness of this difficulty and highlighted it as follows: *“Well you know you can only withstand pain for so long ... so I realised that if I haven’t cried for so long. I like literally broke down emotionally for two years in Grade 9 and 10. It shows that you don’t have to hold everything in and you sometimes can go to and talk to someone”* (4;6;G;5;84) and *“I don’t do things for myself, that’s why I have a lot of empathy, I don’t really have a lot of self-management”* (4;2;D;2;31). She was, however, also able to show an improved understanding of this skill and discussed her strategy as follows: *“I acknowledge feelings, but there is no reason to go through pain any more. Like I don’t need to put myself through that anymore. Like I overthink things and I don’t need to ... so I do think about my feelings and stuff, except like now, I don’t go into depro-mode”* (4;4;E;1;18).



**b. Inter-personal skills**

During group discussions, the participants occasionally referred to their attitude towards others. The Duty Fulfiller, in particular, recalled how his empathy towards others was initially developed: *“My mother always taught me I must always look out for my friends. Not like, put others before me – but look out. If you can help someone, help them”* (1;6;G;1;14). The Giver’s responses also reflected her empathetic side: *“I don’t really want to worry about my problems, I just want to help them with theirs, I don’t want to think about mine”* (4;2;C;2;33).

The Idealist appeared to balance his own needs with those of others: *“Well, you can focus on yourself, but also you have to keep other people happy, because if other people aren’t very happy – you are not going to get very far for yourself”* (5;2;C;4;73). This awareness of others’ needs, became even more apparent in The Idealist’s choice of quotations: *“Who-ever appeals the law against his fellow man, is either a fool or a coward. Who-ever can’t take care of himself without that law is both. For a wounded man, shall say to his assailant – ‘If I live, I will kill you, if I die you are forgiven’. Such is the rule of honour”* (5;2;C, 2:64). He described his choice of quotation as follows: *“I’m actually very sort of into the whole self-respect thing and if one doesn’t have sort of honour for himself or for others then he has no purpose”* (5;2;C, 2:67). The Idealist also attached value to friendship: *“Brotherhood, someone you can rely on and someone who is always there for you. If you can’t say something to your family then you can definitely say it to them”* (5;2;C, 5:211) *“If you understand another person, you can think about how they think and not only about you”* (1;2;C, 5:211). The Giver was able to relate to The Idealist’s aforementioned responses, as follows: *“It helps, because sometimes you want to say it, but you don’t want to say it out loud ... it just helps that someone is on your side”* (4;2;C, 5:212). The Executive, seemed to place his own needs first: *“I also see myself, first of all to do things that make me happy. I don’t like to please other people”* (2;3;D;2;48).

**c. General mood**

During the discussion of the life-design counselling activities, the participants reflected on their life experiences. The Duty Fulfiller, The Scientist and The Giver emphasised their tendency to look on the bright side of life: *“Ja, it was like little things, but then I think I have cut them out of my life – so I don’t really think about them. So, I can’t ... there’s like ... even since I was little, there is nothing that was really negative”* (3;6;G;3;55); *“Ok they [failure experiences] were there and they weren’t really small, but like I don’t hold grudges, I don’t focus on the negative a lot. I just don’t like ... I don’t see the point”* (4;6;G;3;57); *“Ja ... I you are just making it worse for yourself. I would rather forget about it and have a good time ... than make you feel like you are a negative person”* (4;6;G;4;59) and *“Focusing on it, just makes everyone unhappy”* (1;6;G;3;58).

Both The Duty Fulfiller and The Idealist also mentioned efforts made to direct their lives towards general happiness: *“I don’t know ... cause like I don’t have any sad things in my life, I’ve just realised that I don’t have any sad things in my life ... everything is just always an adventure ... ok not everything is always exciting, but I’m always happy for some reason”* (1;6;G;7;136); *“You’ve got to be happy at the end of the day”* (1;2;C;5;77); *“You mustn’t do something that you are not going to enjoy. Do something that you are going to be happy with”* (1;4;E;7;142) and *“Success isn’t money or anything like that. Success is when you are happy with what you are doing”* (5;4;E;6;124).

(i) **Qualitative analysis of the participants’ post-interview**

a. **Intra-personal skills**

▪ **The Duty Fulfiller**

The Duty Fulfiller demonstrated an awareness of his displayed emotions: *“I can’t stay angry. I have never been able to stay angry at someone, like I have never been able to hold a grudge. Like if someone irritates me, I would be angry for one day and the next day I would forget about it”* (1;9;I9;8;95).

▪ **The Executive**

Even though The Executive’s relationship with his mother appeared to be strained, he nonetheless indicated that: *“I have kind of forgiven her. Either way, she’s my mom and I have to get over it somehow. When I’m older ... I know I will regret it. I guess that I’m over it now, it happened, rather forgive and forget than hold a grudge”* (2;9;I2;20;243).

▪ **The Giver**

Based on the qualitative analysis of The Giver’s responses during the post-interview, she demonstrated an improved capacity to make sense of her emotions: *“It’s ok that everything happened to me ... it made me who I am today and it did make me stronger”* (4;9;I4;3;16) and *“I’ve been trying to get to a point where ... it took me long ... just imagine you are a lot of people wearing masks ... just think all that. Just to see that most of the people weren’t even me”* (4;9;I4;3;16). Although The Giver spoke of her intention to assert herself more readily, she appeared hesitant to act on it: *“So I, like obviously don’t deserve to be treated this way, like I get it ... I know it’s a joke and I get that it’s a joke, because I was trying to be something that I am not .. it’s just really not fun anymore”* (4;9;I4;2;6) and *“I haven’t yet started to stand up for myself, but in my head ... it just doesn’t come out”* (4;9;I4;2;8).

- **The Idealist**

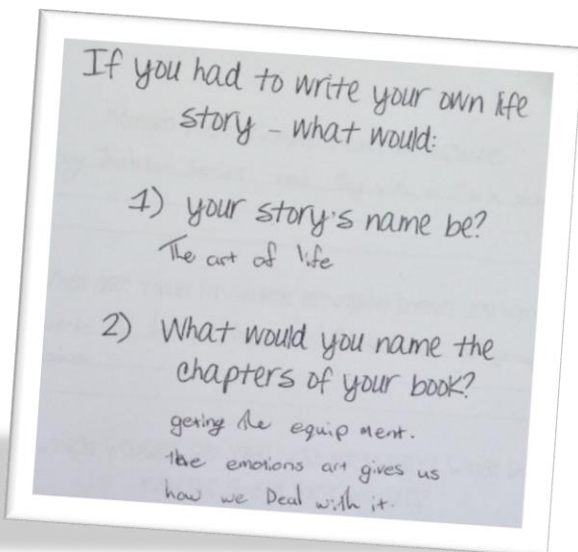
Each of The Idealist’s life-story chapters discussed elements related to emotional intelligence. His first chapter was synonymous with the development of intra-personal skills: *“In the beginning of our lives, we are basically taught emotions and how to use these sort of things. That’s very much like tools of an art piece. You get to know when to use a pencil and when to use an eraser, when to change the type of lead. When to change the colour”* (5;9;15;5;63) and *“It is a continuous process, but only up to a certain time. When you were angry as a little kid, you didn’t know you were angry – that was probably the first time you were angry. It takes time, but it doesn’t take you eons to learn it. It is something that happens and then you go ‘Oh this is it’. But, I mean with in the first year of our lives, we know what anger is what sadness is, what’s depressed, what’s this, that and the other”* (5;9;15;5;67).

The Idealist also reflected on his ability to stand up for his beliefs, based on his experience of being bullied at school: *“In Grade 4, the Grade 7’s always used to grab my hat and tease me and taunt m and I always thought that being the more humble type person ... in situations like that, you just have to man up and beat people”* (5;9;15;3;43); *“You basically enforce yourself ... you can’t always be ‘It’s ok’. You have to stand up for yourself”* (5;9;15;2;45) and *“When it is up to the point that it jeopardizes yourself then you have to take control”* (5;9;15;4;48.)

## b. Inter-personal skills

- **The Duty Fulfiller**

The Duty Fulfiller appeared to display a different set of inter-personal skills with his family than with other people: *“With other people ... I’m not like going to hide behind your back and say something – I’ll tell you, ‘Look I don’t like this, can I have something else?’ – but not in a rude way. But, with my family I can’t do that. I will be like, ‘Ja, it’s nice”* (1;9;19;11;139). The Duty Fulfiller motivated his reluctance to express his true opinion to family members as follows: *“Nothing bad would happen, but I just wouldn’t say it – I love them too much”* (1;9;19;11;141). This approach appeared to be influenced by his father’s insistence that his children should display good manners: *“Yes, but my dad will always be like ... if they offered me something and*



*The Idealist’s life-story chapters*

*I didn't want it, I would have to say 'No thank you'. That they only taught me once and then I knew it"* (1;9;I9;11;143).

▪ **The Giver**

The Giver's responses suggested that she continued to strengthen her awareness of other people's feelings: *"It's fine if you don't think that I am worth it, but you are worth it – maybe you are also not treated the way you should be treated and like maybe you also don't know how to love and care back and I like am willing to wait"* (4;9;I4;2;8); *"I like wait before I say what I want to say, like you are not done talking ... so now I am actually listening to what people want to say"* (4;9;I4;1;6) and *"It is ok that everything happened ... it kind of helped me deal with certain people and to have an understanding of where people come from"* (4;9;I4;3;16)

▪ **The Idealist**

The Idealist seemed very knowledgeable on the topic of emotional intelligence and was able to integrate it with his life-story chapters and life-design: *"If I had to walk into an office meeting all willy-nilly ... no-one is going to take you seriously. But, if you learn that you have to walk into that situation and go: 'Ok ... this is what's going to happen'. You need to be assertive in that point of time. When you are with your family and your family is going through a rough time – you have to be able to show sympathy ... you have to be able to have a high ... not IQ ... EQ"* (5;9;I5;5;73). He also seemed to believe that the successful implementation of his future plans relied on his ability to work with others: *"It's not a matter of I can design to make it a better life – it is just a matter of getting people to listen"* (5;9;I5;15;190).

His interest in getting along with others was also demonstrated in the following statement: *"Everyone wants unity in life ... everyone wants a better life for themselves and their brother – and by brother I mean their next door neighbour or their friend down the road"* (5;9;I5;15;188). His commitment towards caring for his fellow-man was further confirmed by his profile picture on a social media application.



*The Idealist's profile picture on a social media application, indicating the importance he attaches to caring for his fellow human being.*

**c. Stress management**

The Duty Fulfiller comfortably spoke about his anxiety regarding the future: *"Yes, because worry is my stress"*

(1;9;I9;4;47). He was subsequently reminded of the quote he had chosen to paint during the last group session: *“Worrying is like a rocking chair, it gives you something to do, but gets you nowhere”*.

He has also noticed that playing video-games in his free time, like *‘Call of Duty’* appeared to ease his stress: *“I don’t know, it’s like when I’m angry and stuff it takes away the stress”* (1;9;I9;9;111).

### 5.2.3.6. Theme 6: Adolescent development

Table 5.8. provides a more in-depth layout of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide the coding process for theme 6..

**Table 5.8.:Theme 6: Adolescent development**

Theme 6: Adolescent development	
Inclusion Criteria	
6.1. Self-identity (Erikson in Louw, Van Ede, Louw, 1998:472)	
Description of adaptability	Examples of participants’ responses
Any words, sentences or phrases that refer to an individual’s ability to construct his/her identity according to his/her drives, abilities, skills, beliefs and individual history. Any references to the participants’ ability to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in comparison to their perceived view of others’ expectations (Marcia, 1980).	<p><i>“I pass. I like seeing more than 75 – but I just don’t work for it. But, this year, I’m working on it. Cause it comes naturally to me, to be able to achieve”</i> (4;0;A4;1;20).</p> <p><i>“I know what they are all thinking ... ‘He’s a sick and twisted child”</i> (5;2;C,10;180).</p> <p><i>“Even if I don’t have a black blazer on, I will still have more effect than most people in this school on other people in the school and the decisions that the younger grades make”</i> (2;3;D;9;352).</p>
Exclusion Criteria	
6.2. Religious Beliefs	
Description of religious beliefs	Examples of participants’ responses
Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the participants’ faith. Since only one participant occasionally referred to her belief in a Higher Being – the relevance of this theme was questioned and subsequently excluded.	<p><i>“I don’t know who I am ... then I was like ok, I asked the question ... and I was like, ok ... ‘take away all the things, all the emotions, everyone and take away everything that you have left and then ... I’m still God’s child and that’s where everything starts”</i> (4;0;A4;5;58).</p>

	<p><i>“I was like rely on God and give him everything and I started praying and I handed my burdens over to him” (4;0;A4;5;58).</i></p> <p><i>“It was in Spiderman ... his grandfather left a message on the phone. It’s on my laptop, like it’s on the front, because it’s like: ‘I know what you went through and I know it is difficult and you might not be able to cope, but I am here for you, so please come home’ ... and I said ‘Please come home, come back to your heart’ or something ... somewhere along those lines and then I said: ‘love Jesus” (4;0;A4;17;213).</i></p> <p><i>“Ja ... I can’t do that. If my mother says something, I can’t just like ignore it. Like if they something that I do not agree with ... like I am not really a very spiritual or religious person ... like I don’t really believe in ... well certain stuff. I like believe in to a certain extent ... and if it sounds like impossible then I am going to question it. And my mother is not the same ... and she will come and say: ‘Ja ... this happened, because it was meant to happen’... and then I will say ‘No, it happened because of this and this’ and then ja ... it’s an argument” (1;4;E;8;169).</i></p>
<b>6.3. Autonomy</b>	
<b>Description of autonomy</b>	<b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>
Any phrases, sentences or words that allude to the participants’ desire to act independently or break-free from any imposed restrictions. This includes statements that show their willingness to act autonomously and/or demonstrate self-reliance or preference to act alone.	<p><i>“Ja, actually. I want to live on my own because I want to get away from my mother” (1;9;I4;8;124);</i></p> <p><i>“Ja, I think between 13 and 16 I was just lazy, stayed at home and got lifts. Then I got my bike now I have now I have to get myself around” (2;9;I2;2;22)</i></p>
<b>6.4. Values</b>	
<b>Description of values</b>	<b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>
Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the participants’ value system. This will make reference to their motivational drivers and/or the priorities that they have attached importance to.	<p><i>“I am very much the kid who will go ... if the dog is stray ... you can’t leave the dog next to the road – I would be very happy to give the dog a home” (5;9;I5;16;200)</i></p>

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*“Everyone wants the unity in life ... everyone wants a better life for themselves and their brother – and by brother I mean their next door neighbour or their friend down the road” (I, 15:188).*

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(i) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the individual semi-structured interviews (before the group life-design counselling sessions were initiated)**

a. *Self-identity*

During the semi-structured interview process, The Giver and The Idealist shared information pertaining to their self-concept. The Idealist discussed the importance of self-evaluations: *“So you always keep thinking: who you were, what experiences happened and that ... that just sort of brings you back. It’s just a time to sit back on and have some self-time and self-thought – that’s all” (5;0;A5;10;158).*

The Giver described herself as someone who is: *“Not really a girly-girl” (4;0;A4;4;58)* and a *“I-don’t-need-your-help’ type of person” (4;0;A4;10;134).* She also revealed that she did not *“... experience that feeling of being wanted and I want that feeling” (4;0;A4;5;58).* She subsequently described her attempt at changing the way people perceived her: *“This year, like I’m a talkative person. No, I’m quiet, but I told myself, I am not going to be quiet anymore. But, I decided that it is at school” (4;0;A4;2;36).* She reflected on this process by referring to herself as: *“The one that is being revealed, slowly” (4;0;A4;18;229).*

The Idealist described himself as the *“... type of person, ‘who will be who you would like me to be’ and slowly work in ‘this is how I actually am’ and ‘who I actually am’. And that kind of comes across as getting attached to people” (5;0;A5;7;126).* He also seemed to have had experiences of failure which may have indirectly been absorbed into his view of self: *“You are setting yourself up to fail. Yes, you are setting yourself a standard and if you don’t reach it ... well what happened?” (5;0;A5;4;68)* and *“Don’t make it a goal in life and if you fail you can’t beat yourself up about it” (5;0;A5;4;64).* The Executive considered himself to be *“a good leader” (2;0;A2;4;49).*

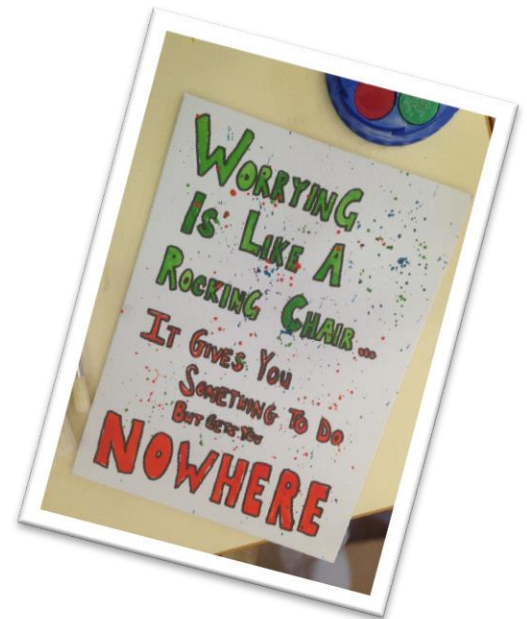
(ii) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the life-design counselling group sessions**

a. **Self-identity**

Some of the reflections offered by the participants, during a discussion of their role-models, also served to elicit self-perceptions. The Idealist, for example, demonstrated a strong identification with a para-Olympian, which appeared to represent the struggles he endured with regards to his own learning difficulties: *“Oscar Pistorius, because even though he was disabled, he ran against able-bodied people to prove that just because he is disabled, doesn’t mean that he is out of the game”* (5;6;G;2;16).

The personal anecdote he shared about chewing on the intestines of a slaughtered animal, also served as a basis for sharing perceptions that he most likely expected others to hold of him: *“I know what they are all thinking ... he’s a sick and twisted child”* (5;2;D;10;180). It also provided others with an opportunity to confirm or change these perceptions: *“It’s a bit weird for a three-year old to be”* (2;2;D;10;177).

When the participants were asked to share special talents or skills they have, The Executive confidently spoke about his abilities, particularly leadership: *“I have a few other talents ... and I have people listen to me as well. Maybe some leadership qualities in me”* (2;2;C;10;345) and *“Just social standards. I don’t need a black blazer just to be a leader. It doesn’t ... because even if I have red blazer, I can still be a leader and have a great impact on the school. It’s just the blazer”* (2;3;D;10;352). The Idealist reflected on his talents, which was further affirmed by The Giver: *“I would like to say that I am able to relate to people, but I don’t really know ... so yeah ... I don’t really know.”* (5;2;C;10;335) *“I think he is right. Because he does have the right words and he is a good listener as well”* (4;2;C;10;339). The Idealist also acknowledged his scholastic difficulties: *“And other special talent ... failing at school”* (5;2;C; 10;342).



*The Duty Fulfiller’s chosen life-motto during a group activity.*





The Duty Fulfiller's collage depicting his ambitions, interests and self-identity.

### (iii) Qualitative analysis of the participants' post-interview

#### a. Self-identity

##### ▪ The Duty Fulfiller

One quality The Duty Fulfiller seemed to have become more aware of – is his need for adventure as suggested by the title of his life-story *'The Adventures of The Duty Fulfiller'*. His desire for new experiences was also noticed during the post-interview: *"I don't mind doing them both,*

*but more challenging stuff. Things that will like keep me busy – not the same thing every day"* (1;9;I9;1;9) and *"Yes, I don't want to do the same thing over and over again also"* (1;9;I9;1;11). This sub-theme also repeated in his choice of free-time activities, namely gaming: *"Ja Xbox live is unpredictable ... ja, people can jump out of nowhere"* (1;9;I9;9;113).

*Yes, if I do medicine and I find friends there ... that is what I'm hoping, also. Because, I don't want to be with people who are always ... because I know they are going to be hard workers, they are going to work all the time and they don't want to go out and have fun, but, I'm hoping for someone like me"* (1;9;I9;17;225). After a brief discussion of his life-themes, The Duty Fulfiller was able to acknowledge his greatest fear: *"I don't want to fail"* (1;9;I9;20;269).

##### ▪ The Executive

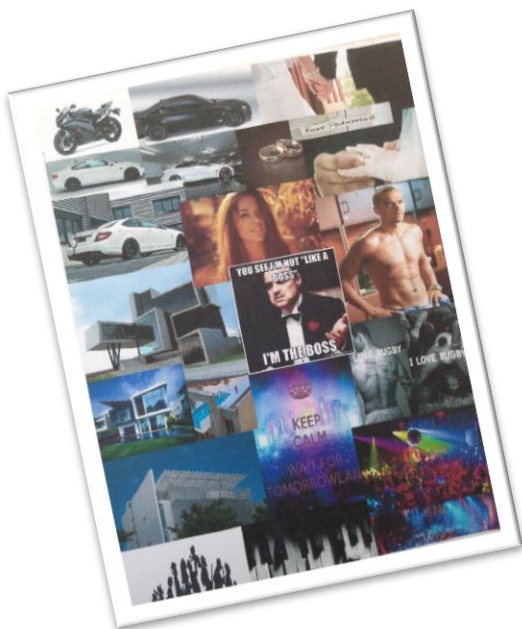
One of the qualities The Executive identified as being part of his strong suit, was leadership: *"Even if I don't have a black blazer on, I will still have more effect than most people in this school on other people in the school and the decisions that the younger grades make. I can have more leadership over other people. Like even in my house at the moment, I have more leadership in controlling the house and house activities and what not"* (2;9;I2;9;106).

In discussing his life-story chapters, The Executive revealed the challenges that have seemingly contributed to his identity formation: *"She [his mother] had another mental breakdown, like she would go crazy and fight with us for everything and ja, she used to hit us for no reason. And then I guess when I got to like 12 years old, I told her I'm tired of this and I'm taking my sister, and I just literally took my sister and we started to walk to my dad's house – that's how bad it had gotten - whatever. But, between that time and my mom was going crazy, I guess, I just got into trouble at school all the time and I was*

*angry. And I couldn't take it out on my sister or mom, so I guess, it just happened at school. But, I'm over it now – that's life – it happens (2;9;I2;19;229).*

▪ **The Scientist**

The Scientist appeared to utilise the life-design counselling process as a means of confirming and organising her self-knowledge. She was also able to recognise the value of life-design counselling: *“I think because who you are and what you are kind of makes your path for you ... you strive to do and be true to who you are” (3;9;I3;12;124).* She was also able to identify strengths and characteristics, such as her ability to solve problems: *“I think career-wise, I would have to solve problems, because that is what I like” (3;9;I3;1;14).* She also mentioned her determined nature: *“I don't know. It was just since I was little, I do what I want. And if I don't succeed, it doesn't matter what anyone tells you – you can do what you want and you will finish it. (3;9;I3;2;20)* and *“I don't like being held back by anything (3;9;I3;6;58).* She also recognised her desire to be challenged: *“I think that is what I like about it. I need something to challenge me, otherwise I would be bored (3;9;I3;7;74)* and *“When I bake, I like to make new stuff and something. I don't like making something that is not pretty, I want to make something that is interesting and that looks nice and tastes nice” (3;9;I3;8;82)* and *“Yes, I like things that are clean and it must have something to it that stands out” (3;9;I3;8;84).* She also described her practical and structured nature: *“Everything must just be practical – there must be purpose to it” (3;9;I3;8;86); “I like rules and I like structure (3;9;I3;9;100)* and *“I don't know, I like working on my own and doing my own thing and have my own rules”(3;9;I3;8;76).*



*The Executive's collage depicting his self-perception of being a leader, as well as other life aspirations and interests.*



*The Scientist's completed collage.*

▪ **The Giver**

The Giver appeared to demonstrate an improved understanding of her strengths: *“I’m like finally listening to myself – I’m actually like pretty amazing – I did not know that”* (4;9;I4;5;28); *“I like being realistic ... and I like new things ... I just love learning new things”* (4;9;I4;1;6) and *“I love intelligence ... because I am smart”* (4;9;I4;5;26). The progression noted in her identity development is best illustrated at the hand of her life-story chapters: *“‘Innocence’ ... when no one was in my head ... ‘Freedom’ you still kind of ruled, but there is something that over-rules you ... ‘Corruption’ ... just when everyone came into my head ... ‘Masquerade’ ... just becoming what everyone else wanted me to be ... ‘The Reveal’ is the start of what is happening now – I want to be me”* (4;9;I4;2-3;16).

**b. Autonomy**

▪ **The Duty Fulfiller**

The Duty Fulfiller seemed to grapple with the idea of dependence versus independence: *“I want to live on my own because I want to get away from my mother ... not get away from my mother, but like get away from that stress, but then I need food. I’ll learn how to cook for myself, I don’t mind doing that – but I need home-cooked food”* (1;9;I9;10;152); *“Before exams, midterm – I went out almost every day and then my mother started getting irritated and she said I had to study. And then I said ‘Exams are two weeks away, as long as I do my hour a day, I’m fine’. So, like it gets like ... like my mother starts getting angry and the my father starts getting angry and then it gets like tense at home ... ok, then I’ll know I’m pushing it too far”* (1;9;I9;11;147).

The Duty Fulfiller’s parents did, however seem to be increasingly aware of his desire to be more independent: *“Since, like now recently – everything since my brother turned 18 ... like he is more relaxed and they are more relaxed ... like they have accepted that we are growing up* (1;9;I9;15;207).

**c. Values**

▪ **The Giver**

The Giver briefly referred to some of the values that guided her interactions with others: *“There are people who like do the most unthinkable, but honestly to me everyone is people – that is just the way I see things. Those people you can’t look at because there was an accident and something happened and I don’t look at the outside of the people”* (4;9;I4;5;22).

▪ **The Idealist**

The Idealist’s choice of favourite television shows, books and songs all contained elements of valour, honour and fighting for the ‘underdog’. The afore-mentioned values seemed to resonate with him: *“It’s sort of a childhood thing. Where back in the dark ages, there were swords and arrows and there was honour to families and this, that and the other. Just a sort of mystical, very out there sort of idea ... the way I see myself, actually the only way I could see myself being able to change the world is through my art. Because I extremely enjoy doing shock art and sort of through doing that you captivate the audience to sort of go, ‘Wow!’ This is really how it happens, is this really what is going on and geez, I really have to change that part ... or help to change that part of humanity or change that part of myself”* (5;9;15;77;99); *“I was thinking today, because Mrs P said – ‘I want to fight for world peace’. That music video basically says one of the things that I also believe is true, if you want to fight for peace, you have to prepare for war”* (5;9;15;9;117) and *“Yes. I would fight for an underdog ... but it is back to EQ”* (5;9;15;152).

**5.2.3.7. Theme 7: School life**

Table 5.9. provides a more in-depth layout of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide the coding process for theme 7.

**Table 5.9.:Theme 7: School life**

Theme 7: School life	
Inclusion Criteria	
7.1.School achievement	
Description of school achievement	Examples of participants’ responses
Any reference to the participants’ scholastic performance. This includes words, sentences or phrases pertaining to scholastic results, school reports and academic goals.	<i>“I’m good at Maths, so maybe I can go into actuarial science”</i> (1;0;A1;1;8).  <i>“I’ve beaten her before ... it’s the best feeling in the world. You don’t brag about it, but you are like chilling with your mark and knowing that you are better than her”</i> (1;6;E;5;104).
7.2. The role of extra-mural activities	
Description of extra-mural activities	Examples of participants’ responses

<p>Any words, sentences or phrases that refer to the participants' involvement in extra-curricular activities. This includes their participation, level of success, attitude and performance in both sport and/or cultural events. It may also stretch to include the value and influence of these activities in their lives.</p>	<p><i>“Ja ... like for touch rugby ... I will set goals, like I will set operational goals...I won't set goals at the end, I will set performance goals” (1;1;B;2;27).</i></p> <p><i>“Maybe, my first gold medal. It was at the [school] Gala ... swimming breast stroke and I came first” (5;8;G;2;24).</i></p>
7.3.Social aspects	
Description of social aspects	Examples of participants' responses
<p>Any words, sentences or phrases relating to the social aspects of school, such as friends, relationships and/or the peer group. This theme encompasses any reference to social popularity, bullying and/or teasing.</p>	<p><i>“Yes, because Thursday night all my friends went to Spur but then I've got AP Maths, so I can't go” (2;2;C;1;10).</i></p> <p><i>“So if you get advice from them, then you are like one of the nerds ... then we'll become nerds” (4;6;E;5;96).</i></p>

**(i) Results from the qualitative data analysis of the individual semi-structured interviews (before the group life-design counselling sessions were initiated)**

**a. Academic achievement and self-efficacy beliefs**

References to academic achievement were also made and two participants, in particular, shared childhood memories related to the difficulties they experienced in this regard. The Giver related the disappointment she had come to know from failing to live up to initial academic expectations placed on her: *“Then I realised, ok ... let's start from the beginning. I like went back to my childhood and I was like ok what's happened ... and I was like in Grade 1 and 2, I was like the top of my class and I read books. I read books even before I was meant to read. I took some international test for something” (4;0;A4;3;50); “I don't know why but I just all of a sudden let go of my academics and I didn't become top of my class anymore” (4;0;A4;3;50) and “I was in Grade 4 when I did the test. They said I'm supposed to be in Grade 8 level and when I did the stuff, I got too much stuff wrong and then they brought me back. So, as a person who came from first of all like Gauteng or whatever and then going to that school – the teachers were kind of disappointed because they wanted it to be high and stuff” (4;0;A4;4;54).*

The Idealist on the other hand, reflected on the learning difficulties he experienced as a child and how he had chosen to manage it: *“I always used to struggle with reading and etcetera ... and I moved schools and I just kept on running away from all my problems and that's not what you need to do. You need to stop running away from all your problems and be who people need you to be” (5;0;A5;7;120).*

**b. The value of extra-mural activities**

Four of the five participants reflected on the experience of successful sports achievements in their lives: *“I’m good at soccer. I have made it to Northernns. I was the youngest player to make it into the under 19’s so far”* (1;0;A1;6;110) and *“That’s when I did softball for the first time. It’s funny, like you know when you don’t know stuff, but when you did, it’s like you already know how to do it and you do it. – that’s what happened with sports”* (4;0;A4;4;56). The Giver also reflected on the contributing value of sports experiences with regards to her identity development: *“I was great at sports and I never used to like netball, because I used to think that netball is for girls – I don’t like girly-girls ... I never used to. And then I was like, ok ... let me just try it out, because I didn’t want to say that I didn’t try netball because it was girly. So I did it and stuff and ever since then, I’ve tried out for like every sport and everything”* (4;0;A4;3;52). The Executive also reflected on the role that sports related activities could play in his future adjustment: *“Like when we play rugby and the younger ones have to pick up the cones and stuff ... I just tell them we were all there once. So I guess when I get to varsity I will just understand that it is my time to be at the bottom and I will get to the top again eventually”*.

**c. Social aspects**

The Giver and The Idealist reached back to their childhood memories and spoke of the times they were bullied: *“Grade 1, I was always teased and taunted – all because I had the outlook on life that I don’t care what you think”* (5;0;A5;7;120); *“And I got bullied. I don’t know why, I think ... I’m a very sensitive person, because I think the reason for my bullying ... to me was very stupid – like, I shouldn’t have let it gotten to me. I don’t know why I did”* (4;0;A4;3;52) and *“In our Grade 6 class, all the boys tried to gang up on me and none of them could take me down and stuff”* (4;0;A4;4;56). Both The Giver and The Idealist seemed to have processed these events and were able to reflect on them, as follows: *“I don’t remember what it was. I’ve forgiven it – so I got the lead that I’m supposed to be stronger or something”* (4;0;A4;4;54) and *“It is all about what is popular ... all the people who were in fashion started with ‘I don’t care what you think, I am going to be myself’. But, for a person who isn’t actually a trendsetter or shy, he needs to be able to a) be sort of himself around people he knows ... but around certain people, you have to be able to be that person that can fit with that guy ... so it’s you sort of have to adapt yourself to be the person who other people need you to be, unless it is someone you are close with”* (5;0;A5;6;114).

The Giver, nonetheless identified the school environment as a positive one: *“School is not a role for me – school is where I am myself, home, is a role”* (4;0;A4;3;37) and *“In Grade 7, I came from that side and I find out that people are talking about me. It kind of confused me ... because I’ve got this thing where like I think I am invisible and here people knew my name”* (4;0;A4;5;58).

(ii) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the life-design counselling group sessions**

a. *Academic achievement and self-efficacy beliefs*

The Duty Fulfiller reflected on how his subject preference has played a role in his career decisions: *“Yes, that’s why I want to do medicine. I don’t want to go study for medicine. I don’t like studying ... no one likes studying, but I like that area and I like Bio. It’s my favourite subject. I don’t mind ... like with some subjects, I’m like ‘oh crap, I have to there’ ... with Bio, I’m like ... ‘I don’t mind’. And it makes me happy”* (1;4;E 6;135)

He also demonstrated a strong awareness of the marks he requires to pave his way towards his anticipated career path: *“It [his achieved marks] dropped by like 2%. It was a shock – it is the first time that I had been below 80 in my life. No, it’s like ... it’s not a bad mark. I’m happy with my mark. But, if I want to become a doctor, then I’m not ... then I have to get it up”* (1;4;E;4;83). The Duty Fulfiller’s desire to achieve better marks, prompted a description of the plan he intended to follow: *“Yes, so I just have to get my marks up ... I’m quitting hockey now”* (1;4;E;4;71) and *“Yes I am finding my feet with medicine. Now, I want to it. I am trying to get my marks up so that I can do medicine. Because, if I don’t get accepted then I have to go and do architecture ... or something else”* (1;4;E;4;79). The Duty Fulfiller was also able to identify both obstacles and personal drivers to advance his academic goals: *“Yes, I suck at that. I think I might have ADD though, because every time I’m supposed to work ... I look at the XBOX and I think why not”* (1;4;E;5;89); *“I’m a competitive person. All sports people are like that ... like you just want to be the best”* (1;4;E;6;119).

The **competitive nature** of academic achievement was also revealed in The Duty Fulfiller’s discussion of his marks and the particular drive he shared for beating the top academic achiever in Grade 11: *“I think what I stopped doing is ... I always wanted to try and beat [redacted] ... and I used to beat everyone else except for [redacted]. Now, I’m not trying to beat anyone, so I’m not beating anyone”* (1;4;E;5;99); *“I’ve beaten her before ... it’s the best feeling in the world. You don’t brag about it, but you are like chilling with your mark and knowing that you are better than her”* (1;4;E;5;104). *The people about you want to be [redacted]. So, if you beat [redacted] ... the people around you are like ‘Ok ... you beat [redacted]’”* and *“[redacted] is the standard – and you need to get there. And she isn’t trying to beat anyone. She doesn’t like stoop to your level”* (1;4;E;5;108).

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<sup>7</sup> Name of top-achiever has been omitted from this section.

The participants shared different views on this aspect of academic achievement and were able to draw on personal experiences, with The Giver stating: *“But, what if [redacted] marks are the best you can be, even if you beat her aren’t you then being the best you can be?”* (4;4;E;6;117); *“I don’t want to be like [redacted], but I want to have her diligence and the fact that she doesn’t try and beat anyone ... she just does”* (4;4;E;5;109). The Idealist was also in agreement: *“I understand that [redacted] is like a role-model, but none of us are her so why are we focusing on beating her when we should be focusing on the best we can do”* (5;4;E;6;114).

*b. The value of extra-mural activities*

In describing their earliest recollections and time-line events, the participants referred back to their sporting achievements: *“Maybe, my first gold medal. It was at the [school] Gala ... swimming breast stroke and I came first”* (5;6;G;2;24); *“There’s a lot that stands out, but it is all mostly sport. And I wrote in grade 1 I was the only girl in the cricket team”* (4;6;G;2;30); *“I went to that school and as usual we participated and everything and I came first for everything ... and I tried out 1200 for the first time and came first”* (4;6;G;2;34); *“It is also my sport, because I started with my touch rugby in Grade 7 and it was just school touch and then in Grade 9, I played Northerns – I made the Northerns team ... and that year I made the South African Netball Club”* (3;6;G;3;38); *“I don’t have much ... like big things that happened in my life. So ja ... mostly it was the touch rugby and then this year again for my netball, I made the first team”* (3;6;G;3;43) and *“Sport also. For indoor soccer, like when I got picked for Northerns, and it was a big thing because most people were under 19 and I was only 15”* (1;6;G;3;45).

The Scientist and The Giver also reflected on the value that sporting achievements have had on their lives. Sport firstly seemed to serve as a **motivational device**: *“I don’t know the meanings in my life when it comes to sport. I just know that what it means is that I won’t give up”* (4;6;G;2;36); *“Then I have to just keep improving on it and it is something ... that I just wouldn’t give up on playing it until I’m like 30”* (3;6;G;3;38) and *“You have to give your all, the whole time and never stop”* (3;6;G;3;41). Secondly, sport was acknowledged for its role in **promoting relationships**: *“I know like with touch rugby it is with a team and you like have to ... there is certain things that you have to do to score in the end and you all have to work together ... and if something or someone doesn’t play their part, you won’t get anywhere. I like that about it”* (3;6;G;3;41) and *“Then I got to play with my sister and it was really nice, because we got to play goal keeper and goal defence together ... so we had like a bond...and then our relationship because we played together and then we ran cross country together ... then our relationship has really improved”* (3;6;G;3;43).



(iii) **Qualitative analysis of the participants’ post-interview**

a. **The value of extra-mural activities**

▪ **The Executive**

Sport played an affirming role in The Executive’s life: *“For touch rugby, I will set goals ... like I will set operational goals. I won’t set goals at the end, I will set performance goals. Like school, I’ll work for school touch, because northern practice and trials are coming up and I will work hard at school touch and be at practice even if my friends aren’t there and then I’ll go to Northern trials and then I’ll perform there and stand out and make them see me ... and then my next goal is probably Gauteng Provincial elite team and then after being short-listed for the SA squad – which two years ago I accomplished that goal and I was happy”* (2;9;12;4;43).

▪ **The Scientist**

Sport featured as a strong influential factor in The Scientist’s life, too: *“I did cross-country and I think that also helped lot ... because I like seeing the end of it and then getting to the end and I like that motivation of it”* (3;9;13;3;22); *“Well, I think sport is also because in the end if you win something – you know you have put all that hard work into it and then you get the result out of it. So you push, and you push until you get what you want”* (3;9;13;3;26) and *“When I was little, I was like really bad with it [sport] and everything and then I started practicing and stuff and later on I started to see that if I practice it, I can get the result out of it”* (3;9;13;9;94).

**3.2.3.8. Additional theme 8: Childhood dreams**

Table 5.10. provides a layout of the inclusion criteria used to guide the coding process for theme 8.

**Table 5.10.: Theme 8: Childhood dreams**

Theme 8: Childhood dreams	
Inclusion Criteria	
Description of childhood dreams	Examples of participants’ responses
Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the <i>career aspirations</i> the participants held as young children.	<i>“I see myself in medicine. Ever since, I was little – it was all I wanted to do”</i> (1;0;A1;7;146.).

Three of the five participants mentioned the career aspirations they held as young children: *“Well, I always wanted to be a cook when I was little, but as I grow older, I realised that it is not very possible ... you have to have your own restaurant, and it’s going to take a long time to get there and a lot of sacrifices, so I decided against it”* (3;0;A3;2;29-31); *“I very often get side-tracked with other ideas ... for example: going to the army or sort of childhood ideas – army, fire-fighting, ambulance work, community sort of stuff ... Because as a child, you are taught those are your heroes and you have to respect them”* (5;0;A5;2;22-26).

As opposed to The Scientist and The Idealist’s notion of pursuing a different career to the ones they had originally planned for themselves, The Duty Fulfiller had every intention to follow through on his: *“I see myself in medicine. Ever since, I was little – it was all I wanted to do”* (1;0;A1;7;147).

### 3.2.3.9. Additional theme 9: Reflection on the process of life-design counselling

Table 5.11. provides a more in-depth layout of the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide the coding process for theme 9..

**Table 5.11.: Theme 9: Reflection on the process of life-design counselling**

Theme 9: Reflection on the process of life-design counselling	
9.1. Working together as a group	
Description of working together as a group	Examples of participants’ responses
Any words, sentences or phrases that refer to the participants’ experiences of working together as a group in completing, sharing, reflecting and commenting on the life-design counselling activities.	<i>“It is a good thing to say things out loud. I never say it aloud...and this morning in group was good. Especially hearing what they thought ... because I think I am invisible to everyone”</i> (4;0;A4;5;58).
9.2. Insights provided to others based on the activities	
Description of the insights provided to others based on the activities	Examples of participants’ responses
Any words, sentences or phrases that reflect statements, insights, advice and/or insults made to or about a fellow-participant with regards to the activities shared during the group life-design counselling process.	<i>“The Duty Fulfiller knows what he wants, but also he wants to impress his family – he wants to be the one who steps up to the plate, but he also wants to sit back and be like: ‘Woo hoo ... party’”</i> (5;6;G;11;221).  <i>“What, that doesn’t make sense whatsoever ... you guys are trying to be deep ... and that’s not really deep”</i> (1;3;D;4;100)

9.3.Overall evaluation of the process	
Description of the overall evaluation of the process	Examples of participants' responses
Any words, sentences or phrases that reveal the participants' responses to life-design counselling as a career facilitation technique. These statements may include comparisons drawn between post-modern and traditional career counselling practices. It may also reflect personal accounts or reflections of what the process meant to them in a personal, career or future regard.	<i>"It has helped me to understand more about myself and what I would be happy going into"</i> (2,9;I2 23:294).

(i) **Results from the qualitative data analysis of the life-design counselling group sessions**

a. ***Working together as a group***

The participants were also encouraged to reflect on the experience of sharing their completed life-design activities with the group. All five participants highlighted the contribution of other group members' opinions as a valuable aspect of working in a group: *"I like working alone, but I don't want to be alone ... it's ok to work in a group like now and have other people's input and stuff. I don't know, I just never want to be alone... but sometimes I want to work alone"* (4;5;F;5;84); *"It's nice to have other people's ideas and then create something new. Everyone thinks of things differently. But then, I want to do my part on my own ... and then in the end put everything together"* (3;5;F;5;85); *"I enjoy group work more, because you get a lot of different ideas form different people ... different points of views or different attitudes. I think working in a group is more accurate than only having one person's view or opinion"* (2;5;F;5;87) and *"Yes, because it helps you realise that you are not the only person going through this. And then you can also ask them hear what is happening with them ... and maybe get some ideas of your own"* (1;5;F;5;95).

The Idealist and The Giver also mentioned the comparative value of listening to others' stories and connecting it to their life experiences: *"It's interesting finding out about what other people want to do"* (5;5;F;5;97) and *"It is so different, like The Duty Fulfiller's point of view and then The Executive and The Scientist's point of view. Like, they both kind of true, but then how do they mix together? Like, couldn't so many people assume so many different things? And I don't how I can get all of that into one thing, especially career"* (4;2;C;4;69). Occasionally, the participants reflected on one another's statements:

*“What? That doesn't make sense whatsoever ... you guys are trying to be deep ... and that's not really deep” (1;3;D;3;8;100).*



*Group work in action. The participants worked together in a classroom to complete their life-design activities.*

***b. Insights provided to others based on the activities***

The participants' involvement in group sessions, provided ample opportunity to reflect on each other's shared life-design activities. This seemed to spur on discussions reflections, guidance and conclusions about the other participants' life experiences, personalities and future career journeys. Annexure I lists some of these insights:

***c. Overall evaluation of the process***

The participants also reflected on nature of life-design counselling as follows: *“[Life stories] help to show us where we come from. The reason why you have to look back at what happens is, because when it happens, you kind of look at it and think, I don't want to deal with it, I am just going to brush it off, or look at it, or take note of it. But later on, you are probably going to have the same situation, or the same scenario whereas you have to think ... ok, maybe I have handle it differently or maybe I have to*

*handle it in the same way, or I have to treat it like this or like that, because it didn't work the last time. So this is just way to guide you, because you made the mistake the last time and you can now make the right one"* (4;1;B;3;57); *"Because in reflecting on your past, you can decide for yourself what strengths and weaknesses you have. What advantages and disadvantages you have. What subjects for example ... or sport you are good at and decide from there what you can go into"* (2;1;B;3;73); *"Like, I've done a little bit, but this is helping – it brings that assurance and certainty"* (1;3;D;1;10) and *"I still don't know exactly what I want to do. But, I am a bit more positive about everything and hopeful"* (3;3;D;1;12).

(ii) **Qualitative analysis of the participants' post-interview**

a. **Working together as a group**

▪ **The Giver**

The Giver's responses suggested that she particularly enjoyed being familiar with the other participants in the group and highlighted the following: *"I feel like I got to know them even better. It felt good to talk about stuff"* (4;9;14;8;76).

▪ **The Idealist**

The Idealist seemed to use the group life-design counselling sessions as a yardstick for comparing his progress to the other participants' efforts: *"More thought as to where life is and where it is going. I learnt more of how actually other people react – that is partly why I did it. I've always wanted an ideal sense of where I want to go in life, but it is always interesting to sort of see where other people are going and if I am going the right direction"* (5;9;15;16;211). This reflection allowed him to draw the following conclusion: *"I am going the right way. It is always good to go your own way and create your own path – however, the way other people tend to react to how you do it as a person – it sort of makes you think why, why would they say that? Why, why would they go ... 'You can't say that?' Whereas I'm a human being, you are a human being – there is very little difference"* (5;9;15;16;213).

b. **Overall evaluation of the process**

▪ **The Duty Fulfiller**

The Duty Fulfiller was able to connect the theory behind life-design counselling to his own life: *"Ja, it was different. Normally, I don't think about that stuff and I don't think it can actually relate to what I want to do and stuff, but like sometimes when you explain how personal memories can link to*

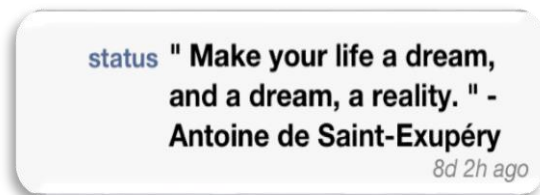
*what I do now ... and how I make my decisions then I think there is some connection” (1;9;I9;1;3). He also reflected how this form of career counselling might have been useful to him in Grade 9 with regards to subject choice: “I think this one [life-design counselling] is much more better, because you find out who you are and what you really want to do. Because, now I am thinking I shouldn’t have taken EGD – I love EGD, but I should have taken an 8<sup>th</sup> subject – I wouldn’t have minded taking an 8<sup>th</sup> subject ... like something else, like Sport Science” (1;9;I9;25;318).*

▪ **The Executive**

The Executive affirmed the value of life-design counselling as a means of providing more certainty: *“It has helped me to understand more about myself and what I would be happy going into” (2;9;I2;23;294).*

▪ **The Scientist**

The Scientist had the following to say about life-design counselling: *“I like this method, because it opened up my eyes to a lot more things about myself and about different careers – that are personal to me and not just the factual things about what I should go and do” (3;9;I3;12;140); “I think because who you are and what you are kind of makes your path for you and if you only go with facts or a questionnaire then you might not do what you want to do or what you strive to do and being true to who you are” (3;9;I3;12;142); “I think it does, because there are lots of building blocks in your life that form one big picture and you learn through everything to end the story with” (3;9;I3;12;144) and “You have also opened up my eyes to many things that I have not even noticed” (3;9;I3;13;162).* The following status update on a social media application further confirmed The Scientist’s dedication towards designing an authentic life:



*The Scientist’s status update, describing her intention to design an authentic life.*

- **The Giver**

The Giver described her participation in the life-design counselling programme as follows: *“I think it was very helpful. It helped me to get to know myself better and ... have a better idea of what I want for my life ... it gave me courage”* (4;9;14;8;78).

- **The Idealist**

The Idealist’s response suggested that he preferred life-design counselling to traditional career assessment techniques: *“No, tests wouldn’t work, because the test sort of go ... ‘Ok well you answered this, that and the other, so you must be good with this’ ... however, when you actually talk to someone and you actually converse with them, you actually see how a person reacts ... how a person reacts or actually copes with a certain situation – that is more effective, it gives you more of an understanding”* (5;9;15;17;215).

### **5.3. FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES**

Table 5.12. (See: Annexure J) provides an overview of the frequency of specific participant responses. These have been distributed according to the described themes and sub-themes identified during each session.

### **5.4. CONCLUSION**

In this Chapter, I endeavoured to present the qualitative data collected as part of the pre- and post-interviews and the group-based life-design counselling sessions. Seven main themes were identified: Career adaptability and the four Cs (pre-determined codes); parental/familial/significant others’ influence on the participants’ career trajectory; financial and economic considerations; the value of time; components related to emotional intelligence; adolescent development and, school-life. In the next chapter, emphasis will be placed on the discussion of the results and literature control.

## *Chapter 6: literature control of my findings*

*Feeling my way through the darkness*

*Guided by a beating heart*

*I can't tell where the journey will end*

*But I know where to start*

*They tell me I'm too young to understand*

*They say I'm caught up in a dream*

*Well life will pass me by if I don't open up my eyes*

*Well that's fine by me*

*So wake me up when it's all over*

*When I'm wiser and I'm older*

*All this time I was finding myself*

*And I didn't know I was lost*

*I tried carrying the weight of the world*

*But I only have two hands*

*I hope I get the chance to travel the world*

*And I don't have any plans*

*I wish that I could stay forever this young*

*Not afraid to close my eyes*

*Life's a game made for everyone*

*And love is a prize*

(Bergling, Blacc, & Einziger, 2013).

(Image: Vaute, 2012)



## CHAPTER 6: LITERATURE CONTROL OF MY FINDINGS

### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

Bassey (2003:65) believes that successful qualitative research endeavours should aim to collect enough data to provide *plausible* and *trustworthy* interpretations of what has been found. This premise ensures that a *worthwhile story or argument* can be constructed and linked to relevant research in the literature. Chapter 6 is therefore dedicated to a discussion of my research findings in comparison to other studies that have also reported on aspects related to the effectiveness of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school setting. The literature control will be based on a discussion of the themes derived from the qualitative data. The comparison between my research findings and those of others is aimed at either corroborating the findings from existing studies or highlighting those that may differ. In addition to this, I will also be exploring the possibility that my study may have uncovered previously unreported findings. The literature control will also attempt to highlight any emerging trends.

To provide an encompassing review of the current literature available on the afore-mentioned aspects, existing (previously cited in Chapter 2 and 3) and additional references will be cited. The literature control will begin with a comparison of the qualitative data findings from my study and those found in existing research literature, followed by a summative discussion. Hopefully, the above intentions (and the discussion to follow) will meet Bassey's (2003:65) final criterion for a successful research effort: *convincingly* relaying the story or argument to an audience.

### 6.2. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned above, the format of the literature control to follow will be guided by the discussion of the themes and sub-themes identified during the data analysis process as described in Chapter 5 (See: Chapter 5, Tables 5.4.; 5.5.; 5.6.; 5.7. and 5.8. for a more detailed exposition of these themes).

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<sup>1</sup>In consultation with my supervisor the decision was made to omit all coding references pertaining to participant responses in Chapter 6, unless otherwise specified. Please See: Chapter 5 for coding references or consult the verbatim transcripts on the submitted CD (Sources A-I).

### **6.2.1. Theme 1: Responses related to career adaptability and the related sub-skills based on the *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS)* (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012)**

Savickas *et al.* (2009) discussed the complementary use of life-design counselling as a means of exploring clients' career adaptability. These life-design counselling activities, as demonstrated by previous research studies (Hansen, 2010; Havenga, 2011; Maree & Hancke, 2011; Hughes *et al.*, 2013), also appear to have contributed to an improvement in clients' displayed level of career concern, control, curiosity and confidence. Given the expectation that the qualitative data should reflect responses indicating the participants'<sup>2</sup> concern for their future; control over their environment; curiosity in exploring possibilities and confidence in managing any perceived or actual barriers – the four Cs were stipulated as pre-determined themes (Savickas *et al.*, 2009; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

#### **6.2.1.1. Career concern**

##### **(i) Awareness of developmental task associated with career planning**

From a developmental perspective, one of the main tasks associated with adolescence is an increased display of concern towards career exploration (Savickas, Passen & Jarjoura, 1988). Skorikov (2007) also indicated that adolescents seemed to become progressively more certain of the steps required to plan and prepare for their future career choice from Grade 11 to six months after graduation from high school. They were also likely to focus their attention to planning activities during impending transitions and subsequently decrease these efforts once the transition took place.

Based on the responses from the first contact sessions (individual pre-interviews and the first group session) the participants in my research study were actively engaged in the expected developmental tasks. One participant's (The Executive's) earliest recollection serves to confirm this tendency: *"I just like remember the process of getting everything ready, like the bakkie on the trailer ... getting all the supplies we need, like petrol, extra petrol ... tying it down. The food and the water ... everything you need for a day at the quarry"*. He also demonstrated a similar degree of preparation for his future: *"My plan in life is get my engineering degree, do whatever I want to do, make my money and then invest my money into property and investment – so that by the time I am like 55, I can sit back and will have properties that will bring money and income and investments"*. Across the board, the participants' individual responses relayed an awareness of how their current choices were likely to affect their future, as the following participant's (The Scientist's) statement reveals: *"My career ... is*

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<sup>2</sup> The use of the word 'participants' will hereafter be used as an encompassing term referring to all five of the research participants.

*also going to determine how I am going to live and like what husband I am probably going to get and how my family is going to be and my life in the end is going to turn out”.*

## (ii) Career Indecision

As mentioned above, all five participants seemed to share Savickas’ (1997b) belief that career planning and exploration were imperative to career decision-making processes. The participants’ interest in the future also confirmed the findings from other studies (Anderson, Bechhofer, McCrone, Jamieson, Li & Stewart, 2005; Brooks & Everett, 2008). A difference was, however, observed in the participants’ degree of displayed progress, commitment and invested efforts in this regard. Similar to Germeijs and Verschueren’s (2011) study, the two female participants (The Scientist and The Giver) demonstrated greater signs of indecisiveness than the males and discussed the difficulty they were experiencing with regards to career indecision. They subsequently requested assistance with career planning: *“To prepare me for my career and everything involving my future”* and *“If I know where I want to go, I can start planning and stop stressing”*. Other researchers (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999; Harris *et al.*, 2010) have also observed this apparent lack of direction in their respective studies. Julian (1999) noticed this tendency in the late 90’s indicating, that at that point in time, 60% of the youth were unable to obtain career information effectively. Difficulty in accessing career information was not the case in my study (participants were provided with a number of website links, career brochures and literature, as well as the dates of university open days), thereby suggesting that the communication and technological advances made over the last three decades have arguably brought Julian’s (1999) findings into question.

Harris *et al.*’s (2010) more recent explanation of this type of career uncertainty or aimlessness seems to account more clearly for the two participants’ career uncertainty. In their findings, they describe a tendency amongst students to extend their studies without obtaining a degree to show for it. This appears to be prevalent especially in the case of the two female participants, one of which (The Scientist), mentioned her intention to enrol for a general university course, in the hope that she would then be in a better position to narrow down her choices as the year progresses. The authors cautioned that this tendency identified among the youth holds widespread consequences for the labour market. They are therefore adamant that adolescents should engage in role exploration to enhance their chances of fostering enduring relationships, engaging in life-long learning opportunities and enjoying their careers as adults.

Efforts specifically directed towards achieving the afore-mentioned goals are seen to contribute to higher levels of career adaptability, which in turn serves as a likely buffer against threatening experiences (Briscoe, Henagan, Burton & Murphy, 2012). Lower levels of career adaptability, on the other hand, contribute to increased levels of anxiety (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). Interestingly, the two female participants (The Scientist and The Giver) described themselves as ordinarily structured

individuals, as suggested by the following respective statements: *“I like rules and structure”* and *“People say I am well-prepared and I don’t even have a career I can go into”*. It is accepted that adolescents who prefer structure, routine and order are likely to experience greater difficulty in adjusting to the demands of the current career world without sufficient preparation (Roenkae & Pulkkinen, 1995). Perhaps, in the light of my study, it can also now be considered that the two participants who prefer structure, routine and order were also likely to hold broad, idealistic notions of the expected trajectory they would like their lives to follow, but may experience indecisiveness and anxiety related to the planning thereof. The last-mentioned statement has been derived from my data and as far as I could tell no other research studies discussing the effect of anxious females on career planning seem to have been reported. The one participant’s (The Scientist’s) indecisiveness seemed to be related to her understanding of career choice as a solution to a problem, whereas the other participant’s (The Giver’s) reluctance towards exploring potential career options appeared to be related to a lack of ownership on her part. In this case, Creed *et al.*’s (2011) useful suggestion to direct career interventions towards planning for change as opposed to planning for a career becomes very clear.

A study by Brannen and Nilsen (2002) reflected the difference in career planning noted in my study between the two female participants (described above) and the three male participants (described next). The afore-mentioned authors explored adolescents’ orientation towards their future career planning. Their findings reported that some of the individuals from their focus group presented with either a present-centred adaptability (acknowledging the unpredictable nature of the future and planning around it), or predictability (regarding the future as stable and drawing up long-term goals) orientation towards the future. My findings suggest that three participants (The Executive, The Idealist and The Scientist) appeared to demonstrate more person-centred adaptability tendencies as based on their awareness of a competitive job market and the efforts demonstrated to enhance their chances of success by, for example going to additional Mathematics classes and being enrolled at an independent school.

### **(iii) Higher levels of career concern**

The three male participants seemed only to require further clarification and confirmation of their future career decisions. All three participants reflected responses that indicated their well-developed sense of planfulness, for example *“I want to apply everywhere that is good with medicine. The best is UCT and then basically I want to apply for overseas”*. Active engagement in career preparation contributes to improved career decidedness and choice congruence (Hirschi, Niles & Akos, 2011). It might have been interesting to compare the level of career maturity showed with pre-vocational tasks between the two genders as a means of predicting their future commitment and satisfaction related to their career plans (Seifert, 1994). Based on my study, however, it seems as though the adolescent males demonstrated an earlier commitment towards designing and establishing their career trajectory. To my knowledge, no other previous studies have reported on this noted gender difference.

All five participants, nonetheless, conceded that they felt apprehensive about the future. They consequently viewed the life-design counselling programme as an opportunity to gain more certainty with regards to their future career plans and demonstrated an openness to consider possible alternatives to the existing ones which relates to Creed *et al.*'s (2009) finding that the improvement of career adaptability skills (with the focus on building competence and self-improvement) can serve as a means of reducing the immobilising effect of elevated career concerns on career decision-making and self-exploration.

Following their participation in the life-design counselling programme (based on the data accumulated during the individual post-interviews) the participants demonstrated an improved sense of planfulness as was demonstrated by their overall knowledge of tertiary courses; conviction in their abilities to perform their chosen careers; narrowing down of choices; acceptance of the idea that plans may change, and awareness of skills/actions required to realise their plans and show optimism towards the future. This was demonstrated by such statements as: *"I think at the beginning I was really scared and I was really stressed, because I didn't know what I wanted to do and I didn't think there was hope for me ... but now, because after half of the year, I am more at ease with it and now I know what I can do"*. Rehfuß *et al.* (2011) reported similar findings in their study involving the application of the *Career Construction Interview* (Savickas, 2011c).

#### **6.2.1.2. Career control**

##### **(i) The significance of the Grade 11 academic year**

Participants demonstrated differing degrees of career control (based on the qualitative data). All five participants seemed aware of the importance attached to the end of their Grade 11 results and demonstrated a desire to improve their chances of being accepted at a tertiary institution, as suggested by the following participant's (The Idealist's) statement: *"Sit, study, learn, pay attention and you work your butt off to get your varsity entrance"*. This desire to make positive educational and vocational decisions appears to be influenced by an individual's level of perceived efficacy and ability regarding self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning, problem-solving and persistence in working towards educational and career goals (Lo Presti, Pace, Mondo, Nota, Casarubia, Ferrari & Betz, 2012). Some of these findings coincide with my research study, as demonstrated by the participants' desire to find the right occupation; search for career information; decide on career goals; draw up plans and ultimately utilise the life-design counselling programme as a means of facilitating sustainable problem-solving skills.

## (ii) Subject choice selection in Grade 9

The participants' responses also indicated that they believed the process of making their subject choices at the end of Grade 9 furthered them along in their career journey, since it provided them with an opportunity to select subjects based on their future goals, for example: *"Kids these days have to decide what they want to do, coming into Grade 10 ... you have to actually sit and think about it – it's not just an everyday choice of what am I going to wear tomorrow"*. Participants also utilised this occasion to assert their personal preferences, for example: *"Then I fought for Drama"*. Based on these types of participant responses, two seemingly new insights emerged from my research study. Firstly, that the participants' emphasis on the importance of subject choice in Grade 9 appears to merit the application of a life-design counselling programme to younger high school learners and secondly, that an individual's displayed level of career adaptability with regards to designing his/her future life could already be explored as early as during his/her selection of subject choices. In this light, more efforts can be made to improve adaptive career decision-making skills by focusing on the following factors: *comprehensive Information gathering; analytical Information processing; a more internal Locus of control, more Effort invested, less Procrastination, greater Speed of making the final decision, less Dependence on others and less Desire to please* (Gadassi, Gati, & Dayan, 2012: 612).

## (iii) Career decision-making

Building on the above-mentioned study, some factors pertaining to career decision-making were also observed in the responses of those participants who seemed certain of their future career trajectory and those that did not. One such factor refers to the anxiety experienced by the two female participants (The Scientist and The Giver) who were experiencing a perceived lack of control (Weinstein, Healy & Ender, 2002). One such participant (The Scientist) described the afore-mentioned experience as follows: *"At that time, I was very uncertain ... and I was really scared"*. According to Paivandy *et al.* (2008) the anxiety experienced by students related to the process of career decision-making is exacerbated by two types of decision-making behaviours that are applicable to my study. The one type of decision-making style refers to individuals, such as the one indecisive female participant (The Scientist), focused on making the perfect decision. These so-called maximisers are also likely to experience increased levels of anxiety should they fail to find the perfect solution: *"I'm going to study something ... that's what I am going to do then ... it is basically going to be set for life"*. Participation in the life-design counselling programme saw The Scientist arrive at the following realisation: *"Well, I think you can change things and you don't have to stick to one thing to get where you want to be in the end"*.

The other type of decision-making style, inadvertently displayed by the other female participant (The Giver), was rumination. This inclination to isolate oneself in the midst of making a career-related decision may result in the individual constructing his/her career decisions on the idea of pleasing others.

During the completion of the life-design activities and group discussions, this participant expressed the following response: “*I just haven’t been certain if it was me or if I was who people want me to be – it is actually clarified*” and “*I think like the decisions are now like more mine than theirs ... I think I am getting smarter about my career, because I know myself*”.

The latter account of career-indecision could also be related to a reliance on others to assist with the career-decision making process, for example: “*I just do what they [her parents] tell me*”. In addition to this, the two female participants also demonstrated delayed decision-making behaviour (e.g. “*It is happening so fast*”) and even procrastination (as evidenced by The Scientist’s intention to attend a tertiary institution without knowing which course to enrol for) (Gadassi *et al.*, 2012). These responses infer the stress or *Zeteophobia* (Krumboltz in Campbell & Ungar, 2004a: 17) that individuals begin to experience when they feel burdened by the consequences of their decisions. Both participants, however, also demonstrated some adaptive responses (Gadassi *et al.*, 2012), such as a willingness to gather more information about possible careers (e.g. “*I would rather go and find out more for myself, before I make the decision ... if I know more then, I would make a better decision*”).

Betz and Voyten (1997) also suggested that undecided students were expected to demonstrate an increased level of career exploration. Contrary to this study, my study demonstrated that although the two female participants both mentioned a desire to engage in career exploration, differences were noted in the degree of agency demonstrated. Prior to their involvement in the life-design counselling programme, both female participants demonstrated minimal effort aimed at exploring possible career options. Following her participation in the life-design counselling programme, The Scientist began to make more of an effort to gather information by consulting study brochures and visiting a university lecturer to discuss the courses that interested her. The Giver, on the other hand, did not appear to make any concerted efforts to gather more information on her potential study courses. My study corroborates the findings by Argyropoulou *et al.* (2007) who suggested that students who demonstrate career decidedness are more likely to seek out more occupational information and additional support.

The usefulness of addressing these two participants’ career indecision through the life-design counselling programme as a means of improving their ability to achieve their career goals, assertiveness and role saliency (Crites in King, 2002) was likely to secure positive work adjustment in the future (Seifert, 1993). This finding, in part, was also confirmed by Staff, Harris, Sabates and Briddell (2010) who suggested that 16-year olds with uncertain career aspirations were likely to earn less ten years into the future in comparison to their decisive peers. The implication of exercising career control is therefore far-reaching, as suggested in a study by Germeijs and Verschueren (2006a). The afore-mentioned authors established that students who demonstrated a high level of coping with career decisional tasks towards the end of Grade 12 were more likely to stick to their intended goals, whereas those that demonstrated less in-depth exploratory behaviour were at a greater risk of discontinuing their studies and struggling to adjust to the demands of tertiary education and work.

Looking at the matter of career indecision from a neurological perspective, Gladwell (in Kuijpers *et al.*, 2011:22) states that adolescents are not yet capable of making *conscious and informed* career choices due to the fact that their pre-frontal cortex (the centre of their decision-making ability) is still developing. Based on the responses received from the participants and the above description of the various factors contributing to career indecisiveness, it seems that brain development may also be regarded as an additional factor (but certainly not the only one). Gladwell's point can be further explored, in light of the three male participants' responses indicating a more responsible, conscientious and goal-oriented approach to performing vocational tasks, for example *"I think the only reason I will fail in life is because of me. Everyone else has given me the tools – my parents have given me the tools, right schooling. So if I mess up – it is only my fault."* A study by Duffy (2010) reported similar findings to my own with regards to the degree of control the participants involved in my study have attached to their perception of supportive relationships<sup>3</sup>, self-esteem<sup>4</sup> and general outlook on their future life<sup>5</sup>. Based on the qualitative data produced by the study, it may also have been these three participants (The Duty Fulfiller, The Executive and The Idealist's) engagement in challenging tasks that may have amplified their sense of control (Brown *et al.*, 2012). The influence of career control on the participants' level of career confidence could not accurately be determined, but research by Rottinghaus *et al.* (2012) suggest that an increased sense of control is likely to lead to an increased sense of confidence in a person's abilities and career potential, as well as future adaptability (Duffy, 2010).

Towards the end of the life-design counselling process all five participants demonstrated a stronger commitment towards taking responsibility for their future, as confirmed by the one female participant's (The Giver's) reflection on The Scientist's statement: *"You try something new, but you have to try it in a certain way. That's why you have to go to college and experience it"*. This statement is in line with Savickas' (2011) suggestion that clients are likely to benefit from stories that help them recall previous experiences involving change, in addition to the resources that helped them cope with the accompanied uncertainty. It also confirms Rottinghaus *et al.*'s (2012) findings that the use of life-design activities is likely to enhance a person's coping abilities due to an improvement in his/her self-awareness and knowledge of career-related information. This progress was noted in the following participant's (The Duty Fulfiller's) response: *"Yes I am finding my feet with medicine. Now, I want to do it. I am trying to get my marks up so that I can do medicine, so that if I don't get accepted then I have to go and do architecture or something else"*. Even though, participation in the life-design counselling programme seemed to lead to an improvement in the participants' level of decisiveness (as supported by the qualitative research efforts), it was also encouraging to read Germeijs and Verschuere's (2006b) study indicating that students who initially appeared uncertain were likely to catch up to their peers in the final year of schooling. In my research study this process, however, seemed to occur at a faster rate.

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<sup>3</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.5.1. (ii), 5.5.2.; 5.5.2. (ii) and 5.5.3. (ii).

<sup>4</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.5.1. (vi), 5.5.2. (vi), and 5.5.3. (vi).

<sup>5</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraph 5.5.2. (iii).



Perhaps this is a good place to consider the influence of counselling in speeding up the afore-mentioned process, as proposed by Campbell and Ungar's (2004b:29) statement that *counselling may accomplish more quickly what time will eventually decode*. It is, however, only possible to speculate about this possibility, since my research study did not explore the longitudinal effect of the life-design counselling programme on the future career adaptability of the participants.

Nonetheless, the intervention appeared to lead to faster follow-up and goal-oriented actions, as illustrated by the following statements regarding the participants' commitment towards improving their academic results as a means of exercising more control over their future prospects. The Duty Fulfiller reflected on his brother's academic achievement to motivate his goal-driven behaviours "*Because this is Grade 11. Like with my brother ... his Grade 12 marks were fine ... but they didn't accept him for actuarial science ... I don't want that to happen to me*". The Executive demonstrated his goal-driven behaviour as follows: "*Train hard, fight easy ... I think that applies to sport and school. If you work hard at school, you are going to have an easy life*". Should the participants successfully manage to achieve their goals, they are likely to experience an enhanced sense of competency and self-efficacy associated with the concept of personal mastery, which in turn is expected to contribute to their future career adaptability (King, 2002).

**(iv) Relational strife**

In The Giver's case, the career decision process seemed to be delayed. Based on her responses (as observed during the pre-interview, group sessions and post-interview), the relational strife between herself and her parents may have contributed to the added difficulty she was experiencing in making a career decision. Interpersonal difficulties correlate well with the features of career indecisiveness (Spunt, Rassin & Epstein, 2009; Brown and Rector in Hirschi, 2011). The impact of career indecision on self-esteem, life satisfaction and well-being was not as clearly elucidated in this study as it was in the one done by Creed *et al.* (2004).

**6.2.1.3. Career curiosity**

**(i) Career exploration**

Savickas (1997b) described the exploration phase of career development as characterised by confusion and experimentation. Other studies (Germeijs & Verschueren, 2006b; Porfeli & Skorikov, 2010; Staff, Harris, Sabates and Briddell 2010) also discussed adolescents' likelihood to engage in career tasks that involved role exploration and the investigation of possible career trajectories. One such study by Marcia (in Meeus, Oosterwegel & Vollebergh, 2002) associated adolescents' exploration and commitment progress with four identity statuses (identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and identity achievement).

Contrary to the above studies, only the two male participants (The Executive and The Duty Fulfiller) seemed to have made concerted efforts in this regard, as suggested by their initiative to explore job-shadowing opportunities and have conversations with family members and friends about careers (as mentioned during the collection of the qualitative data). Perhaps, this observation may serve as a possible indication of the inter-relatedness of the four career adaptability constructs, since the male participants also seemed to demonstrate higher career concern and control (as presented by the qualitative data).

## (ii) Addressing the lack of career exploration

The one male (The Idealist) and two female participants (The Scientist and The Giver) initially seemed to have made little effort to attend open days, seek out job shadowing opportunities and/or read up on career possibilities. This could possibly suggest that they have not yet experienced the sense of curiosity about career prospects that Savickas and Porfeli (2011) regard as the driving force behind career exploration. Responses provided by The Scientist and The Giver (during the pre-interview and group sessions) also confirm, Rottinghaus *et al.*'s (2012) conclusion that less curiosity is likely to result in a lack of occupational awareness, which in turn will have an effect on one's ability to engage in goal-directed behaviour. Pertinent to the previous point, is one participant's (The Scientist's) response to obtaining more career information: *"I haven't looked, because I don't know what I want to do ... I don't know if there is something else that I would like more or be better at ... so it is only going to happen later"*. Through the application of life-design counselling activities, the three participants were able to identify some of barriers that restricted their career curiosity. The barriers included: dependence on parents to make the decision for them<sup>6</sup>; the lack of assertiveness contributing to feelings of inhibition/low motivation<sup>7</sup> and rigid perceptions held regarding the importance of the current decision on their future. Challenging the barriers that were effectively hampering their interest in seeking career information was addressed during discussions (both group and the individual pre- and post- interview sessions). These efforts were seen as an opportunity to encourage career exploration and help them work towards a more integrated career identity – an intention that complements a previous study conducted by Gushue, Clarke, Pantzer and Scanlan (2006).

Participation in the life-design counselling programme seemed to improve the three aforementioned participants' efforts in gathering more career related information, which supports a previous study by Brown and Hector (in Hirschi, 2011) also demonstrating the effectiveness of a life-design counselling programme as a means of providing clients with a better map of their planned career journey. The participants' responses reflected the success of these efforts as follows: *"I have to start, I*

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<sup>6</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.5.1. (i) and (ii); 5.5.2. (i), and (ii).

<sup>7</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.5.1. (vi) and 5.5.2. (vi).

*have to explore ... because, if I don't it makes it even more difficult” and “Now that I know I can find my future and I can find ideas of what I can do, I feel a bit more certain and not so scared anymore”.*

As the life-design counselling programme progressed, the two female participants (The Giver and The Scientist) demonstrated improved efforts to consult with others, experiment with the fit between self and the work world and engage in more career research. An example of the latter is: *“I have been reading study guides from the university ... and a few medical magazines ... and there's this one university magazine on the internet”*; *“I should also start doing research. To have a vision you need knowledge, without doing research your vision can become a blur and you have uncertainty. Do research so you know what you are talking about and what, where, when and how things are going to happen”* and *“Mom is taking me to UP open day this Saturday”*. It, therefore, appears as though the acquisition of more information served to decrease their anxiety about the future. Possible new knowledge generated through my study suggests that participants, including the male participants, who participated in the life-design counselling programme, demonstrated more initiative towards learning about the world of work and also seemed more open towards exploring alternatives. Based on the participants' responses it also appeared as though those who engaged in job-shadowing and had conversations with others generated useful career-related knowledge from the experience. Furthermore, one participant (The Idealist) also suggested that schools should consider more initiatives and events aimed at providing learners with career information<sup>8</sup>. Kuijpers and Scheeren (2006) suggest that should such programmes be considered that they focus on, among others: work exploration and networking as essential competencies to be included.

#### **6.2.1.4. Career confidence**

##### **(i) Qualities associated with career confidence**

Analysis of the individual pre-interview schedules and initial group sessions suggested that the participants presented with varying degrees of career confidence. In an effort to identify the specific qualities associated with career confidence a number of research studies were taken note of (Pulakos *et al.*, 2000; Young & Valach, 2000; Crites in King, 2002; Santos, 2004; Hall, 2004; McArdle *et al.*, 2007 and O'Connel *et al.*, 2008). Collectively, these studies discussed the various competencies that people were likely to exhibit once they began to experience a higher degree of career confidence: innovation, resilience, practicality, willingness to adjust self/environment, positive orientation towards change, engagement in self-reflective activities, self-efficacy, creative problem solving, internal locus of control, open-mindedness, and social adjustment. In my study, it would appear as though four of the five participants convincingly demonstrated some of the afore-mentioned qualities associated with high levels of career confidence. The Idealist serves as a good example of the afore-mentioned statement

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<sup>8</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraph 5.5.1 (i).

since his confidence seemed to stem from his general outlook on life and change as illustrated by his life motto: *“Hakuna Matata”*. His perception of change as a repetitive process seemed to add to his sense of confidence, as suggested by the following response: *“There’s no point in getting yourself over excited or nervous – you’ve been there before. So it is going to be something that is going to be built into you for the rest of your life, so you might as well get on with it and stop being a little ‘wuss’ about it”*. The other participant (The Executive) believed that his ambition and knack for being well-prepared, together with his experience of specific life events have added to his sense of confidence. His confidence is depicted in the following statement: *“Basically, you can throw anything at me and I will be able to handle it”*. Another participant (The Scientist) believed that her natural ability for problem-solving, optimism and past experiences of success have added to her career confidence. A reflection of her attitude is seen in the following response: *“I basically told myself that it is going to be a new beginning and it is a new page and that I must start from the beginning and make everything right and just carry on from there”*. The ability to anticipate success and manage possible obstacles that may come their way was also reflected in the responses of these four participants describing their capacity to view mistakes as learning curves, One such example can be found in a response offered by The Idealist: *“Life is very much a thing of art ... you draw a line and if that one doesn’t work, you erase it ... you have to draw, erase, draw, erase ... you have to constantly work forwards to work backwards, to work forward again”*. The four participants were also able to draw on their admiration for certain role models (often their family members) as useful sources of inspiration to encourage achievement and/or overcome barriers. These behaviours imply that the participants have developed the ability to identify their coping behaviours early on in their career journey, which increases the likelihood that they will continue to do so in the future – a tendency also noted by Seifert (1993).

**(ii) The implementation of a life-design counselling programme to enhance career confidence**

In a longitudinal study, Stringer and Kerpelman (2012) described three components related to adjustment, namely: emotional stability, social adaptation and self-actualisation. The latter competencies were also shown to be strongly associated with career confidence. The authors further emphasised the importance of incentives aimed at enhancing high school learners’ career confidence to support their transition from high school to tertiary institutions or work – a process that is likely to peak from Grade 11 to six months after high-school graduation (Skorikov, 1993). The life-design counselling programme implemented in my study, may very well be considered as such an incentive; especially when one considers the reported success of life-design counselling as a vehicle for generating new experiences by restoring perceived barriers, developing skills and abilities and devising action and contingency plans to secure an intended future (Campbell & Ungar, 2004a; Savickas et al. 2009). As

noted in my research undertaking<sup>9</sup>, completion of the life-design counselling activities (specifically the earliest recollections, role-model identification and life story chapters (Cochran, 1997) seemed to promote the participants' career confidence by facilitating their ability to gain perspective. The following respective participant responses made by the Scientist and the Idealist, serve to support the previous statement (e.g. *"One event, I've already shared with you guys, was when me and my sister were on the bicycles and when we had the accident. And I think, also I have learnt out of that a lot"*); acknowledging their strengths (e.g. *"I think it helps you to learn from your mistakes and figure out your skills and see what you are good at"*) and becoming more aware of existing coping behaviours (e.g. *"You felt that feeling before ... you can pinpoint where it is coming from and what you can expect from certain situations"*).

One female participant (The Giver), in particular, demonstrated a lack of confidence to pursue her own interests at the start of the life-design counselling programme. Towards the conclusion of the research study (and consequently the programme) an improvement in her confidence was noted (based on the analysis of the qualitative data collected). Support for such an improvement can be seen in the following responses made by The Giver: *"When you know yourself ... you don't care too much about what other people think anymore"* and *"The Reveal of a Gift' – it's my life story ... it's just all of my struggles of what I want to be and being what everyone else wants me to be. Just becoming and being me is the greatest gift I can offer the world"*. Another male participant (The Duty Fulfiller) demonstrated a lack of confidence in his ability to manage the workload and achieve the academic requirements for his intended course of study, as shown by the following statements: *"If my marks aren't good, what do you think I should do, cause with medicine if I don't get in, then that is going to be a problem"* and *"It is just the workload that is making me doubt"*. Towards the conclusion of the life-design counselling programme, The Duty Fulfiller demonstrated a greater awareness of the coping skills he possesses to manage these anxieties (e.g. *"Yes, what comes, comes. ... I can go with my life to where the adventure takes me. I make plans as I get there ... but, I am not going to go at it unprepared"*). These two participants' experience of overcoming barriers seemed to add to their sense of confidence – much like the findings from a study conducted by Raque-Bogdan *et al.* (2013).

### **6.2.2. Theme 2: Parental/familial/significant others' influence on the participants' career trajectory.**

Post-modern counselling aims to gain a holistic understanding of the various contexts an individual belongs to (Hall, 2004). Both internal (self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy) and external influences (family and home life, community and culture) involved in the career decision-

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<sup>9</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.5.1. (i); 5.5.2. (i), and 5.5.3.1. (i). Also see the transcripts (Sources B to I) available on the submitted CD.

making process emerged as themes (Young & Valach, 2000; Ungar, 2001; Campbell & Ungar, 2004b). From the participants' responses gathered during the semi-structured interviews and group discussions of the life-design counselling activities, the influence of these external voices on their career trajectory could be identified. Significant others such as *family, friends, mentors and peers* (Chen, 2007:32) influence an individual's sense of agency – an important component of both life-design counselling and career adaptability. This theme was narrowed down to the following sub-themes: parental involvement; envisioned life; the influence of significant others and family relationships.

### **6.2.2.1. Parental involvement**

#### **(i) The significance of parental involvement**

Four participants (The Scientist, The Giver, The Executive and The Duty Fulfiller) reflected on the integral part their parents played in their career decision-making process. Parental involvement in career related tasks was also noted in various other studies (Young, 1994; Phillips *et al.*, 2001; Keller & Whiston, 2008; Ozdemir & Hacifazlioglu, 2008; Raque-Bogdan *et al.*, 2013; Stoltz, Wolff, Monroe, Mazahreh & Farris, 2013). One such study (Kush & Cochran, 1993) already demonstrated the value of a joint parent and adolescent career-planning programme as a means of successfully improving students' agency, career certainty, career salience and identity over two decades ago. Based on my study's described findings in this regard (described below), the latter authors' suggestion still provides food for thought.

#### **(ii) Parental expectations**

In my study, one participant (The Idealist) indicated that his parents have not invested much in his career decision-making process until recently (e.g. *“Well of late, my parents have been trying to get involved with me. But, I am so used to not having them around so it is actually irritating me that they are trying to force it on. My parents' idea is basically – you earn a salary and you can look after yourself, then you can leave the house”*). Contrary to this, the other four participants' responses reflected their parents' wishes for them to be happy in the future. Responses, however, indicated that their parents have seemingly attached certain conditions (with regards to competency and achievement) to their children's happiness, based on their own past and present career experiences. Responses made by the Duty Fulfiller and The Scientist reinforce the previous statement (e.g. *“She doesn't want me to end up like her parents and she doesn't want me not to have options ... she said she had missed out on opportunities”* and *“It must be something that will benefit me in the long run ... so they won't really let me go and do something pointless”*). During his individual post-interview, The Idealist reflected on the contradictory nature of the message the other participants' parents were conveying to their children: *“I*

actually think that their parents have said: ‘It is fine you can do what you want, but we want you to this’”.

Three participants’ (The Scientist, The Duty Fulfiller and The Giver’s) responses also reflected the confusion they were experiencing between autonomously designing their life (as encouraged by their parents), whilst at the same time attempting to meet perceived parental expectations. The previous statement corresponds to The Giver and The Scientist’s responses as follows: “*When they don’t tell you what they want you to do, it throws you off ... I have been doing all of this because of them and then my mom is like: ‘Do what you want’*” and “*They are also open to everything ... it’s hard because they are not showing me the right direction I want*”. Liang *et al.* (2008) documented this ambivalence and confirmed that adolescents are bound to weigh up their desire for autonomy against their desire for approval from their mentors. The responses noted afore in my study, also confirmed the previous authors’ suggestion that adolescents were likely to experience a lack of feedback as a type of betrayal. Two participants (The Idealist and The Executive) indicated that they were set on designing lives independent of their parents’ desires. This notion contradicts with existing literature portraying most children as being cognizant of their parents’ opinions (Bandura *et al.*, 2002; Liang *et al.*, 2008; Duffy & Dik, 2009; Wiese and Freund, 2011).

### (iii) Parental encouragement and support

All five participants referred to the significance of parental support. Phillips *et al.* (2001:212) suggested that *emotional and/or instrumental* forms of support were likely to enhance adolescents’ *adaptive transitioning* – it also seemed to influence their commitment towards being successful in their future career endeavours. A study by Raque-Bogdan *et al.* (2013) showed that parents were inclined to believe their daughters to be more likely to encounter career barriers than their sons and as a consequence offered them more emotional support. Apart from emotional support, the male and female students who participated in the afore-mentioned study did not experience any gender differences related to the verbal encouragement, instrumental assistance or career modelling their parents provided. In my study, both the male and female participants reported on verbal encouragement, instrumental assistance and their parents’ career modelling, but the nature of my study did not lend itself to a quantifiable means of determining whether any significant gender differences were noted in this regard.

Other than the gender differences reported in the study mentioned above, no ethnic differences were found related to the influence of parental support on students’ perceptions of barriers or coping behaviours in the afore-mentioned study. My research undertaking, on the other hand, revealed that two participants – one being Indian (The Duty Fulfiller) and the other one coloured (The Executive) were influenced by their parents’ described tenacity in overcoming socio-economic and politically driven educational obstacles in their past to achieve career success, as suggested by participant statements such as these: “*Both my parents came from really poor backgrounds. My father didn’t have any money and*

*his father kicked him out at like nineteen and my father had to work” and “She doesn’t want me to end up like her parents and she doesn’t want me not to have options ... she said she had missed out on opportunities”.*

**(iv) Parents as role-models**

The above admiration shown by the The Executive and The Duty-Fulfiller towards their parents’ ability to overcome obstacles is likely to have contributed to three of the five participants (The Duty Fulfiller, The Executive and The Scientist) naming their fathers as role-models and mentors in their lives. Liang *et al.* (2008) emphasised the benefits of such relationships and added that mentor relationships tend to be fostered by shared activities, trust and role-model identification. Whereas younger adolescents were likely to idolise role-models, older adolescents were inclined to hail the unfaltering nature of the human spirit. This also seemed to be the case in my study, where the specified participants described the admiration they held for their parents’ journeys, for example: *“He grew up with very little ... he made a success of his life and he has always been like there behind me, telling me what I should do, helping with my goals and dreams”*; *“When I look at what they have accomplished ... and I ask my parents how they got there, they say hard work ... so I also want to be like them when they are older and I also have to strive to do better”* and *“He didn’t have much of a stable home ... he used to get the best marks in his grade ... and had a lot of self-discipline. And I think that is amazing because of the success that he is today. So I think he has been through the hardships ... and I think he understands life more than I know”*. Be that as it may, one participant (The Idealist) questioned the other participants’ view of their parents as role-models due to the additional pressure they were likely to experience (e.g. *“I don’t want to say this, in case I am wrong, but the way I see it – they have made their parents their role-models and they have to live up to their parents’ standards and what their parents think”*).

By taking a leaf from their parents’ book, these three participants for all intents and purposes placed themselves in a better position to exercise resiliency in the face of adversity (Liang *et al.*, 2008). In summary, a potentially new contribution that could add value to the field of existing career research relates to three participants’ (The Duty-Fulfiller, The Giver and the Idealist’s) discussion of their intention to incorporate certain career lessons learned from their parents into their own life-design (e.g. *“You mustn’t do something that you are not going to enjoy”*; *“Spend more time with your family”* and *“It is better to work for yourself than to work for someone else”*).

**(v) Parental advice**

Furthermore, the participants also seemed to attach value to constructive input from their parents, provided it was not regarded as too limiting or controlling, affirming Savickas and Porfeli’s (2011) findings. Interestingly, one participant (The Idealist) communicated (as based on his responses



during the group sessions) his belief that overly involved parents were likely to inhibit their children's sense of agency and ability to make independent decisions or solve real-life problems in the future. One participant (The Duty Fulfiller) also remarked that his mother's involvement in his school work, such as scheduling extra lessons; reminding him to study for tests and examinations, and expecting high academic results were regarded as stressful and irritating (e.g. *"My mother never ever makes her point. She shouts for like no reason. She shouts at me for my marks ... its good marks ... I'm top 11 ... 'I'm like 11<sup>th</sup> in the grade and you are shouting at me for my marks?'"* and *"If I have a small problem and let's say my mom hears about it, she will be like: 'Come, let's go for lessons and stuff. I don't need someone to take me for extra lessons – I know my work. Basically, all my stress comes from my mother"*). A study by Juang and Silbereisen (2002) found that academic success may very well be attributed to parental involvement factors such as: parental warmth, school involvement, academic discussions and high parental aspirations.

#### (vi) Parents' socio-economic status

It seems as though my study was not the only one to acknowledge the influence of familial socio-economic factors on the career trajectory of the individual (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2002). One such study demonstrated that instrumental forms of support, specifically the social status and income of the family, appeared to play a significant role in a student's choice of tertiary institution and chosen field of study. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds are said to prefer the security offered by careers within the science, medical and engineering fields, whereas students from high-income backgrounds preferred social or artistic careers (Ozdemir & Hacifazlioglu, 2008). The participants from my study attend an independent school, which in itself suggests that they are *likely*<sup>10</sup> to come from high-income homes.

Three of the five participants (The Scientist, The Executive and The Duty Fulfiller) have, nevertheless, indicated engineering and medical fields as their preferred choice, whereas the other two participants (The Giver and The Idealist) preferred careers within the social/artistic fields. One male participant (The Executive) demonstrated a strong aptitude for careers within the social field, but communicated his reluctance to pursue these options based on his perception that they were likely to offer meagre earnings. Possible new insights generated from my study suggest that the socio-economic background of the parents may have a more enduring influence than expected, since three of the five participants' reported on their parents' committed work ethic and dedication towards wanting a better life for themselves by rising above their previous low socio-economic circumstances. Perhaps this accounts for the three participants' decision to pursue careers within the scientific, engineering and medical fields. Unfortunately, The Giver and The Idealist, did not provide any indication of their

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<sup>10</sup> This statement is based on the assumption that parents who are able to afford the exorbitant fees (± R75 000 per year) of an independent school are most likely not regarded as low-income earners.

parents' past socio-economic circumstances. It may, however, still be of significance to mention that The Giver referred to her parents' insistence on her pursuing a career within the latter fields, despite her self-expressed interest in the artistic field.

The previously mentioned research study did, however, consider that a parent's educational background was likely to influence the specific career direction he/she steered his/her children towards; with those from low-income backgrounds believing that his/her children are better off following careers within the science, medical and engineering fields. As stated previously, my study appears to affirm these findings, as suggested by the following statement made by The Giver: "*I see my career path as something to do with a lot of Science and Maths, because of my parents*". Possible new information generated from my study in this regard, is based on the different cultural perspectives observed. Based on the qualitative analysis of the participants' responses, it would appear as though the white participants' parents encouraged them to find satisfaction and happiness in their future career trajectories regardless of financial factors, whereas the Indian, coloured and black participants' perceived their parents to have attached a degree of financial reward or economic stability to their child's future career trajectory<sup>11</sup>. Three of the five participants shared the impact that their parents' socio-economic background has played in their decision-making process. This impact appeared to be two-fold; on the one hand, their parents seemed to offer them the privilege of choice – as based on the respectively black and Indian participants' responses indicating that their parents experienced little choice when they were younger. On the other hand, the three participants also seemed inspired by their parents' ability to have worked themselves from the bottom, up.

#### **6.2.2.2. Envisioned family life**

##### **(i) Consideration of their future family lives**

A noticeable sub-theme, identified from the qualitative data, relates to the participants' desire to design lives that would offer a stable and financially secure future for their own family, as substantiated by one of The Executive's responses: "*I think I would struggle to like come home and think: 'How am I going to feed my family tonight?'*". As far as I could establish no existing literature studies have reported on the potential influence that participants' envisioned family lives may have on their career aspirations.

Wiese and Freund (2011) do, however, acknowledge the contributing impact of parents' behaviour on their children's envisioned lives. The study mentioned the role of gender-related behaviours, as well as the level of engagement, career enjoyment and accessibility that each parent demonstrates at home. These interactions served as effective (or ineffective) examples of how family and career contexts can be integrated. In my study the participants' responses also reflected an

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<sup>11</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.5.1.1.; 5.5.1.2., (ii) and 5.5.3.1. (ii).

evaluation of their current family life and a discussion of how certain aspects (such as divorce, the relationship they share with their parents and/or their parents' career choices) were likely to impact their future family life. An example of how The Executive views the effect of his parents' divorce on his future family life is reflected in the following response: *"How would you know how to parent, if you didn't really have a parent who is like a parent?"*

**(ii) Maintaining their current standard of living**

Four participants (excluding The Giver) also indicated a strong desire to maintain a similar or better quality of life to the one that they had become accustomed to, as implied by the following statements: *"I like the life I live now; where my parents have provided for me, I don't want to go lower ... I want to do better than what my parents did for me"* (The Duty Fulfiller); *"I want to give my kids everything that my parents give to me – and I'm going to need a lot of money for that. Yes, I have to keep it up"* (The Duty Fulfiller) and *"Give them all the luxuries that I was so fortunate to receive from my parents. They just deserve the same that I received"* (The Executive).

The participants' aspiration to design a life in accordance with the one created by their parents (based on their responses generated from the qualitative data set) becomes even more meaningful in light of Ashby and Schoon's (2012) research indicating that career, family and wealth aspirations held at the age of sixteen were likely to have an enduring influence on a person's well-being and perception of success in later life. The likelihood of adolescents achieving these future aspirations is further strengthened by the degree of confidence their parents managed to instil in them (Raque Bogdan *et al.*, 2013).

**6.2.2.3. The influence of other significant figures in the participants' lives**

Two participants (The Giver and The Idealist) acknowledged the positive and encouraging influence of significant others (apart from their parents) in their lives. This became particularly more evident during a discussion of the role-model activity (Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2011) when they shared the meaningful impact that, among others teachers have had on their lives. The previous statement was epitomised in the following participant's (The Idealist's) response: *"Even though they are older, they still respect the younger generation, because they know the younger generations are going to be our future and if we do not teach the younger generations then the world is going to turn to rubbish"*. The other participant's (The Giver) realisation that other people tend to observe and praise her talents has had an impact on her self-efficacy beliefs, as based on the following comment: *"It's like a lot of people in my life saw a talent that I never saw and I just go with it and I do end up being good with it"*.

Sjaastad (2007) reflected on the role that educators could play in inspiring learners to pursue specific educational paths. He also highlighted the importance of interpersonal relationships as the key motivator behind inspiring others. The role of significant others such as teachers, counsellors and friends in providing career information was also mentioned in a study by Ellison, Wohn, and Greenhow (2014). These findings were corroborated in my study by three participants' responses (The Duty Fulfiller, The Executive and The Idealist). The afore-mentioned participants mentioned the benefits involved in consulting others with regards to their future career aspirations, as demonstrated by The Duty Fulfiller's responses: "*Basically, my uncles ... like my father's cousins ... they went to university, because they came from the rich side of the family. So I listened when they were talking to my brother. My brother got a lot of advice and stuff ... so I was listening*" (1;0;A1;4;76) and "*One of my brother's friends, he got into UCT for actuarial science and I heard what the person does*" (1;0;A1;5;100).

Lent, Brown and Hackett (2000) also refer to significant others in their discussion of the Social Cognitive Theory (SCCT), in which they describe the concentric nature of influences surrounding a person. They also believe significant others or mentors to be very useful in acting as buffers against any potential barriers a person may encounter. My findings also corroborate with those reported by other studies (Richardson, 2001; Rhodes, 2002; Bluestein, 2004) also demonstrating the positive influence of mentors in shaping an adolescent's career aspirations. Most prominent are those studies that confirm the strong connection between increased career adaptability and improved social support (Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005; Creed *et al.*, 2009; Hirschi, 2009). There seems to be a consensus (Lent *et al.*, 2000; Duffy & Dik, 2009) that more research initiatives are needed to investigate the effect of external factors (and not just internal factors) on career choice. Apart from confirming the positive influence of significant others in the lives of the two specified participants, my study did not provide any further insights in this regard.

#### **6.2.2.4. Family relationships**

##### **(i) The quality of family relationships**

The participants' responses suggest that the quality of family relationships appeared to have had a mentionable influence on their future life-design. Family values; the degree of parental control and interest, as well as particular events that occurred in the family (e.g. divorce and an attempted suicide) were discussed during the group activities and individual interviews. The effect of relationships on adolescents' career decision-making processes has been the focus of many research studies, of which the relevant ones will be referenced below. This is not surprising given the powerful hold that family relationships have over a person's perception of him/herself (Rosenburg in Young, 1994). In fact a study conducted by Stoltz *et al.* (2013) indicated that unpredictable family circumstances were likely to result in either extremely cautious or highly impulsive interpersonal coping styles. Both these types

of coping styles were viewed as having an effect on a person's ability to adapt in work settings in so far as cautious individuals are more likely to experience illness, procrastination/task avoidance, mental tension and lack of assertiveness.

One of the participants (The Executive) described the instability experienced at his mother's house after his parents' divorce. As a result of his mother's emotional instability (including an attempted suicide) he started living with his father. During his post-interview he mentioned the positive impact that this move has had on his life. Given the findings of the above-mentioned study, it might very well be argued that the stable home environment offered by his father might have contributed to his future adaptability as demonstrated by his strong leadership skills and assertiveness (e.g. "*I can have more leadership over other people*") displayed during the sessions. Another participant (The Giver), whose responses indicated the emotional difficulties she was experiencing in her relationship with her parents, demonstrated a lack of assertiveness<sup>12</sup>. The afore-mentioned authors recommended the implementation of Savickas' Career Construction Interview (CCI) (2011) to improve individuals' self-knowledge as a way of assisting them in re-authoring or constructing a future narrative that reflects assertiveness, self-confidence, trust and control. The positive effects noted with the inclusion of the CCI in my research study will be seen throughout my discussion of it in this chapter. Findings from my study affirmed Sawitri *et al.* (2014) suggestion that family conflict is likely to influence an adolescents' career decision-making ability.

## (ii) Family communication and attachment

Meeus *et al.*'s (2002) study, suggesting that communication and parental attachment have an effect on adolescents' identity exploration and commitment was found to be very applicable in the discussion of the next point. The relevance can be better understood alongside the following examples of The Giver's responses: "*I don't know what kind of people they are [parents], I don't talk to them. You know when you need people to talk to you, to show you what kind of person they are ... I haven't had that with my parents*" and "*But, they are your parents and they do love you, no matter how you might think differently – that's all, like they love you and it doesn't matter that they are forced to love you, even if they don't at the end, but then at the end of the day, they love you and you are not being a better person by doing that*". The Duty Fulfiller and Idealist also respectively made the following contributions to the stated sub-theme: "*I'm close with my mom. It's just that we fight a lot ... but at the end of the day we are still very close*" and "*We know that the affections are there, we know that blood is thicker than water and we don't need to say: 'I love you' to assure each other*". The importance of addressing any relationship strife and working towards improved parent-child relationships and communication becomes even more apparent in light of Richardson's (in Rottinghaus *et al.*, 2012) conclusion that adolescents who experience a reliable support base demonstrate higher levels of self-

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<sup>12</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.5.1., (i) and (v); 5.5.2., (i) and (v).

esteem, efficacy and coping. Based on the results from my study, this statement can be roughly confirmed, but further investigation is necessary. Kinnier, Brigman and Noble (2001) discussed how family enmeshment encourages career indecision due to the lack of individuation in the family. There were no traces of family enmeshment in my study.

A study by Young *et al.* (1997) suggested that the emotional quality of the parent-child relationship is affected by whether they share similar or opposing constructions of the adolescents' anticipated career trajectories. This seemed to ring true for one participant (The Giver), in particular, who reflected on how the quality of the relationship with her parents has affected her ability to act assertively and communicate openly with them about her future plans. At the start of the life-design counselling programme, she accepted their plans for her as a means of avoiding conflict (e.g. *"I don't know what I actually want to go into, because the career I'm taking is actually for my mom, because I actually want to go into art. So I want to figure out if I should carry on or if I should tell my parents that I don't want to do architecture"* and *"All I get from them is disappointment ... and I don't want to disappoint them because it really makes me feel like I am worthless"*). The other participants (The Executive and The Scientist, respectively) also picked up on this situation during the group sessions (e.g. *"Talk to your parents, because you have to have a good relationship with your parents ... because, if you don't, you are not going to have a good relationships with your [kids] either ... so it is going to be a never-ending cycle"* and *"I don't think she is fully aware of her potential ... like other people, like her parents and that, so they like feel the need to decide for her, because I don't think that they think she can make the decision on her own"*). Towards the end of the life-design counselling group sessions and based on her responses provided in her post-interview, The Giver appeared to move towards a general acceptance of the latter points expressed by her fellow participants and demonstrated a stronger willingness to speak her mind and make her desires known. The Giver voiced this intention as follows: *Honestly, I've always known what I want to do. But, at the beginning I thought I just need someone to tell me what to do. Just to tell me who I am and what I want and like ... its ok you can do it.*

### **(iii) Excluded sub-themes**

Two sub-themes that were excluded (due to wide scope of the study) in Chapter 5 pertained to the participants' responses related to parental discipline and the differences in the nature of the relationship some of them shared with each of their respective parents. In hindsight, I feel inclined to question the initial exclusion of this sub-theme based on the insightful contributions from three specific studies (Guerra & Braungart-Rieker, 1999; Koumoundourou, Tsaousis & Kounenou, 2011; Seginer & Shoyer, 2012). As a subsequent after-thought, I have decided to, nonetheless discuss these omitted sub-themes in Chapter 6.

The participants' responses indicated that all five of them appeared to share a better relationship with their fathers. Four of the participants described the difficulties they have experienced in getting

along with their mothers, as follows: *“I would like to hear from my dad. I respect my dad, because he says when something is not right ... whereas my mom would be: ‘Aghhh’”*(The Duty-Fulfiller); *“My mom will like shout at me from her dizzy heights and my dad will be like ... ‘Listen, this needs to improve’”* (The Idealist); *“My mother is not logical ... my father is logical. My mother never ever makes her point. She shouts for like no reason. She shouts at me for my marks ... its good marks ... I’m top 11”* (The Duty Fulfiller) and *“It was like parents’ evening the other day and the only thing I remember my mom saying was: ‘Pathetic’. Like all my dad did was like ... he tried to make me laugh and my dad was like: ‘Ok, just do what you do in EGD with all your other subjects’”* (The Giver).

Seginer and Shoyer (2012) pointed out that disagreements were likely to occur when a mother’s personally-held future orientations for her adolescent conflict with his/her future orientation. As previously mentioned, another study (Guerra & Braungart-Rieker, 1999) also considered the influence of mothers on their children’s career decision-making. The authors established that career indecision could be induced by maternal over-protection. Students also perceived that in comparison to their mothers, their fathers appeared far more apt at cutting the apron strings – a sentiment shared by four of the participants involved in my study. One participant (The Executive) also felt discouraged by his mother’s failed business ventures and reflected as follows: *“She is following her dreams, but they are not successful”*. Based on his mother’s unsuccessful efforts, he indicated his commitment to following in his father’s footsteps and planning his career journey around financial stability as opposed to personal satisfaction.

Some participant responses also hinted at the type of discipline style their parents enforced at home, as described by The Duty Fulfiller: *“I used to get beaten a lot, I was a naughty child”* and *“Yes, I have been disciplined a lot, but it helps you, it like puts you in your place”*. According to Koumoundourou *et al.* (2011) stricter approaches may have a negative effect on children’s educational achievement, well-being and self-confidence. Both permissive and authoritarian discipline styles seemed to contribute to career indecisiveness in males, whereas only authoritarian parenting triggered hesitation and dependency in females. Previously Hoeltje, Zubrick, Silburn and Garton (1996) and more recently Juang and Silbereisen (2002) stated that adolescents were likely to display greater autonomy if their parents were perceived as nurturing as opposed to punitive and harsh. I agree with the Koumoundourou *et al.*’s (2011) call for further research efforts aimed at exploring the consequence of parental discipline styles on adolescents’ career experiences.

### **6.2.3. Theme 3: Financial and economic considerations**

The participants’ responses reflected their perception of the expected financial and economic considerations surrounding their future career trajectory. Sub-themes that enjoyed further attention were: the importance of financial security and awareness of the job-market (both internationally and

domestically). The literature control highlighted the importance of socio-economic considerations, which will be furthered discussed in the section below.

### **6.2.3.1. The importance of financial security**

All five participants demonstrated their intention to design a life directed towards achieving financial security. This aspiration seemed to stem from a desire to maintain or improve on the quality of life/socio-economic circumstances they have enjoyed up to this point in their lives. Reportedly the best indicator of salary is gender, extroversion and agreeableness (Rode, Arthaud-Day, Mooney, Near, Baldwin, 2008). Future well-being during transition periods also seemed to be affected by among other factors – finances (Borgen, Amundson & Tench, 1996).

In addition to the above, financial support and social class also appears to provide access to more career advancing opportunities, such as role-models and higher self-efficacy beliefs (Lent, Brown, Talleyrand, McPartland, Davis & Chopra, 2002). In my study, the participants did not make explicit mention of their current socio-economic status and no efforts were made to objectively attain it. It is, however, possible to make a fairly accurate deduction (based on the participants' enrolment at an independent school, as well as qualitative responses made by some of the participants that hinted at the possibility of wealth) that they most likely belong to the middle or higher class.

As mentioned by Blustein, Chaves, Diemer, Gallagher, Marshall, and Sirin (2002) the idea behind organising participants into a specific social class assists researchers in establishing its influence on people's lives. As an example, the afore-mentioned researchers were also able to ascertain that in comparison to lower-income families, individuals from high-income families generated greater personal satisfaction from work and benefited more directly from the availability of external resources. In general, they also displayed a higher level of career adaptability and seemed to be in a better position to enjoy more meaningful and self-fulfilling careers. The advantages listed in the study continued to pile up and included aspects such as educational resources, access to career services and less relational disruptions. Due to these favourable situations, individuals from higher levels of socio-economic status were also more likely to be afforded the opportunity to invest more thought and planning into their career decisions, which most likely explains their higher career adaptability. One of the participants reflected on this reality, as follows: *"People with money are going to succeed – the rich is going to get richer and the poor is going to get poorer"*. Other studies (Brown, Erikson & Johnson, 1996; Fukunaga & Umemoto, 1996; Anderson, 2004; Akos, Lambie, Milsom & Gilbert, 2007; Duncan, Featherman & Duncan, 2011) also lend support to the finding that privileged youths have more access to internal and external forms of support. Schoon and Polak (2011) are, however, also quick to point out the value of individual factors on the achievement of career aspirations.

The above description of the various advantages accompanying membership to a higher socio-economic class not only serves to expose social inequalities (Duncan *et al.*, 2011), but also helps to



explain the participants' strong desire to attain the same quality of life for their own families. In as far as I could establish, a unique contribution derived from my study was the strong desire expressed by of two of the participants (The Duty Fulfiller and the Executive) to reciprocate their parents' investment in their education by achieving academic success and securing a similar lifestyle for their families as the one that they had been privileged to. Of particular relevance is the cultural distinction noted in that only the coloured and Indian participant described the feeling of being indebted to their parents. The following responses (from The Executive and the Duty Fulfiller) serve to illustrate the afore-mentioned point: *"So in order to make my family happy, I have to give them the luxuries they want and provide for them – just like my parents have done for me. And I think that is only fair, because my parents have put me in good schools, crazy amounts of money for this schooling, buy me bikes at age sixteen – expensive bikes ... brands of clothes"* and *"I want to give my children what my parents have given to me – that's the main thing"*.

#### **6.2.3.2. Awareness of the job market (internationally and domestically)**

Participant responses suggested an awareness of the market trends and the possible implications it held for their planned career journeys. Seemingly new insights derived from my research study suggest that all five participants expected to come across several perceived career barriers, such as affirmative action (BEE), inadequate academic achievement and competitive work opportunities. These afore-mentioned barriers are accordingly described by The Duty Fulfiller and The Idealist as follows: *"Even though you are Indian ... it is going to be hard to get in, so it puts you at a disadvantage"* and *"I don't want to be racist, but young white kids in this country will not get very far"*. This sentiment seemed to be shared by all five participants, irrespective of their race.

Furthermore, their responses also reflected a generally negative attitude towards the future of South Africa. The participants believed that they should brace themselves for an uncertain time ahead if the current conditions should persist. A comment made by The Giver is provided as an example: *"I don't know if it is going to get worse, or if it is going to get better. And I don't want my children to be ... what if I am supposed to get out of the country now and start a new life somewhere else?"* Based on the participant responses, there appeared to be no cultural or racial distinctions in this regard.

A gender difference was, however, noted in that the three male participants subsequently described an unmistakable commitment towards stacking the odds in their favour so as to increase their chances of success in a competitive work world. Their responses also reflected their intention to bolster their chances of success in the future career world (including the option of studying abroad), by planning to excel or set themselves apart from others. They also spoke of their objectives to attain high academic results; obtain tertiary qualifications; pursue in-demand occupations; diversify their skills and abilities

and, establish networking opportunities<sup>13</sup>. A study done by Patton, Creed and Watson (2003) confirmed that South African adolescents were likely to perceive the high unemployment rate, retrenchments and affirmative action policies as barriers. Contrary to my study, however, the Grade 11 students that formed part of the previous authors' study demonstrated greater career indecision, uncertainty and planning due to their perception of these barriers.

#### **6.2.4. Theme 4: The value of time**

The participants' responses showed that all five of them placed significant emphasis on the value of time. In as far as I could establish, the importance of getting ahead in life as quickly as possible seems to be exclusive to my study. Furthermore, the participants' responses demonstrated that their apparent awareness of time appeared to influence their drive towards achieving their desired life goals within a set time frame. All five participants' responses demonstrated a commitment towards enrolling for their tertiary studies without delay. This finding refutes an earlier study conducted by Du Bois-Reymond (1998), suggesting that adolescents were likely to postpone entering the world of work by keeping their work identities at bay. The findings from my study are, however, aligned to a more recent study (McDonald *et al.*, 2005) showing that adolescents are only deferring adulthood with regards to starting a family and not their careers. The latter study described the youth's ambition to achieve tertiary success and gain work experience in an effort to achieve financial security. This conclusion supports the findings drawn from my study.

Two participants also demonstrated an unyielding desire towards making the most of the present time, since the ticking of the clock was believed to mark the dawn of a perceived future narrative that seemingly provided little time for fun and irresponsibility. The Executive's life motto of YOLO (You Only Live Once) symbolised his desire to enjoy his youth before he has to take on the responsibilities associated with tertiary studies, work and family life. The Duty Fulfiller shared this sentiment. My study, however confirmed a slightly more recent study by Brannen and Nilsen (2002:560) who suggested that youth was generally perceived as a time of *possibilities, variety and excitement*, whereas adulthood was viewed as *boring and routine*. The afore-mentioned notion is confirmed by the findings from my study as communicated by the two specified participants.

A study by Woodman (2011:111), concurred that *notions of time play a central role in contemporary youth sociology*. As noted in my study, the one participant also reflected Rosa's (2008) description of the increased pace of life. Additionally, the afore-mentioned author also discussed the factors contributing to a fast-paced life, such as: technological changes, the rapid speed of production and consumption, as well as cultural influences. Four of the five participants also commented on the lack of free time due to their busy schedules. The Scientist and The Giver, who were unclear about their

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<sup>13</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.5.1., (iii), (b), and 5.5.2., (iii), (b).

future career journey, struggled to describe their favourite magazines or what they enjoyed doing in their free time due to their full school programmes. This seemed to be a common feeling amongst the participants, since they all believed Grade 11 and 12 to contribute the most towards their future plans. During his post-interview one participant (The Executive) also demonstrated an increased desire to develop effective time-management skills to maximise his time usage. The Duty Fulfiller also believed time-management as imperative to his success.

#### **6.2.5. Theme 5: Components related to emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2007)**

Assuming that the participants involved in my study were bound to share personal and emotional accounts of their lives during group discussions and given the understanding of emotional intelligence as a combination between a person's emotions, thoughts and behaviours – it makes sense that emotional intelligence should emerge as a sub-theme in career-related research studies (Santos, 2004; Di Fabio & Blustein, 2010). Since the participants' responses reflected aspects closely associated with intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management and general mood, the components noted in my study were best organised according to Bar-On's (2007) model of emotional intelligence.

My study's acknowledgement of people's affective states as part of their career development and decision-making process is revered as a move in the right direction (Young *et al.*, 1997; Kidd, 1998; Santos, 2004; Di Fabio & Blustein, 2010). Puffer (2011) also confirmed the association between emotional intelligence and the processes involved in the preparation of a career journey and consequently expressed his disappointment at the lack of academic acknowledgement it has received. This argument is strengthened by Emmerling and Cherniss' (2003) finding that people with high emotional intelligence are likely to present with a greater ability to express their interests, values and needs. Moreover, people with lower emotional intelligence are likely to be less adaptive and demonstrate ineffective decision-making styles, such as avoidance, procrastination and hyper vigilance (Di Fabio & Blustein, 2010).

The latter findings pertain to my study when viewed in light of Emmerling and Cherniss' (2003) suggestion that career adaptability is increased when people are more in tune with themselves and demonstrate confidence in their ability to navigate their way through an anticipated career journey (Brown, George-Curran & Smith in Di Fabio & Blustein, 2010). Saki, Gati and Kelly (2008) were so interested in the association between emotional intelligence and career making-decisions that they developed the *Emotional and Personality Difficulties Scale* (Saki *et al.*, 2008) to evaluate the influence of emotions and personality (i.e. pessimism, anxiety and self-concept) on career planning. A similar study by Rode, Arthaud-Day, Mooney, Near and Baldwin (2008) demonstrated that emotional stability and a pro-active personality were the best indicators of job-success. Since people tend to *construct their lives through four major social contexts: market work, personal care work, personal relationships and relationships in the context of market work* (Richardson, 2012:26), it makes sense that my study should

follow suit and also report on the interplay that appears to exist between emotional intelligence, adaptability and life-design.

### 6.2.5.1. Intrapersonal skills

Two participants (The Giver and The Idealist), in particular, regularly utilised the individual and group sessions<sup>14</sup> to discuss the importance of emotions and assertiveness. Sharing of early recollections, life-story chapters, role-models and favourite book/movie (Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2011) seemed to lend itself best to discussions involving the participants' efforts to understand themselves better. The experience of doing so appeared to influence their capacity to design and live a more authentic life. One of these two participants (The Idealist) demonstrated a familiarity with the principles of emotional intelligence and used it as a golden thread to stitch together his life-design and story chapters, as illustrated by the following example: *"In the beginning of our lives ... we are basically taught emotions and how to use these sort of things. That's very much like the tools of an art piece"*.

Participation in the life-design counselling programme seemed to facilitate a greater awareness of the potential value that lies in expressing one's feelings, opinions and beliefs. Furthermore, Di Fabio and Blustein (2010:72) believed the *intrapersonal domain of emotional intelligence to be the best inverse predictor of non-adaptive styles*. This applied to The Giver's case, since she not only experienced difficulty in communicating her future plans to her parents, but also battled to express her feelings in general (e.g. *"I fake emotion ... I'm very good at making people think that I am ok and making myself believe that I am ok"*). Her propensity for hiding her true feelings was also demonstrated in one of her chapter headings, titled: *"Masks ... because I started to be what everyone else wanted me to be"*. These responses suggest that The Giver struggled with career adaptability, since she experienced noticeable difficulty in expressing, as well as demonstrating her true feelings.

According to Hirschi *et al.* (2011) individuals who perceive their lives as being out of their control is likely to inhibit their career exploration and decision-making ability. An inability to assert oneself (also known as acquiescence) is likely to lead to low self-confidence and the perception of being a misfit in the work place, whereas those who are able to assert themselves are likely to find themselves in leadership positions (Stolz *et al.*, 2013). Participation in the life-design counselling programme appears to have placed The Giver in a better position to acknowledge her lack of assertiveness. Sharing her earliest recollection with the group appeared to facilitate a greater awareness of how her lack of assertiveness and difficulty in expressing her emotions have affected her in the past, as indicated by the following response: *"I acknowledge feelings. There is no reason to go through pain anymore ... like ... I don't need to put myself through that anymore ... like ... I overthink things and I don't need to"*.

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<sup>14</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.5.1., (v), (a), p.26; 5.5.2., (v), (a), p. 44-45.; 5.5.3.1. (v), (a). Also see the verbatim transcripts (Sources A-I) on the submitted CD.

Self-regulation (along with planning, exploration and decision-making) is regarded as a strong contributing factor to career adaptability (Creed *et al.* 2009). The afore-mentioned participant's admitted difficulty with self-regulation (which is thought to be further related to other behaviours such as, goal-setting and impulse-control), therefore appeared to inhibit her career adaptability (Creed *et al.*, 2011). Given this finding, the initial concern she described in designing an authentic life can be better understood. Adaptability also appears to be linked to self-control and risk management (Porath & Bateman, 2006; Pulkinnen, 2009). Participants in my study shared very little data pertaining to the two afore-mentioned factors.

### **6.2.5.2. Inter-personal skills**

#### **(i) Inter-personal relationships with others**

Two participants (The Giver and The Idealist) demonstrated an awareness of their relationships with others and the impact of these interactions on their ability to balance the needs of others with that of their own, as best illustrated by The Giver's comment: *"It's not a matter of what I can design to make it a better life – it is just a matter of getting people to listen"*. The other participant (The Idealist) highlighted the importance of applying emotional intelligence in the workplace and indicated that well-developed inter-personal skills influence an individual's ability to adapt to various situations (Sjaastad, 2007; Blustein, 2011). Likewise, the Idealist's insights were also more recently supported by Brown *et al.*'s (2012) study that partly focused on the extent to which a person's career adaptability can be strengthened by his/her capacity to engage and interact with others in multiple contexts.

The Idealist also highlighted the importance of inter-personal skills as a gateway competency in facilitating future networking opportunities. Contrary to a study reported by Cunningham, Bruening, Sartore, Sagas and Fink (2005:135), The Idealist believed the *old adage 'it's not what you know, but who you know'* key to successful entry in the work place. The particular participant's sentiment was corroborated by the following response: *"It's a good example – Zuma ... he left school and he is sitting as a president [of South Africa] now ... and it's not because he went and studied politics at varsity – it is because he knew certain people. Mark Zuckerberg ... it is not what he knew, but who he knew"* (5; 0;A5;6:100).

#### **(ii) Inter-personal relationships between family members**

All five participants reflected on the relationships between themselves and their respective family members. Porfeli and Lee (2012) account for the likelihood of finding family related themes in qualitative career studies, believing that interaction with others (such as family members) is likely to shape adolescents' understanding, interest and preferred choice of careers. This also seemed to be the case in my study, based on the participants' description of various inter-personal skills demonstrated

within the home environment, for example: “*You need to be assertive in that point of time. When your family is going through a rough time – you have to be able to show sympathy ... you have to be able to have a high ... EQ*” (The Idealist); “*Cause like some days my mom gets mad and I don’t understand, but sometimes I’m just like she’s having a bad day and she is frustrated and people get frustrated and there is no need for me to take that back*”(The Giver) and “*With other people ... I’ll tell you: ‘Look I don’t like this’ ... but with my family I can’t do that, I will be like: ‘Ja, that’s nice’*”(The Duty Fulfiller).

The afore-mentioned participants’ awareness of their family members’ feelings support Young *et al.*’s (1997) notion that emotions are socially constructed. The latter study prompted an additional discussion (See: paragraph 6.2.2.4.) of the influence that family relationships have on careers. The last-mentioned study analysed the construction of career within a family setting to demonstrate the power of emotion in prompting action. The last-mentioned authors also emphasised the value of joint constructions about career in lieu of the more traditional approach to career counselling characterised by its emphasis on individualism and objectivity. This sentiment was also observed in my study (See: paragraph 6.2.9.2. and 6.9.2.3.).

### **6.2.5.3. Stress management**

Through the individual interviews and group discussions, all five participants identified strategies that were likely to improve their capacity to manage stress. The techniques were similar to the ones described by Kidd (1996) and included: looking on the bright side of things; taking responsibility for oneself; adjusting one’s goals and of course feeling good about oneself<sup>15</sup>. One participant (The Duty Fulfiller), in particular, reported feeling very stressed about his future plans. During the life-design counselling programme he came across a life motto that appealed to him, namely: “*Worrying is like a rocking chair, it gives you something to do – but it gets you nowhere*”. He was also able to identify gaming as an effective stress reliever. During his post-interview, he was also able to share the following affirmative response: “*I’m going to change my mind-set and if it gets stressful, I am going to remind myself to look at my options*”. McArdle *et al.* (2007:248) confirmed that *self-efficacy, problem focused coping behaviour and internal locus of control* are likely to improve re-employability. Previously, Patton *et al.* (2004) specifically reported on the positive effects associated with an internal locus of control, such as: improved career planning, social knowledge, knowledge of the work attitude and better career choices. Although it is too premature to assume that the participants in my study are likely to enjoy the advantages connected to the afore-mentioned stress management skills, it is, however, hoped that their described stress-management techniques should stand them in good stead.

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<sup>15</sup> See: Chapter 5, paragraphs 5.5.1. (v), b; 5.5.2. (v), b and the verbatim transcripts (Source A-I) on the submitted CD.

Another participant (The Giver) spoke about her previous suicide attempt. Her responses indicate that she had made a cognitive decision to maintain a positive mind-set and be more accountable for her emotions. Based on a research study by Argyropoulou *et al.* (2007) it would be interesting to consider the influence that stressors such as intra-personal, inter-personal and environmental conflict have contributed to The Giver's previously discussed experience of career indecision (See: paragraphs 6.2.2.4.; 6.2.5.1., and 6.2.5.2.).

#### **6.2.5.4. General mood**

Completion and discussion of the life-design counselling activities revealed four of the five participants' (excluding The Executive) general outlook on life. Responses in this regard seemed to be specifically attached to the completion and discussion of two life-design activities, namely the timeline and success/failure experiences (Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2011). Responses documented during the last-mentioned activities demonstrated the four participants' distinct preference towards focusing on the positive aspects of life as opposed to the failed or negative ones, as marked by The Duty-Fulfiller's response: "*I don't focus on the negative, I don't see the point. You've got to be happy at the end*". Discussions surrounding the concept of happiness seemed to trigger the participants' desire to incorporate elements of this value into their life-designs, as expressed by The Duty Fulfiller: "*Success isn't money or anything like that. Success is when you're happy with what you are doing*".

The four participants' overall optimistic outlook on life is likely to serve them well in the future, based on Rottinghaus *et al.*'s (2005) view that optimistic and adaptable people are shown to have higher academic aspirations, experience less discomfort with regards to their future career plans and tend to pursue more career-related opportunities. In my study, all five participants discussed their commitment towards academic success, but the same cannot be said with regards to the apprehension that two of the participants (The Scientist and The Giver) initially felt during discussions of their future career plans. According to Duffy (2010), employees who exhibit a sunny disposition are likely to exercise a larger degree of personal control over their lives, which in turn heightens their adaptability. McArdle *et al.* (2007) have also previously established that optimistic people were likely to see unemployment as an opportunity as opposed to a threat. Optimism also boosts coping mechanisms that enhance adaptability, which contributes to higher levels of *well-being and career management* (Rottinghaus *et al.*, 2012:126). Creed, Muller and Patton (2003) stressed the importance of identifying students who may not be displaying the same positive attitude demonstrated by the four participants involved in my study. The authors also indicated that students who experienced poor well-being at school were likely to struggle with transitions in the future. Kelly and Shin (2009) also call for counselling practices that focus on developing positive self-schemas, to address negative career thoughts and feelings (Kelly, 1996). Since all four of the participants exhibited an optimistic approach, it might have been interesting to consider the possible factors that could have contributed to this occurrence in a follow-up study. A study by

Sawitri, Creed, and Zimmer-Gembeck (2012) further confirmed the positive effects of optimism on a person's career adaptability by pointing out that negative affect/neuroticism was likely to lead to career-indecision due to a person's tendency to focus on the negative.

### **6.2.6. Theme 6: Adolescence according to Erikson's stages of development (Erikson in Louw *et al.*, 1998)**

On top of dealing with the physiological and psychological changes associated with puberty, adolescents are also expected to construct a cohesive vocational identity and engage in career preparation. These tasks involve a great deal of change – especially when one considers that they will also end up leaving high school to pursue a tertiary qualification or job opportunity (Creed, Muller & Patton, 2003; Erikson in Stringer & Kerpelman, 2012; Porfeli & Lee 2012). Successful management of career-related tasks contribute positively to an adolescent's level of career maturity, which enhances his/her ability to cope with the *psycho-social demands of transitions into working life* (Seifert, 1993:355). Life-design counselling is said to assist adolescents in this regard, since it improves their self-knowledge and helps them to organise their roles in the future (Reid & West, 2011). This aforementioned point is perhaps best defined by one of The Scientist's description of her current life chapter, titled '*Metamorphosis*': "*I am still like a worm, because I'm still not ready and I'm still not grown up yet. So, I'm still on my path to find what I am*". Reflection on the afore-mentioned response, reveals the participant's enhanced awareness of the progression involved in moving between various life phases, whilst at the same time acknowledging her current developmental phase and the accompanying tasks. Given that the participants in my study were adolescents, various emerging themes could be related to this phase of development. In the next section the following sub-themes will be discussed alongside existing literature on the following subjects: self-identity, autonomy and self-efficacy beliefs and, values.

#### **6.2.6.1. Self-identity**

##### **(i) Subjective Identify Forms (SIFs)**

Guichard (2009) believes that identity formation occurs within a social context, where the interactions where the interactions with others is said to contribute to the creation of Subjective Identity Forms (SIF's). SIFs are influenced by self-schemata and social categorisations and act as an internal referencing system when individuals engage with others in specific contexts. Elements of this were observed during the research process, as illustrated by these participant responses: "*Yes, if I do medicine ... I don't want to be with people who are always ... going to be working all the time and they don't want to go out – so I am hoping for someone like me*" (The Duty-Fulfiller); "*I'm not really a girly-girl*"



(The Giver); *“I know what you are all thinking – he is a sick and twisted child”*(The Idealist) and *“I don’t-need-your-help type of person”*(The Giver). Core self-evaluations, such as these, reflect thoughts people hold about their worth, competence and abilities, which in turn are directly related to their level of job performance, satisfaction, achievement and well-being (Judge & Bono, 2001).

Furthermore, participant responses indicated that they were all able to demonstrate self-knowledge in as much as they were able to describe certain personality qualities, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Participants were also able to utilise the life-design activities, individual interviews and group sessions with others to expose or contribute to their Subjective Identity Forms (SIFs). The previous observation is significant, since life-design counselling sets out to help individuals commit to a design that sees the integration of these SIFS with an acceptable future perspective (Savickas, 2005); which is important in light of Guerra and Braungart-Rieker’s (1999) suggestion that inadequate identity formation is likely to contribute to a person experience of *generalized indecision*. Porfeli and Lee (2012) refer to this progression in identity by describing how individuals move from a vague view of themselves in an undefined career to a crisper image of themselves immersed in a specific career. The affirmations that each participant received from his/her fellow group members seemed to contribute to the afore-mentioned goal, as noted in The Giver’s respective descriptions of The Scientist and Idealist: *“She doesn’t give up and when she plans on doing what she does, till the end”* and *“He is very wise, he doesn’t like to conform to society. He is an asset in this world in saying things from like a different perspective”*.

My study confirms Del Corso and Briddick’s (in press) findings that the audience is likely to affect a person’s self-knowledge. Implementing the life-design counselling programme in my study therefore appeared to stimulate a more in-depth discussion of each individual’s perception of him/herself in addition to providing participants with the opportunity to be more cognizant of their strengths, understand themselves better and identify areas in need of improvement or reframing. One participant (The Idealist), in particular, spoke about the importance of self-reflection: *“So you always, keep thinking who you were, what experiences happened and that just sort of brings you back ... it’s just a time to sit back and have some self-time and self-thought”*. Participant responses demonstrating these improvements serve as a means of identifying higher career adaptability, since people who present with a high level of career adaptability are more inclined to assimilate and implement changes in their identity (Thomas & Feldman, 2007). It would also appear as though career adaptability contributes to a *coherent identity* (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012:752).

The life-story chapters and role-model life-design activities (Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2011) seemed to resonate well with participants seeking to understand aspects of their identity a little better. This process makes sense, given McAdams’ (in Del Corso & Rehfuß, 2011:335) suggestion that the meaning a person derives from narratives, is driven by a need to *live well with unity and purpose*. Given these findings, in addition to the positive responses observed in my study, I agree that Savickas’ Career

Construction Interview (2011) is a suitable means of promoting a holistic and personally-relevant sense of self (Taber, Hartung, Briddick & Reh fuss, 2011).

**(ii) Motivating factors**

The ability to create a personal picture depends on whether an adolescent's motivations are either externally or internally derived (Guay, 2005; McArdle *et al.*, 2007). The former construct suggests that adolescents tend to rely on others to shape their identities, whereas the latter refers to adolescents who demonstrate a greater sense of self, appear to be more in control of their decisions, and experience more confidence in solving career-related difficulties. In my study, two participants (The Executive and The Idealist) clearly presented as internally derived adolescents, as based on their desire to act independent of others' opinions. Indications of this tendency is found in statements respectively describing The Executive and The Idealist as follows: "*I think, he does what he loves and he doesn't do what other people want him to do – he will do his own thing, which is a good thing. He doesn't care about what other people think*"; "*What he does or how he does it ... he must be able to have the freedom to do whatever he wants*". These two participants also subsequently seemed to experience more career control and confidence.

The one participant (The Giver), appeared to be more externally derived, based on her acquiescence in letting her parents make the decisions for her and seeming uncertain of her own identity. She also struggled to complete the collage activity and ended up making two very different ones. According to a study by McArdle *et al.* (2007), The Giver's progression towards defining her own identity, as evidenced by her current chapter in her life story titled "*The one that is being revealed slowly*", is promising. The last-mentioned authors also suggest that an *internal career compass* (McArdle *et al.*, 2007:249) is essential in promoting self-direction and further propose that one's identity can act as an anchoring device throughout the goal and decision making process. One of the participants (The Scientist) reflected this as follows: "*I think because of 'who you are' and 'what you are' kind of makes your path for you ... you strive to do and be true to who you are*".

**6.2.6.2. Autonomy**

**(i) Discrepancies between adolescents' sense of agency and parental expectations**

Adolescents who display *autonomy, independence, initiative and adaptation* (Littleton *et al.*, 2000:109) are viewed as agents (Cochran, 1997). The degree of agency demonstrated by adolescents is reported to be influenced by *family, friends, mentors and peers* (Chen, 2007:32). As previously discussed in this chapter (See: paragraph 6.6.2.), parents are likely to play an influential role in their adolescents' career decisions. It is, therefore, also understandable that they are likely to influence an adolescent's degree of independence regarding choices related to their future career orientations. Guay

(2005:78) suggested that adolescents experience a sense of autonomy when *they experience choice in the initiation, maintenance and regulation* of their behaviour. Subject choice selection, towards the end of Grade 9, appeared to serve as one of the first career-related platforms for the participants to test their budding autonomy (as described by the previous author) against their parents' authority, as inferred by the following responses, respectively stated by The Duty Fulfiller and The Giver: *"My mother actually made me do it [Accountancy] and I said 'No, I don't want to do it ... it's my life and I want to do EGD instead'"* and *"Then I fought for Drama – it's like the only artistic subject I could take"*. A study by Guay *et al.* (2006) suggested that decision-making self-efficacy beliefs influenced career indecision the most.

My findings confirm those made by a rather dated, yet relevant, study reported by Guerra and Braungart-Rieker (1999) who indicated that career decisions are often inhibited by the dynamics that arise between an adolescent's desire for more autonomy versus parental guidance and expectations. The responses indicated that both the participants and their parents appeared to struggle with balancing the give-and-take nature of autonomy. This tendency can be observed in the responses from one of the male participants (The Duty Fulfiller) describing the relationship he shares with his mother: *"Yes actually I want to live on my own, because I want to get away from my mother ... but then I need food. I'll learn to cook for myself ... but I need home-cooked food"*. He also wanted to pierce his ears for his birthday, but was reluctant to do so without his mother's consent (she eventually agreed). There were, however, also responses indicating greater acceptance of his autonomy: *"She has also accepted the fact that I am also getting older and she can't control me"* and *"Ever since my brother turned 18 ... they are more relaxed – like they have accepted that we are growing up"*. My research findings are similar to those from two earlier studies (Daddis & Smetana, 2005; Zimmer-Gembeck, Ducat & Collins, 2011) focused on the differences between adolescents and parents' views on the degree of autonomy that adolescents should be granted during decision-making processes. My findings also supported another study by Feldman and Wood (1994) who further suggested that a difference in opinion regarding the adolescents' degree of autonomy were likely to result in conflicts between them.

Comparable to the above participant's experiences and adding momentum to the last-mentioned author's findings, is The Giver's experiences related to autonomy. Her responses reflected the discrepancy she perceived between her intended career trajectory and the one that her mother had set out for her. A case study described by Young, Paseluikho and Valach (1997) suggested that even though mothers and daughters may share an interest in as far as identifying career goals, they might disagree on the course of action to follow. The study confirmed that a mother's negative response to her daughters' autonomy is likely to push her daughter away due to her feelings of frustration, disappointment and anger. The authors therefore suggest that parents and adolescents should be jointly engaged in career counselling or exploring practices. I am in agreement with the latter statement and would also be interested to see more studies explore this notion.

Overall, all five of the participants displayed varying degrees of autonomy, which ranged from the previously mentioned female participant's (The Giver's) reluctance to act autonomously to the two male participants (The Executive and The Idealist) who insisted on being independent. Progress was noted in The Giver's autonomous development – as illustrated by her ability to move from firstly believing that she had to do what her parents told her to do (e.g. *"I just do what they tell me"*) towards acknowledging her parents' permission for her to follow her goals (*"We are giving you the green light"*). The two male participants (The Executive and the Idealist) demonstrated their autonomous nature, right from the start of the research process, as indicated by several responses along the following lines: *"First of all I do things to make me happy – I don't like to please other people"*. Participation in the life-design counselling programme created room for all the participants to explore their sense of autonomy through self-reflections, participation in joint discussions and comparison with the other group members. Reflections by other group members', in this case The Idealist's, often mirrored their fellow participants' perceived sense of autonomy, for example: *"It's because his role-models and stuff are people who don't really care about what other people think"* and *"He knows what he wants, but he also wants to impress his family"*.

This aspect has also previously enjoyed further attention in the scientific field as evidenced by several studies (Munson, 1993; Juang & Silbereisen, 2002; Schoon & Polek, 2013); focusing on adolescents' sense of agency versus their parents' expectations or influence. One such study (Kush & Cochran, 1993) reported on the importance of self-agency, suggesting that those who present with a weak sense of agency were likely to benefit from interventions aimed at strengthening their capacity to bring about change. The latter finding bears relevance to my study in that my study confirms the aforementioned finding based on The Giver's experience of the life-design counselling experience. This particular participant initially demonstrated a high degree of career indecision, as well as a reluctance to communicate her career aspirations to her parents. Progression in her sense of agency could be observed between the pre- and post-interview as noted by the following post-interview responses: *"In the beginning I thought I just needed someone to tell me what to do ... like, I've known what I wanted to do, but I just like needed reassurance"* (4;8;I4;1;4); *"And I've decided ... like no, that is not the way I want to be treated – I am finally seeing it ... I am finally seeing it"* (4;8;I4;1;7). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002:3) believed that youth will be expected to become more individualised and in essence design a *do-it-yourself biography*". This tendency could be observed in The Executive and The Idealist's expressions related to their independent approach towards designing their future career course.

A longitudinal study by Guay, Ratelle, Senècal, Larose and Deschênes (2006) focused on career indecision as a function of self-efficacy, autonomy and support from parents and friends. The preceding study is therefore relatable to the sub-themes identified in my own research study in that I also corroborate the latter authors' suggestion that autonomy and self-efficacy play an underlying role in career indecision. Furthermore the findings from the last-mentioned study indicated adolescents whose

parents allowed them more opportunities to act autonomously were likely to display more career certainty. Although my research study did not follow a longitudinal design, the findings substantiate those expressed by Guay *et al.* (2006). The lack of autonomy demonstrated by The Giver also seemed to be linked to her observable career indecision, whereas the higher levels of autonomy displayed by The Executive and The Idealist might have contributed to the degree of career certainty observed, as suggested by the examples provided.

Another study (Sawitri, Creed, Zimmer-Gembeck, 2012) also reported on adolescents' perceived degree of autonomy versus parents' expectations using the *Adolescent-Parent Career Congruence Scale*. Findings from this research study suggest that a discrepancy between the adolescent's career aspirations and those that his/her parents hold for them are likely to have a negative effect on his/her career development. My study confirmed the last-mentioned finding as indicated by The Giver's demonstrated difficulty in balancing her own career aspirations with her parents' intended plan for her life.

### **6.2.6.3. Values**

#### **(i) Values attached to financial wealth**

Part of the following discussion relates to the sub-theme of financial and economic awareness, previously discussed (See: paragraph 6.6.3.). In my study the importance attached to the acquisition of wealth relied on the participants' values. One female participant (The Scientist) valued happiness above financial wealth, but, nonetheless, also endeavoured to earn a good living (e.g. *"I think that if I am happy, then I will work harder. I will get more money in the end"*). Another male participant (The Idealist) demonstrated his financial ambition as follows: *"I see myself as a middle-class citizen – not stinking rich, but able to live comfortably on the salary I can work on"* Quite to the contrary, two of the male participants (The Executive and The Duty Fulfiller) appeared to value financial wealth above happiness and career satisfaction, as shown by the following statement: *"If I am going to do something that makes me happy, it is not going to make me money either. So it is, either, happiness and no money or like money and the stuff that money buys. I would rather be unhappy and loaded"*. Their strong desire to obtain financial wealth at all costs, may carry a cultural connotation since both the Indian (The Duty Fulfiller) and coloured (The Executive) participants emphasised this value, whereas the two white participants (The Idealist and The Scientist) seemed to acknowledge happiness and/or comfort more. The above participant comments promote Freud and Chartier's (2008) suggestion that adolescents should think carefully about important issues such as money, power and lifestyle and whether they do, in fact, constitute a good life.

(ii) **Extrinsic and intrinsic values**

In the past, traditional career assessments attached significant value to the determination of a person's interest and values, since these two constructs were believed to contribute to the tasks previously associated with career development (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Watkins, Campbell & Nieberding, 1995). The constructive nature of the life-design counselling programme created opportunities to discuss the participants' values and motives behind their intended future plans. These discussions aimed to consolidate their personal needs with their career ambitions/decisions. The Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) proposed that people experience a sense of well-being when they are able to meet their need for autonomy (freedom of choice); competence (task accomplishment), and relatedness (meaningful connections with others). These needs are attached to certain external and internal motivational drivers. My research study confirmed the basic suppositions of this as noted by the difficulty that two of the participants (The Duty Fulfiller and The Executive) experienced with regards to career decision-making. The Duty Fulfiller appeared to display both *introjected regulation* and *identified regulation*, respectively referring to his inherent desire to become a soccer player versus his commitment towards pursuing medicine and his ambition to specialise in medicine in spite of his dislike of reading and studying (Guay, 2005:79). He was subsequently encouraged to explore several career options that looked at combining these elements, as well as clearing a space in his life for playing soccer (Ungar & Smith, 2004b).

In addition to the above, the Theory of Work Adjustment also proposes that one of the six values that employees aspire to achieve within the work environment is altruism. The afore-mentioned value is achieved when a person receives social-reinforcement from their environment (Shubsachs, Rounds, Dawis & Lofquist, 1978). The emergence of altruistic values in my study confirmed findings from a more recent study (Dawis, 2005) proposing that work satisfaction is likely to rely on the degree to which a person's needs are being reinforced. This was especially noted in the frequency of the afore-mentioned value in three of the five participants' (The Duty Fulfiller, The Idealist and The Scientist's) responses in describing their future career aspirations: The Idealist illustrated this need during a discussion of his favourite television shows, books and song lyrics: "*On the back he hand-wrote a quote inside 'When the rich wage war, it's the poor who die'*". His expressed desire towards helping the proverbial underdog seemed to have inspired his life-design as follows: "*The way I see myself, actually the only way that I could see myself being able to change the world is through my art'*". The Scientist and The Duty-Fulfiller both displayed altruistic tendencies in that their future career aspirations were motivated by their desire to help others.

The possible relevance of values with regards to life-design counselling reinforce Seifert's (1993) motion that adolescents should receive guidance in evaluating the intrinsic and extrinsic values associated with career choice and the possible effect that these motivational drivers may have on their self-actualisation. As far as I could establish little current research has been done in this regard, so I am

in support of Ashby and Schoon's (2012) call for more research initiatives aimed at exploring the effect that career choice based on happiness or other objective values is likely to exercise on a person's future well-being, identity and career progression.

### **6.2.7. Theme 7: School life**

The school system forms an integral part of an adolescent's life. It is in this external environment that adolescents are likely to encounter specific events that may continue to shape their lives for years to come (Sweeting & West, 1994). This context also provides adolescents with a number of challenges, of which the first one involves managing the transition from primary school to high school and the increased workload that accompanies it. Adaptability, in this case, seemingly relies on the development of various self-regulatory skills that contribute to a person's personal management: i.e. *goal-setting, self-monitoring, time-management and self-evaluation* (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006:46-47). Secondly, adolescents are expected to cope with the additional pressure associated with academic achievement and the ensuing self-efficacy beliefs that materialize from their perceived competency (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006:46-47).

In addition to academic achievement and self-efficacy beliefs, adolescents are usually required to participate in the extra-mural activities offered by the school. These activities serve as an extended platform for adolescents to experiment with various roles and dabble with their abilities (Csikszentmihalyi in Munson, 1993). Lastly, adolescents are likely to deal with certain social aspects at school given their current developmental phase (Erikson in Louw *et al.*, 1998). Individuals who are able to seamlessly navigate their way through the obstacle course, also known as school life, are seemingly in a better position for achieving success (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). In summary, the following sub-themes will be discussed below: school achievement and self-efficacy beliefs; participation in extra-mural activities and social aspects related to school.

#### **6.2.7.1. Academic achievement and self-efficacy beliefs**

##### **(i) Human capital factors involved in self-efficacy beliefs**

O'Connel *et al.*'s (2008) research efforts showed that personal adaptability is largely influenced by education and employability. The authors explained that these two human capital factors contribute the most to an individual's perception of his/her readiness to cope with change. Schoon and Polak (2011) concurred with these findings and added that adolescents from privileged schools were more likely than those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to complete high school, pursue a professional career and continue to belong to a high social class. As a consequence, the aforementioned authors were able to argue that social background, as opposed to aptitude and ability, tend to influence adolescents'

commitment to education and career ambition. One of the participants (The Idealist) reflected this tendency as follows: *“With a matric certificate you are sort of being on the brink of not being hired. You’ll get very basic jobs”*. Both these studies add depth to Stringer and Kerpelman’s (2012) conclusion that adolescents were at risk for developing maladaptive behaviours should they perceive their dream career to be out of their reach. In light of the previous statement, Bandura’s (1997) belief that individuals holding low self-efficacy beliefs stand to gain from participation in career programmes aimed at improving their personal adaptability, should be taken to heart. The author’s further suggestion that the programme should focus on encouraging people to invest in their education and expand their skill competency, complements the above findings. This tendency was observed in my study, since two of the participants (The Duty Fulfiller and the Executive) indicated that taking advanced Mathematics and attending an independent school were likely to enhance their levels of competency and benefit them in the long run. In my study, the participants mirrored the above authors’ sentiments regarding the importance of education as a career building block. The following responses denote two participants’ (The Scientist and The Idealist’s) intention to obtain a tertiary degree: *“If I have a degree behind my name, I know that my family is going to have this and this. I think that’s what I want”*; *“Again, a kid can come out of Grade 12 and be a billionaire, but the statistics are very, very low. A kid needs to go to university, which I would say is a more reasonable and successful way of getting on with life”*. Similar responses were also made by two of the other participants (The Duty Fulfiller and The Idealist), suggesting that four of the five participants associated further or higher education with success and financial wealth. The afore-mentioned finding corroborates Woodman’s (2011:116) suggestion that *post-school study has become the norm*. The four participants’ responses also ratify Cunningham *et al.*’s (2005) argument that *investments in training, experience or education* as opposed to *network ties* are likely to open more career doors. Based on the preceding discussion, it would seem as though my findings strengthen the contributions of other studies (Cunningham *et al.*, 2005; O’Connell *et al.*, 2008; Schoon & Polak, 2011; Woodman, 2011) suggesting the association of human capital factors to self-efficacy beliefs and career adaptability.

**(ii) Self-efficacy beliefs related to experienced learning difficulties**

Obtaining a tertiary qualification is, however, easier said than done especially when one considers the responses from one participant (The Idealist) who battles with a learning difficulty (i.e. *“I always used to struggle with reading, etcetera”*). This aspect seemed to carry significant weight with regards to his future aspirations and expectations of success. Consequently he displayed a reluctance in setting goals due to his expectation of failure expressed in following responses: *“And another special talent – failing at school”* and *“Don’t make it a goal in life and if you fail you can’t beat yourself up about it”*. Maughan and Hagell (1996) reflected on the tendency that learners with higher marks are likely to aspire to more high-status careers. Schoon and Polek (2011) displayed a more recent



confirmation of this tendency in their study showing that high aspirations are likely to influence an adolescent's desire to enrol for a tertiary degree and practise a prestigious career in the future.

Panago and Du Bois (1999) also described the influence of a learning difficulty on an adolescents' career planning and suggested that they tend to base their career trajectory (including their interests and motivation) on their self-rated expectation of success within a given field. This finding is further affirmed by The Idealist's tendency to refrain from goal-setting in an effort to avoid disappointment, as illustrated by the following two responses: *"You are setting yourself up to fail ... yes, you are setting yourself a standard and if you don't reach it ... well what happened?"* and *"Don't make it a goal in life and if you fail, you can't beat yourself up about it"*. The authors further believed that these kinds of self-limiting perceptions might have been derived from the differences learners with learning difficulties observed between themselves and learners not experiencing barriers to learning. Subsequently, these adolescents were likely to limit career exploration due to their expectation of imminent failure (Panago & Du Bois, 1999). An example of this tendency is reflected in the following response: *"I haven't really set myself up for being anything else besides a teacher, because I don't think I will do fairly well in any other sort of environment"*. The same participant (The Idealist) referred to this sense of failure in stating the reasons for his specific career choice as follows: *"It's sort of ... I failed at this ... I might as well go and be a teacher. And it is how the saying goes: 'If you can't succeed – you become a teacher and if you can't succeed at becoming a teacher – become a PE teacher'"*. Creed *et al.* (2007) emphasise the importance of including activities that appeal to a wide variety of learners (including those with different abilities) so that these learners feel supported and encouraged.

The Idealist may have experienced life-design counselling as one such intervention, as suggested by the progression in his career planning. During his pre-interview, the respective participant advised himself as follows: *"You need to stop running away from all your problems and be who people need you to be"*. Towards his post-interview, he acknowledged an artistic direction as his first choice, albeit keeping teaching for insurance purposes: *"I know what I am going to do ... if my marks are good enough by the end of next term, I can go into studying at the Open Window Academy ... graphic and film study and then do a diplomacy in teaching ... also the teaching sort of gives me a back-up plan if maybe graphic design and film does not do it for me – at least it will be something for me to fall back on"*. He also demonstrated a more goal-directed attitude: *"According to last term's marks, I only need to increase by 2/3 APS points"* and *"I think I am setting goals without realising it"*. He seemed to have made sense of his self-efficacy beliefs at the hand of an anecdote he shared referring to two types of people, namely academics and people who can cope. He believed the following: *"Because I haven't been able to deal with things in textbooks, I've learned ... how things work, how things run out there"* and described his favourite book as follows: *"He doesn't understand his abilities, but he then learns that he, as a person, is more powerful than everyone else and he needs to use that for good and that may not be one of the easiest things to do, but still ... he does it"*.

The Idealist's statements describing the effect of his learning difficulties on his future life-design appears to have added a unique angle to my study, since this aspect has enjoyed very limited and/or recent attention in the research field (Reis, McGuire & Neu, 2000; Juang & Silberstein, 2002; Field, Sarver & Shaw, 2003).

### (iii) **The role of others in the development of self-efficacy beliefs**

People's self-efficacy beliefs are regarded as the driving force behind their career behaviours (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 2001; Creed, Patton & Prideaux, 2007) and are closely linked to career indecision (Argyropoulou, Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou & Besevegis, 2007). Based on Bandura's (1997) conceptualisation of self-efficacy, this construct is strongly associated with the perceptions others and the individual hold of his/her achievement in a specific task. Lent *et al.* (1994) also suggested that contextual factors, such as expectations imposed on a person by others (such as parents) are likely to influence his/her self-efficacy beliefs.

Savickas (2011b) is convinced that people harbour knowledge of the necessary steps to be taken in their career journey, but may need encouragement from a career counsellor to unearth it. The authors proposed that these beliefs might stem from the adolescents' perception of their parents' projected confidence in their abilities, as well as the degree of parental involvement in school matters. Adaptability and school achievement are said to increase when parents hold higher aspirations for their child and become more involved in his or her schooling. Parents therefore continue to have a mentionable impact on their child's sense of self-efficacy. If adolescents perceived their parents to hold high academic perceptions of them, they were more likely to engage in goal-setting behaviour, demonstrate perseverance and achieve their goals (Juang & Silbereisen, 2002). The participant (The Idealist) referred to in the previous paragraph (See: paragraph 6.2.7.1., (ii)), consistently mentioned the lack of parental support he has received, as noted in his pre-interview, group sessions and post-interview. This type of response was also mentioned in his earliest recollection: *"I think I was about three or four, I crawled into the guts and stuff ... and I was sort of chewing on the guts and stuff and my parents didn't do anything. The next morning, the guys were saying how about 20 metres away, there was an impala being killed by a cheetah and my parents didn't really give a ... damn"*.

Although Juang and Silbereisen's (2002) study focused on the effect of parental expectations on their child's self-efficacy, it might be useful to mention the insightful response shared by one of the participants (The Giver) recounting her experience of changing schools. The new school was subsequently notified of her advanced scholastic ability, but after an assessment was conducted, it was decided that she should rather be moved back to the age-appropriate grade. Her response to this situation was as follows: *"So as a person who came from Gauteng ... and then going into that school – the teachers were kind of disappointed because they wanted it to be high and stuff"*. Based on responses such as the one to follow, this incident initially did not seem to have affected her self-efficacy beliefs:

*“Learning comes easily to me, I find it very easy ... I get things very quickly – it doesn’t matter what subject”*. Discussions with the participant during the pre- and post-interview, however, suggest that her marks do not reflect her self-described abilities and academic potential. She offered the following explanation: *“I can’t have that attitude, not everything comes easily – even if you are smart”*. Participation in the life-design counselling programme, appeared to illuminate the discrepancy between The Giver’s perceived ability and actual school achievement. This realisation saw The Giver enact plans to improve her school achievement. As far as I could establish, very little research has been done on the significance of teacher’s expectations with regards to self-efficacy beliefs and career exploration. One of the few studies, dating back to the early 90’s (Schunk in Schunk, 1991) suggested that that teachers’ attributional feedback, especially during the foundation years, affected children’s self-efficacy beliefs and academic learning. Further exploration of this aspect is of great relevance, since high self-efficacy beliefs are likely to contribute to a heightened sense of confidence in making career decisions and low self-efficacy beliefs are associated with less career exploration (Betz & Voyton, 1997; Duffy & Dik, 2009; Lent *et al.*, 2000). Bandura *et al.* (2002) also added that the children are likely to base their future work success and career decisions on their self-efficacy beliefs as opposed to their academic achievement.

#### (iv) **Self-efficacy beliefs and academic achievement**

With regard to school achievement, Creed, Fallon and Hood (2009) distinguished three types of goal orientations, namely: learning, performance prove, and performance void. The first-mentioned refers to individuals who let the malleable nature of intelligence work for them by engaging in learning opportunities that serve to increase their stock of competencies. These individuals demonstrate more confidence in their ability to make decisions and less career concern. The same can’t be said for performance-prove and performance-void goal oriented individuals, who regard intelligence as a static quality. The former compensates for this view by working hard towards achieving visible success, whereas the latter tries everything in their power to avoid failure. These goal orientations, as evidenced by the associated behaviours, were observed in my study. It could, however, be argued that the participants did not exclusively display one type of goal orientation and moreover that the three distinct types did not present as delineated as Creed *et al.* (2009) described. One participant (The Duty Fulfiller), in particular, demonstrated an inconsistency in his goal orientation, as noted in his efforts to increase his set of competencies (e.g. *“I think that I do IEB and AP Maths would help me”*), whilst at the same time over-investing in his efforts to achieve high marks (e.g. *“It dropped by like 2%. It was a shock – it is the first time it was below 80 in my entire life”*) and avoiding failure (e.g. *“If I don’t study I know I am going to fail. If I don’t do my work, I know I’m going to get into trouble”*). Overall, the participant responses nonetheless demonstrated commitment towards achieving success, which involved prioritising their academics and managing their time more effectively, as demonstrated by the following

examples of the Duty Fulfiller's responses: *"I'm going to work ... ok firstly, I am going to stop playing XBOX ... so then I can focus on my work"* and *"Yes, I just have to get my marks up ... I'm quitting hockey now"*.

Academic achievement and self-efficacy beliefs also seemed to play a role in all five of the participants' subject choices and reported enjoyment of it. Responses also indicated that the participants demonstrated a strong preference towards pursuing career directions based on their academic performance and level of satisfaction derived from a specific subject. They also seemed to consider their performance in a specific subject as a powerful predictor of their expected efficacy and future job performance. In an effort to support the afore-mentioned statements, two participants' (respectively The Duty Fulfiller and The Scientist) responses are provided. The Duty Fulfiller, who is interested in pursuing medicine as a career, described his preference for Biology as follows: *"Bio is my favourite subject ... and it makes me happy"*. The Scientist, interested in a scientific/research field, reflected on Science as a subject as follows: *"Science ... it's about solutions again and fixing problems. I wouldn't mind working in a lab and finding out things. I think solving problems – that is what I like doing"*.

Although a study by Bandura, Caprara, and Pastorelli (2001) focused on children, it might be relevant to note that my study also confirms their findings showing that children's perceived academic and social efficacy were likely to impact on their choice of occupation. The afore-mentioned authors also suggested, as was the case noted with the participants in my study, that these self-held efficacy beliefs directed their career pursuits.

The preceding findings also confirm Athanasou's (1998; 2009) suggestion that a person's interests in learning are likely to influence his/her educational achievement. My study does, however, diverge from his findings based on the author's suggestion that the relationship between career, academic, and leisure preferences is minimal. The afore-mentioned author's (Athanasou, 2005:50) statement that *what we like to learn may not be how we like to earn*, is contradicted by my findings with regards to the possible association that might exist between academic interest and achievement, and future career aspirations.

#### **6.2.7.2. The role of extra-mural activities and other pastimes**

##### **(i) The significance of extra-mural activities in facilitating attitudes, behaviours and competencies**

The participants' responses revealed the importance of extra-mural activities in their lives. Sport, in particular, seemed to act as a frame of reference, as illustrated by participant responses such as these: *"Train hard, fight easy – I think that applies to all sport and school"*; *"I think I strive on success, because I know I will be more comfortable going into a school tournament knowing that I am probably one of the better players here ... I just feel like I have a backbone to fall on, like experience"*

and “*So without being able to adapt or think quickly on my feet I think ... that applies to most things in life – even in soccer. If you receive the ball and you don’t see someone coming and then you have to adapt to the situation, think of your options ... are you going to turn this way or that*”. The preceding participant responses confirm findings by MacDonald, Pini, Bailey and Price (2011) who proposed that a person’s identity is largely affected by leisure activities.

**(ii) The relationship between extra-mural activities/hobbies and the participants’ career trajectory**

As far back as the 80’s Kleiber and Kelley (1980) reported on the importance of leisure as a means for adolescents to experiment with social roles and identities. Later on Kelley (1990) suggested that the freedom experienced by adolescents in having the ability to choose their leisure activities sets the tone for role salience. The afore-mentioned authors’ contribution to the above sub-theme demonstrates the enduring quality of their research, since these studies reflected the nature of my study, too and confirmed the participants’ tendency to refer back to hobbies or extra-mural activities when describing significant experiences in their lives. This transpired more so during the life-design activities that incorporated a timeline of their lives, as well as their recollection of three success and failure experiences (Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2011). The idea of achieving success or failure in one aspect of all five participants’ lives seemed to support Csikszentmihalyi’s (in Munson, 1993) belief that leisure activities are a valuable means for adolescents to experience the efficacy with which they are able to portray different roles.

In addition to this, Argyropoulou *et al.*’s (2007:319) claim that interests are *manifested through the activities we pursue, the objects we value, and we what we find exciting or challenging* was substantiated by participant responses indicating that hobbies or sports participation seemed to mirror their described interests and talents (e.g. “*Actually, it was this year and I was drawing ... I was drawing animation and my mom was like, ‘If this what you want to do, then you can go do it’*”). In the latter participant’s (The Giver) case, her hobbies such as piano, photography, and painting allowed her to understand the importance of acknowledging her authentic self in her career aspirations, instead of trying to please her parents. The other female participant (The Scientist) was also able to form parallels between her interest in cooking and baking with elements of her life-design: “*Every time I cook, I try and do something new – it must have a challenge*” and “*When I bake ... I don’t like making something that is not pretty. I want to make something that is interesting and that looks nice ... and I think fashion also links in with that*”. Munson’s (1993) view that the freedom to participate in leisure and community activities is a positive way of improving career saliency, is substantiated by my findings.

In the case of two participants (The Duty Fulfiller and The Executive) and to a certain extent The Giver’s (due to her parents’ influence), my findings differed from two reported studies (Brown & Brooks, 1991; Hyde & Tricky, 1995). The afore-mentioned authors established that individuals were likely to pursue interests based on the activities that they experienced as pleasurable and that these

interests were likely to exert considerable influence on an individual's career and educational plans. The Duty Fulfiller and The Executive, however, expressed their reluctance to pursue their described interests as occupational choices. In the following example The Duty Fulfiller expresses his passion for soccer, followed by a response that indicates his hesitance in pursuing it as a possible occupational option: *"I just love the game [soccer] ... like I grew up playing it. Even on X-Box, it's my favourite game"* (1;9;A1;6;120). *"If I wanted to become a professional soccer player. They earn a lot, money isn't the problem – but, you won't be able to get another job, because your time is up"*. (1;9;I1;6;116). The Executive shared this sentiment and also revealed his opinion of occupational choice and personal interest, as follows: *"I love my sports. Like every opportunity I can, I will do it"* (2;3;D;8;325 versus *"Work is not supposed to be fun, even though you are supposed to be enjoying it. But, as long as it puts out the right amount of pay, I'll be happy then"* (2;9;I2;7;94). Granted the last-mentioned participant responses, it could be stated that findings from my research do not exclusively confirm that individuals are likely to follow a career course based on their interests alone. The two mentioned participants demonstrated a strong awareness of factors that were likely to impede their decision-making process in this regard, such as financial considerations and possible risks attached to the choice of career. This finding confirmed Gottfredson's (1981) initial contribution and also a study done 28 years later by Athanasou (2009). Both these authors proposed that interests were often sacrificed or compromised in lieu of other goals and added that career aspirations do not necessarily reflect one's choice of leisure activities. My findings, with regards to the mentioned participants, support theirs.

### (iii) The role of sporting performance in the participants' life-design

Participants also highlighted their sporting achievements and disappointments as key events on their time lines and in their earliest recollections (Cochran, 1997; Savickas, 2011), for example: *"I don't have much ... like big things that happened in my life. So ja, mostly it was the touch rugby and then this year again for my netball I made the 1<sup>st</sup> team"* (The Duty Fulfiller). The significance of sports in four of the participants' lives appeared to be related to the degree of dedication invested (e.g. *"When I was little, I was like really bad with it ... and then I started to see that if I practise, I can get the result of it"*(The Scientist); the extent to which they received social recognition for their sporting accolades (e.g. *"and then I'll perform there and stand out and make them see me"*) and/or the sense of accomplishment and self-efficacy they derived from achieving their goals (e.g. *I will set ... performance goals ... I'll work for school goals ... which two years ago, I accomplished that goal and I was happy"*(The Idealist)). One participant (The Scientist) also mentioned that team sports have informed her understanding of working with others in a group. The relationship between life-design and sports participation and achievement emerged as a dominant theme throughout my study. The extent to which it is portrayed in this context appears to not have been reported on before.

Sports, also appeared to contribute to four of the participants' sense of identity (e.g. *"I don't know the meanings in my life when it comes to sport. I just know that what it means is I won't give up"*

(The Scientist)). The female participants' responses also contained references to their gender for example: "*And I wrote in Grade 1, I was the only girl in the cricket team*". One male participant (The Executive) also referred to the association between certain sports and gender preferences: "*Like I love touch [rugby], even though it isn't a proper guy's sports*".

My findings corroborate the psychological benefits associated with sports participation and success (Donaldson & Ronan, 2006). It also further supports Eccles, Barber, Stone and Hunt's (2003) assertion that participation in school sports could serve as a good predictor of academic achievement. I also agree with Kirkcaldy, Shepard and Siefen (2002) that more research studies should focus on the psychological benefits of exercise on children and adolescents. The last-mentioned authors reported on the benefits of sports participation on adolescents' general well-being, stress-management skills and overall psychological performance. My study subsequently confirmed their findings that sports participation was likely to have a positive effect on the social feedback and recognition received from peers.

Two male participants, respectively coloured and Indian (The Executive and The Duty Fulfiller) also indicated their desire to pursue a sporting career, if money wasn't an issue. They were able to realistically assess their talent and potential attached to a sporting career and did not believe that they would be able to practice sport professionally. From a cultural perspective, it may be considered that the afore-mentioned participants' preference towards achieving financial success trumps their desire towards pursuing a hobby. Campbell and Ungar (2004b) suggest that the latter scenario usually occurs due to the nature of social constructions that frown upon the pursuit of leisure activities as paying jobs. It would be interesting to consider this latter statement in relation to cultural expectations, since my study suggested that there might be a correlation between the two factors. In terms of the road ahead, the last-mentioned authors subsequently suggested that clients should be encouraged to merge independent storylines in their future narrative, or at the very least design a life that accommodates or strives towards an ideal.

#### (v) **Sport participation and family relationships**

Sports also seemed to improve family relationships, since two male participants (The Duty Fulfiller and The Executive) emphasised sport as father-son time (e.g. "*Yes, my dad is like my friend ... he taught me soccer, he used to be my soccer coach ... every Sunday we go and play tennis with him*"). A female participant also recounted the positive effect that playing netball on the same team with her sister had on their relationship (e.g. "*So we had like a bond ... and then our relationship really improved*"). A dated study by Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) suggested that parents, especially fathers, exercise a strong influence on their children's participation in sport. My studies suggest that this might still be the case. My study also confirmed Coakley's (2006) findings that fathers are becoming increasingly more involved in their children's sport.

### **6.2.7.3. Social aspects**

#### **(i) Maintaining a balance between academics and socialising**

The participants' responses reflected various aspects related to the social side of school life. Two of the male participants (The Executive and The Duty Fulfiller) described the difficulty they were experiencing in balancing their social life with their academics (e.g. *"I think I am experiencing it [partying] too much now, because I didn't before"* and *"I need to start finishing my homework on Fridays, so that I can party on the weekends"*). This aspect might also be related to the cultural values prescribed to in a coloured, Indian and black family household, since the two white participants (The Scientist and The Idealist) did not demonstrate or discuss any aspects related to the above matter). Wentzel and Wigfield (1998) highlighted the role of academic and social motivations on students' academic performance. The afore-mentioned authors suggested that peer relationships contributed positively to learners' motivation and academic performance. My study does not necessarily confirm or contest the afore-mentioned finding, but does raise the question as to what extent peer interactions help or hinder academic performance. It may therefore be of value to further explore this emerging issue since, in as far as I could ascertain, few if any research studies have reported on the difficulty adolescents experience with regards to balancing their academic and social priorities. This aspect has seemingly been limited to studies of adults encountering difficulty with maintaining the work-life balance (Guest, 2002; Sturges & Guest, 2004; Lewis, Gamble & Rapoport, 2007)

#### **(ii) The school as a socialisation agent**

Bandura (1997) believes that a person's observation of others' behaviour, in addition to the feedback he/she receives back from them is likely to influence the development of his/her self-efficacy. One participant (The Giver) shared her willingness to be more talkative at school than at home, suggesting that she might be experiencing more positive feedback in the former context (e.g. *"I am not going to be quiet anymore. But, I decided that it is at school"* and *"School is not a role for me – school is where I am myself. Home is a role"*). Some responses, however, also indicated the participant's indifference to others' opinions, such as: *"When you know yourself, you don't care too much about what other people think anymore ... obviously everyone cares about what people think ... it's just that you don't accept it anymore"* and *"Don't let what other people want from you or their voices like lower yours"*.



Stoltz, Wolff and McClelland (2011) were interested in establishing the variables that could predict career adaptability. The previously mentioned authors' regarded a person's desire to be acknowledged and his/her ability to leave the world a better place as the two personality characteristics that contribute the most to career adaptability. The desire to be acknowledged was also noted in two of the participants' responses, such as: *"Just social standards. I don't need a black blazer just to be a leader ... because even if I have a red blazer, I can still be a leader and have a great impact on the school. It's just a blazer"* and *"I like think that I am invisible and here people knew my name"*.

Other responses also demonstrated one participant's (The Idealist's) altruistic nature, as suggested by this particular response: *"It takes courage to not only stand up for yourself, but to also stand up for those around you"*. The last-mentioned authors subsequently suggested that counsellors should focus on helping clients find their place in the world so that they can collectively achieve a better work place. I agree with the previous statement.

Rode *et al.* (2008) specified that agreeable and extroverted people were likely to earn more money. Extroversion was also strongly associated with career success. One of the participant's (The Idealist's) responses reflected an early awareness of this quality in his perception that *"It is all about what is popular ... but for the person who isn't actually a trendsetter or shy, he needs to be able to ... be sort of himself around people he knows, but around certain people you have to be able to be that person that can fit with that guy – you sort of have to adapt yourself to be the person who other people need you to be"*. Pettit, Erath, Lansford, Dodge and Bates (2011) proposed that social capital factors such as, the extensiveness of friendships; networks, and supportive relationships act as buffers during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The authors further emphasised the exponential benefit of authentic social connections with close friends. One of the participants (The Idealist) referred to the role that close friendships play in his life as follows: *"Adapt yourself to be the person who other people need you to be, unless it is someone you are close with"*.

Two participants' (The Giver and The Idealist's) responses also referred to specific bullying incidents from their past and the influence that it has had on their lives. Perhaps The Idealist's awareness of the plight of others, might have been related to the teasing he endured as a young child (e.g. *"Grade 1, I was always teased and taunted – all because I had the outlook on life that I didn't care what you think"*). The Giver recounted her experiences of being bullied as follows: *"I don't remember what it was. I've forgiven it – so I think I got the lead that I'm supposed to be stronger or something"*.

A strong connection exists between increased career adaptability and improved social support (Kenny and Blesoe, 2005; Creed *et al.*, 2009; Hirschi, 2009). The relationship between the last-mentioned factors maintains McArdle *et al.*'s (2007) research findings indicating the positive effect of social support (in the form of encouragement and motivation) on clients' self-esteems. My findings support the above-mentioned information, as substantiated by one of the participant responses (The Giver) drawn from my study: *"It just helps that someone is on your side"*.

### **6.2.8. Theme 8: Childhood career dreams**

Three of the participants also recalled their childhood career aspirations. One participant's (The Scientist's) realistic nature seems to have deterred her from following her planned childhood career, as suggested by the next response: *"Well I always wanted to be a cook when I was little, but as I grew older, I realised that is not very possible ... and I decided against it"*. One participant (The Idealist) also reflected on the values he attached to certain careers: *"For example going to the army or sort of childhood ideas – army, fire-fighting, ambulance work, community sort of stuff. Because as a child, you are taught those are your heroes and you have to respect them"*. These finding contradicts those of Auger, Blackhurst and Herting's (2005) suggesting that older children's career aspirations were just as fantasy based as younger children's. It is, nonetheless, interesting to note that elements of the three participants' original aspirations can still be found in their current career aspirations. Literature control in this regard indicated that my findings confirm an earlier study by Trice and McClellan (1994) who conducted a retrospective study demonstrating that 23% of adults (ages 40-55) were able to relay their current choice of occupation back to their childhood career aspirations. Contrary to my study, another study by Helwig (2001) suggested that younger children tend to aspire to careers that they do not necessarily have the means or ability to pursue. Findings from my study, however, suggest that the three participants' childhood career ambitions were seemingly within their reach

### **6.2.9. Theme 9: Reflection on the process of life-design counselling**

The participants were also given an opportunity to reflect on the process of life-design counselling. According to several research studies (Kidd, 1996; Hirschi, 2011; Brown *et al.*, 2012) participation in a career intervention programme, such as life-design counselling, has rendered positive outcomes. Career counselling has also shown to be a successful means of boosting clients' self-efficacy beliefs and general life and career satisfaction (Fouad, Cotter & Kantemneni, 2009; Verbruggen & Sels, 2010). The collective experience of participating in a life-design counselling programme will be discussed below. Specific reference will be made to the following three sub-themes: experience of working together in a group, insights gained from the other participants and the overall evaluation of the process.

#### **6.2.9.1. Working together as a group**

##### **(i) The value of group-based career interventions**

In the past group work was more closely associated with the collectivist culture of the east (Pope, 1999). Perhaps this reason serves to explain the lack of literature (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012)

available on career counselling in groups, which according to Kivlighan (in Dagley, 1999) boils down to less than one study per year. It is, however, surprising that group-based career interventions have not received more global recognition, especially when one starts to consider the numerous benefits associated with it, such as: the development of skills, group interaction and reflective thinking (Santos, 2004). My study is intended to add value to the existing literature on group-based career counselling and to also, hopefully, encourage other researchers to make an attempt at broadening the field.

## (ii) **The power of the audience in group-based career interventions**

Audience is regarded as an integral part of post-modern career interventions, suggesting that the participants' stories are not *formed in a vacuum, but are born out of the relationship* they share with significant others (Del Corso & Briddick, in press). Savickas (2011b) relies on power of the audience in his use of the *CCI*, supporting his belief that one's identity is co-constructed through conversations with others. My participants' comments revealed the usefulness of listening to multiple opinions, for example: *"I enjoy group work more, because you get a lot of different ideas from different people ... different points of views or different attitudes"*. O' Neil and Marsick (2009) regarded these differences in opinion as catalysts for change, since they serve to challenge an individual's existing views and lead him/her to new insights – a finding that was also noted in my research study (e.g. *"It's nice to have other people's ideas and then create something new"*).

This also seemed to be the case in a study presented by Santos (2004), who also relied on dissent and debate amongst group members to encourage critical thinking about career choices and dilemmas, which in turn contributed to the construction of new meanings. Participants in his study were subsequently encouraged to see a specific career difficulty from a different angle and to develop the necessary coping skills to approach career and life decisions confidently. Symes (1998) agreed that these interactions were likely to promote the development of life-long career decision-making skills. These findings correspond to two participants' (The Giver and The Scientist's) responses reflecting their attempts at making sense of the different opinions. The responses to follow also indicate their effort to match new insights to their existing framework, for example: *"But then how do they mix together? Like, couldn't so many people assume so many different things? And I don't know how I can get all of that into one thing ... especially career"* and *"It is always good to go your own way and create your own path, however, the way other people tend to react to how you do it as a person – it's sort of makes you think why, why would they say that?"*.

Di Fabio and Maree (2012) described similar findings in their study aimed at examining the effectiveness of group based life-design counselling using the Career Construction Interview (Savickas, 2011c). My study also confirmed Del Corso and Briddick's (in press) study describing the power of the audience by suggesting that participants in a group-based life-design counselling programme are not only expected to benefit from sharing their own stories within the group, but are also likely to find the

stories and insights shared by other group members conducive to their own personal and career development (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). This outcome is further supported by the findings in my research study, as evidenced by the following participant's (The Scientist's) response: *"Everyone thinks of things differently, which helps me to want to do my part on my own ... and then put everything together"*. It is in sharing stories with one another that other group members' were able to empathise with their peers and share their experience of being in the same boat (O'Neil & Marsick, 2009). Participant responses from my study mirrored the latter statement, as substantiated by The Scientist's response: *"It helps you to realise that you are not the only person going through this ... and then you can also ask them ... hear what is happening with them and maybe get some ideas of your own"*. The confirmation presented by the afore-mentioned response, adds weight to Sacino's (2007) proposal that meaningful interactions between group members should be regarded as therapeutic, because group members are likely to draw on each other's experiences and become motivated to re-authorise their own stories. Ungar and Campbell (2004b) suggest that these shared experiences add a dose of reality to the counselling experience and allows the client to act with more agency and be less dependent on the career counsellor. This type of response was also noted in my study: *"I've always had an ideal sense of where I want to go in life, but it is always interesting to sort of see where other people are going and if I am going in the right direction"*.

#### **6.2.9.2. Insights provided to others based on the activities**

##### **(i) Receiving and consolidating insights received from group members**

As mentioned above, Di Fabio and Maree (2012) emphasised the advantageous power of the audience in group-based career counselling. The afore-mentioned authors proposed that the collective constructions generated during the group interactions were likely to promote an individual's ability to consolidate his/her personalised constructions with the feedback and insights received from the other members. Del Corso and Briddick (in print) also emphasise the importance of peer feedback on an adolescents' self-narrative, especially in the light of their current developmental task involving identity formation. Some of the feedback provided during the group sessions serve to corroborate the above findings, as suggested by the following participant responses calling for some type of action from their fellow group members, for example: *"Go and consult her parents and do what they want her to do, but then put her own twist on it"* (The Scientist) and *"His mind is telling him to stop socialising"* (The Giver). Other comments made by the participants served to challenge the other members' perceptions of themselves, for example: *"I don't really understand him. Cause I don't understand where he is coming from, because of his story, his childhood story ... he doesn't mind getting his hands dirty and his parents just don't care what he does ... and it does hurt him, but he has this 'I don't care attitude' and he uses it like a defence mechanism ... but he does care, but he would never admit it"*(The Giver);

whereas others confirmed their existing framework (e.g. *“Because of all his art and stuff, I think ... that is how he expresses himself and that is how his thoughts and personality comes out”* ).

## (ii) The collaborative process

Sacino (2007) focused on the value of sharing life stories with others in an educational setting. Weingarten (in Sacino, 2007:122) supported this notion and added that a collective approach to sharing allowed for *compassionate witnessing of self through others*, which might subsequently have a therapeutic effect. In my study the shared engagement of story-telling and listening that occurred between the participant/teller and the other group members/audience seemed to hold a beneficial reward for both parties, since participants could indeed witness and be inspired by their fellow participants' efforts to authorise their story (Sacino, 2007). This collaboration could be marked by several pertinent examples stretching from the influence of the male participants' sense of direction on the two female participants' initial career indecision to the effect that the four participants' decision to base their life-design on their own personal preferences, might have had on the fifth participant's (The Giver's) compliance with her parents' plan for her life. This progress can be noted from The Giver's initial response of *“I just do what they [parents] tell me ... I really don't want to go to UP, but my mom told me that I am”* to *“Yes, I think like the decisions are now like more mine than theirs”*. Perhaps some of the following remarks, submitted by the other group members, may have contributed to her personal development: *“First of all to do things that make me happy. I don't like to please other people”* and *“I don't think she is fully aware of her potential ... like other people, like her parents and that, so they like feel the need to decide for her because I don't think that they think that she can make the decision on her own because she is not so aware of what she can do”*. The group discussions therefore created ample opportunity for shared inputs, which seemed to promote each participant's appreciation of being *a point of view amongst others* (Guichard, 2009:254), thus validating the audience's role in identifying useful and/or hindering elements in the construction of their peers' current or future story plots (Ungar, 2001; Del Corso & Briddick, in press). One participant (The Giver) reflected this sentiment in her research journal as follows: *“It was nice to see that I haven't been invisible. People have actually been noticing me – it seems to be good the things that they have taken note of. It is also nice to see the similarities and connections we have with each other and how we can relate to one another”*

## (iii) Social construction

It is, perhaps these very *social supports* offered by the group setting that has helped the participants in my study *identify strengths and assets to overcome weaknesses, barriers and perceived deficits that constrain story development* (Ungar & Campbell, 2004:37). This was particularly evident in my research study, since the interaction between the participants appeared to elicit responses that served as insightful reflections and/or interpretations of the other participants' stories and shared

experiences. With particular reference to the aforementioned statement, participants were able to identify and comment on each other's observed strengths, for example: "*She is not scared to do anything. She does what she wants and she carries it through*" (The Scientist reflecting on The Giver) and "*He is very wise, like he doesn't conform to society. He is an asset to the world*" (The Giver reflecting on The Idealist).

The participants were also skilled at facilitating each other's story development by offering perceptive views and sharing similar experiences. One such example is the group dynamic that occurred when a participant (The Scientist) shared her earliest memory of getting her first bicycle and then proceeding to draw up rules of the road to avoid a cycling accident between her sister and herself. Not only were the participants able to reflect on the possible meaning that the earliest anecdote might have held for the participant (e.g. "*I think because of ... you made rules and it went wrong, it actually wants you to enforce it a bit more on yourself ... so that things don't go wrong again*"(The Duty Fulfiller), but they also compared it to their own memory of receiving their first bicycle (e.g. "*When I rode a bike, I just took the bike and rode on it wherever ... but there were no rules*"(The Giver) and "*My first memory about getting a bike wasn't about rules, it was about performance ... about how fast I could drive, or how to get from A to B faster ... if I can do a wheelie or not*"(The Executive). The collaborative dialogue that occurred between the participants might have contributed to the following realisation described by the respective participant (The Scientist) during her post-interview: "*I think that it taught me that if something does happen – it is not the end, you can recover from it. You do get up and you do move on*" and "*I've learned a lot out of it and I've also learnt to tolerate a few things ... so it's a nice memory*".

Savickas and Porfeli (2011:365) believe that a discussion surrounding the process of decision-making can prove to be very useful. The focus of this discussion should be to utilise *group dynamics in the item discussion cycle*. Dialogue should consist of *spontaneous, responsive, practical, unselfconscious, but contested interactions* (Shotter in Kuijpers *et al.*, 2011:29). Kuijpers *et al.* (2011) regarded the dialogue between group members as more effective in improving a client's career directedness than the more traditional approach of limiting conversations to the client and career counsellor. Findings from my study exemplified the above statements, since the following participants were able to facilitate career directedness by making several suggestions based on the stories shared, such as: "*Well because he like went and poked the animal and stuff, I think like that fascinates him, maybe he should like do something nature or medial related or stuff*"(The Duty Fulfiller commenting on The Idealist's earliest recollection); "*It's because of his role-models and stuff are people who don't really care about what other people think. I think artists are like that*" (The Duty Fulfiller reflecting on The Idealist) and, "*He is a hard worker, but his weakness is that he leaves it until the last minute*" (The Executive reflecting on The Duty Fulfiller).

### **6.2.9.3. Overall evaluation of the process of life-design counselling**

#### **(i) Positive experiences related to the process of life-design counselling**

Clark, Severy and Ali Sawyer (2004) advocate the use of narrative counselling practices as a culturally friendly platform for group members from diverse backgrounds to share their personally nuanced life stories. Participants involved in the afore-mentioned study rated their involvement in a post-modern career-counselling programme on a five-point scale, with a score of 5 suggesting they had benefited from participating in the programme and a score of 1 suggesting that they had found it to be useless. The following aspects achieved a mean score of 4 and above: the discussion of life-themes; feedback received from other group members; discussion of the career and life planning process. The authors concluded that the participants' life stories served to pull the various aspects of their lives together into a unified whole, which consequently enhanced their career decision-making ability. Participants in my study did not rate the effectiveness of their participation in a life-design counselling programme. Based on their overall responses, it can, however, be stated that the life-design counselling programme was well received. Examples of participant responses indicating their favourable experience of life-design counselling are: *"It has helped me to understand more about myself and what I would be happy going into"* and *"I like this method, because it opened my eyes to a lot more things about myself and about different careers – that are personal to me and not just the factual things about what I should go and do"*.

#### **(ii) Participants' comparison between life-design counselling and traditional career counselling approaches**

Four participants from my study also compared life-design counselling to previous experiences of career counselling that seemed to be based on more traditional career assessment techniques. Their responses suggest that they considered life-design counselling to be a more effective approach because it not only acknowledged their individuality but also the value of co-construction and context, for example; *"I think this one is much more better, because you find out who you are and what you really want to do"* (The Scientist) and *"No tests wouldn't work, because the test would sort of go ... 'Ok, well, you answered this, that and the other ... so you must be good with this' – however when you actually talk to someone and you actually converse with them, you actually see how a person reacts ... how a person reacts and actually copes with a certain situation – that is more effective, it gives you more of an understanding"* (The Idealist). These statements resonate with Hughes, Gibbons and, Mynatt's (2013) belief that traditional approaches' narrow focus to person-environment fit may create a blind spot for specific life events that are likely to contribute to a person's career trajectory. A narrative approach, instead, attaches meaning to the dialogue that occurs between the career counsellor and the client in that it acknowledges the influence of life events as well as the actions that have to be taken to

overcome career related issues and not just career choice (Savickas *et al.*, 2009). This finding was confirmed in my research study, as embodied by the following example of The Scientist's description of the afore-mentioned: *"I think because who you are and what you are kind of makes your path for you and if you only go with the facts or a questionnaire then you might not do what you want to do or what you strive to do and being true to who you are"*.

### **(iii) Participants' mention of particular life-design activities**

Reference to the effectiveness of specific life-design activities was also made, such as sharing their three earliest recollections. Savickas (2011:33) intended the latter activity to provide clients with an opportunity to *actively master what they have passively suffered*. One participant's (The Duty Fulfiller's) response, in particular, reflected this experience as follows: *"Ja, it was different. Normally, I don't think about that stuff and I don't think it can actually relate to what I want to do and stuff, but like sometimes when you explain how personal memories can link to what I do now ... and how I make my decision, then I think there is some connection"*. Activities, such as the latter, facilitate a client's ability to identify and meaningfully interact with the recurring themes that form the plot of his/her life story (Savickas, 2011a). This notion was also mirrored by one of the participants (The Scientist): *"There are lots of building blocks in your life that form one big picture and you learn through everything to end the story with"*.

## **6.3. SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

In this chapter, I have integrated the findings of my research study with the existing literature referring to my research topic and the subsequent themes discussed. I will now provide a summary of these results by briefly referring back to the following themes: career adaptability and the related sub-skills; parental/familial/significant others' influence on the participants' career trajectory; financial and economic considerations; the value of time; components related to emotional intelligence; school life; childhood career dreams and the reflection on the process of life-design counselling.

### **6.3.1. Discussion of career adaptability**

Based on the analysis of the qualitative data sources as reported in Chapter 5, as well as the literature control carried out and reviewed in Chapter 6, I can state that the life-design counselling sessions offered in a group context appeared to contribute to an enhanced level of career adaptability demonstrated by the participants in my study. Participant responses recorded during the conclusion of the group sessions and the post-interview, indicate that the participants either improved or at the very least maintained a high degree of awareness (concern), responsibility (control), certainty (confidence)



and, a good dose of realism (curiosity) towards their future career plans. All five participants in my study also demonstrated an increased capacity to manage the uncertainty associated with the future (Rottinghaus *et al.*, 2005), as corroborated by their responses involving goal-setting behaviours (Hall & Chandler, 2005). This positive association between life-design counselling and career adaptability could speculatively be attributed to the participants' ability to re-author their plot lines by either *muting* or *amplifying* certain incipient experiences (Campbell & Ungar, 2004b:29). The findings in my study, particularly pertaining to the complementary relationship that seems to exist between life-design counselling and career adaptability, will hopefully contribute to the growing number of studies already acknowledging its effectiveness (Savickas *et al.*, 2009; Maree & Hancke, 2011; McMahon, Watson & Brimrose, 2013).

### **6.3.2. The influence of significant others on the participants' career trajectory**

With regards to the influence of significant others on the participants' career trajectory, it appeared as though the role of their parents contributed significantly to their future career plans. The participants, apart from one, valued their parents' opinion and experienced a commitment towards honouring their parents' investment in their education. Some inconsistency was also detected between the participants' responses indicating their parents' wishes for them to be happy versus the underlying, conditional expectation that they should be successful. One participant demonstrated a strong commitment towards pursuing a career path determined by her parents. Towards the conclusion of the life-design counselling programme, this particular participant demonstrated a greater commitment towards designing a life that was built around her personal goals. Parents also offered advice, which was received positively or negatively based on the relationship between the parent and the participant. It also appeared as though the advice received from their fathers was better heeded than when it was given by their mothers. Their parents' narratives also appeared to contribute to the participants' life-design, including their parents' immense efforts to rise above their circumstances, as well as their current work experiences. Participants also considered their future family lives with regard to salary, career choice and maintaining the lifestyle that their parents had provided for them.

### **6.3.3. Financial and economic considerations**

Another theme that emerged from the data involved several financial and economic considerations discussed by the participants. The first aspect involved the value that the participants attached to the financial wealth associated with their current and future lifestyles. They were also intent on making use of the opportunities that they were given by improving their chances of success by advancing their skill sets, exploring opportunities that would provide them with the best chance of success and achieving high academic results. They were also aware of the local and international job

market conditions and appeared to view the future career world as highly competitive. They also shared a predominantly negative and uncertain view of their future in South Africa.

#### **6.3.4. The value of time**

The value of time also appeared to be a theme, with the participants demonstrating a significant awareness of its fleeting nature. Responses reflected efforts towards making the best use of their time, with any deviation from course, for example taking a gap year, being regarded as a waste of time. The participants also reported full schedules and regarded time management as a useful skill to develop. They also seemed to view time as a means to an end and believed that the sooner one starts to put a plan in motion the sooner one is able to live the desired life. Time also seemed to mark specific phases of maturity, with their adolescent years being viewed as a time for fun and their adult years a time to be serious.

#### **6.3.5. Components related to the construct of emotional intelligence**

Interestingly enough, factors associated with the construct of emotional intelligence also appeared during the qualitative analysis of the data. One participant in particular, reflected on the value of developing inter- and intrapersonal skills in an effort to enhance career adaptability. The development of these skills was most notable in one participant's observed confidence in her abilities and level of assertiveness. Reference was also made to the importance of acknowledging and voicing feelings, as well as getting along with others. Some participant responses also involved a discussion of stress management skills – some of which were developed and/or acknowledged during the life-design counselling programme. In general, the participants also demonstrated an optimistic outlook on life as demonstrated by their tendency to focus on future instead of past events in their lives.

#### **6.3.6. Developmental tasks associated with adolescents**

Various sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data related well to the developmental tasks expected of adolescents. Based on Erikson's (Erikson in Louw *et al.*, 1998) developmental phases, an adolescent is immersed in the task of establishing his/her identity. They are also increasingly expected to become more interested in preparing for their future career trajectory. In my study life-design counselling appeared to illuminate and even challenge certain beliefs that the participants held about themselves and the world. This created an opportunity to highlight their existing strengths and values. It was, however, also clear that parents and others seemed to contribute to these self-held beliefs and that the participants, at times, seemed torn between parental approval and/or acting according to their self-held attitudes, beliefs and competencies. This conflict was identified as a second

sub-theme, namely autonomy, which described the desire of participants to act more independently. Aspects related to the participants' value system were also identified as a significant sub-theme. Findings from my study suggest that the participants valued financial wealth and success. The participants differed with regards to the emphasis each one placed on wealth, but nonetheless seemed to believe that the financial benefits of a career is likely to influence their future plans. The value of family was also highlighted as an additional sub-theme, since the participants' responses regularly described the type of life they have envisioned for their children based on the experiences of their current family life. Three participants (The Executive, The Duty Fulfiller and The Scientist) expressed their hope at building a similar life to the one that their parents had provided for them, versus the other two participants' (The Giver and The Idealist's) desire to improve on it. Seifert (1993) raised a valid point in suggesting that adolescents should explore their intrinsic and extrinsic values and the extent to which they may influence their self-actualisation.

### **6.3.7. School life**

Another theme discussed in this chapter involved a discussion of the various aspects associated with the participants' school life. One such aspect is their desire to achieve academically in an effort to enhance their chances of being accepted at a tertiary institution. Based on the participants' responses, it is fair to state that they were all in agreement regarding the importance of achieving a tertiary qualification. Participants' self-efficacy beliefs also seemed to play a contributing role in their pursuit of future career ambitions – this tendency seemed to ring most true for the participant identified as having a learning difficulty. Participants, therefore, seemed to base their self-efficacy beliefs on their academic achievement in school subjects. This is an important point, since self-efficacy beliefs are believed to contribute significantly to career exploration and career adaptability (Betz & Voyton, 1997). Focus was also given to the role of extra mural activities in the participants' lives, suggesting that sport achievement appeared to contribute significantly to their self-efficacy beliefs, confidence in their abilities and goal-setting behaviour. Reference was also made to the impact of the social aspects on their future life-design. This sub-theme included the difficulty some of the participants experienced in balancing their social with academic lives. It also mentioned the influence that other's opinions or interactions with the participants were likely to have in shaping their career trajectory – suggesting that social support and encouragement were likely to heighten their chances of career adaptability (Pettit *et al.*, 2011).

### **6.3.8. Childhood career ambitions**

Another theme that was briefly mentioned referred to the childhood career ambitions held by the participants. Although the participants were reluctant to pursue these ambitions, their planned career trajectories, nonetheless, seemed to contain elements of their original ambitions.

### **6.3.9. Reflection on the life-design counselling process**

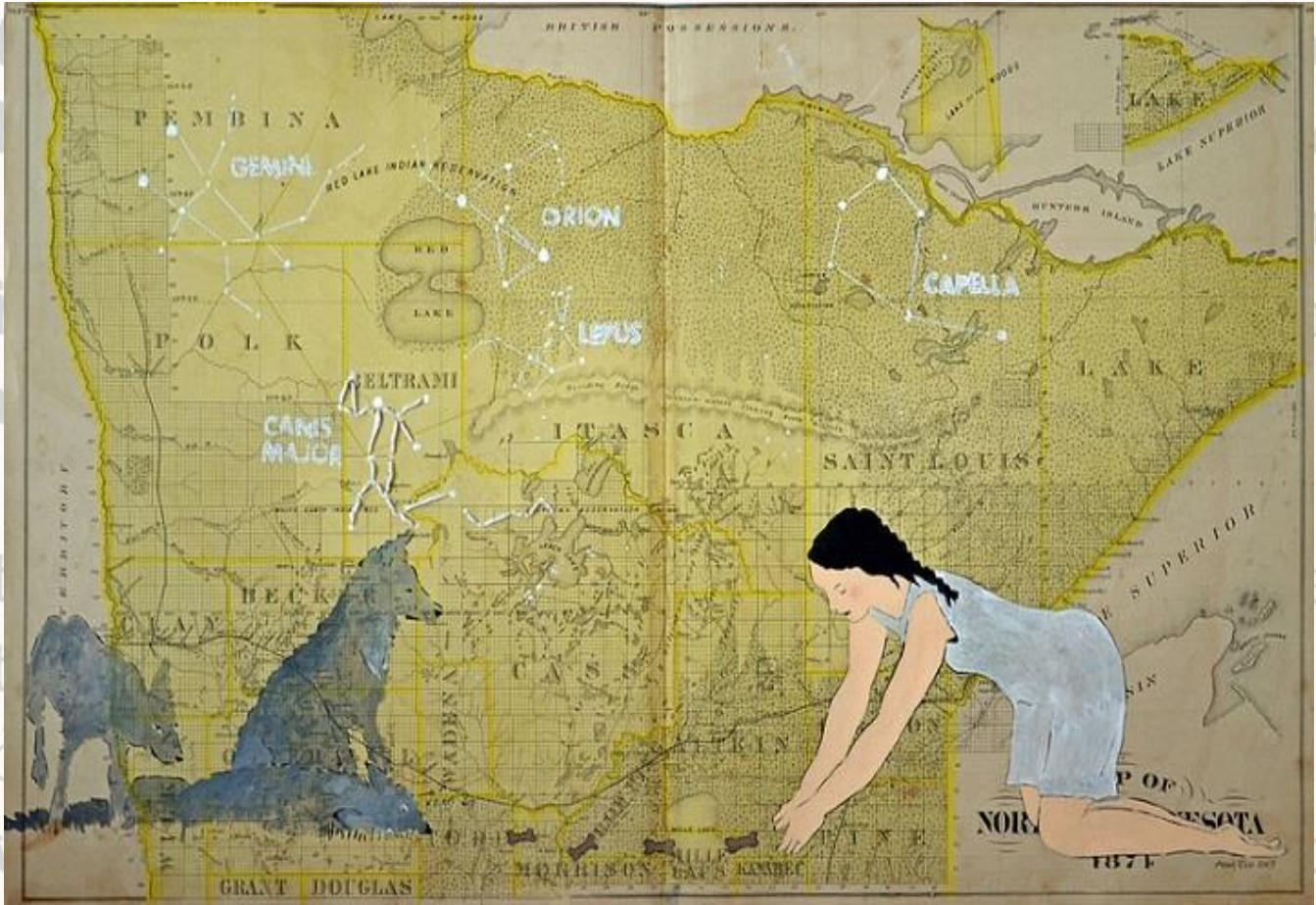
Lastly, reference was made to the participants' reflection of the life-design counselling process. The benefits of participating in the group counselling sessions seemed to rely on the participants' appreciation of their fellow group members' opinions and their ability to integrate the multiple opinions with their existing story plot. Through dialogue and the mutual sharing of stories, the power of the audience was utilised as an effective means of developing a client's story (Del Corso & Briddick, in press). Participant responses further suggested that this approach to career counselling was regarded as more favourable than the traditional career approach, largely due to the emphasis it places on acknowledging individuality and the role that co-constructed knowledge and context can play in a persons' life-design process. A participant in my research study reflected on the process of life-design counselling as follows: *"I am getting smarter about my career ... because I know am getting to know myself better all the time"*. This singular response exemplifies the effectiveness of life-design counselling as a career counselling technique.

## **6.4. CONCLUSION**

Geertz (1986:379) believed that: *"We all have very much more of the stuff than we know what to do with, and if we fail to put it into some graspable form, the fault must lie in a lack of means, not of substance"*. I hope that this chapter has served to present the knowledge derived from my research study in a meaningful and *graspable* manner. In the next chapter, I will continue to heed Geertz' words in my discussion of the final findings, recommendations and conclusions of my research study.

TAKE 1 ounce of red chicken-weed, (gathered in the shade during the month of June into 1 quart of strong (or brewers') beer, boiled to 1 pint. Strain the tea through a clean linen cloth.

## Chapter 7: findings, conclusions and recommendations



*“Getting a handle on why wolves do what they do has never been an easy proposition. Not only are there tremendous differences in both individual and pack personalities, but each displays a surprising range of behaviours depending on what's going on around them at any given time. No sooner will a young researcher think, 'That's it, I've finally got a handle on how wolves respond in a particular situation,' then they'll do something to prove him at least partially wrong. Those of us who've been in this business for very long have come to accept a professional life full of wrong turns and surprises. Clearly, this is an animal less likely to offer scientists irrefutable facts than to lure us on a long and crooked journey of constant learning.”*

- Smith and Ferguson, 2006

For animals, the medicine must be double its food, water and wheat bran, to be given

## CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1. INTRODUCTION

Hancock and Algozinne (2011) suggest that our natural curiosity to seek answers to questions about everyday life usually ignites a deeper desire to find tentative answers through the use of systematic research methods. The authors (Hancock & Algozinne, 2001:3) articulate this process as follows

*Each day we ask questions, large and small, of ourselves and others. A zoologist may ask, “How does a caterpillar evolve into a butterfly?” An educator may ask, “Why does this student behave as he does?” An economist may ask, “What factors shape our society’s economic well-being?” Although the types and scope of our questions are limitless, the questions are united by one characteristic: a desire to find an answer. As humans, we are driven to know why things are as they are.*

The above statement epitomises my initial motivation to engage in a systematic inquiry aimed at informing my (and hopefully others’) understanding of the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context. After completing the fieldwork, analysing the data and reporting on my findings I once again turned to Hancock and Algozinne (2011) to remind me that the answers were not going to be as straightforward as I had originally (and perhaps rather naively) hoped. Through my personal research journey, I too, became increasingly aware of how events could be viewed from multiple perspectives and how disturbingly possible it is that I might have omitted quintessential information in my attempt to cut through the mass of data collected. It is therefore admittedly so that I might have neglected to recognise the possible influence of various unnoticed variables. In spite of this realisation, I have nonetheless strived to ground, describe and present my research efforts as accurately as possible in the preceding six chapters.

In this chapter, I will now further attempt to draw my efforts together by firstly providing a brief review of my research questions and a restatement of my ethical commitments. I will then proceed to make recommendations before concluding with a general reflection on my overall research experience.

## 7.2. REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

From the outset my research statement was formulated as follows: *The effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context*. The following secondary research questions served to further direct my research efforts:

- 7.2.1. To what extent are the current career counselling interventions, aimed at counselling adolescents, addressing their idiosyncratic career counselling needs?
- 7.2.2. What is life-design counselling and career adaptability and what are their values and limits?
- 7.2.3. How does culture impact on the utilisation of life-design counselling?
- 7.2.4. What possible implication does this study hold for the application of life-design counselling?

The purpose of my research study was therefore to explore the possible value and limits of life-design counselling as a means of facilitating adolescents' career adaptability. True to my previously stated desire to filter the nature of my inquiry through a constructivist/social constructivist/interpretivist lens, I will now attempt to answer the above-mentioned questions in the next section by drawing on my direct experiences as well as the social interactions encountered throughout my research journey.

### **7.2.1. To what extent are the current career counselling interventions, aimed at counselling adolescents, addressing their idiosyncratic career counselling needs?**

Four of the five participants' responses stated their preference for life-design counselling as opposed to the current and more traditional forms of career counselling<sup>1</sup>. These participants in my study specifically emphasised the former intervention's more personalised approach. This brings the effectiveness of the current career counselling interventions (predominantly based on the traditional model of career counselling) under some scrutiny. It is nonetheless relevant to mention that the five participants' experience of traditional career counselling practices is limited to what could be regarded as a traditional group-based subject-choice assessment completed in their Grade 9 year. One participant (The Idealist) also reflected on the need for career interventions to occur earlier than Grade 9 so as to improve learners' knowledge of possible career journeys. The same participant also emphasised the value of professionals sharing their

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<sup>1</sup> See: Chapter 6, paragraph 6.2.9.3. and Chapter 5, paragraph 5.3.3.3, xiii

work experiences with younger learners. This was the extent to which counselling interventions were explicitly explored or mentioned in my study.

Since the secondary research question under discussion focuses on whether existing career counselling interventions meet the idiosyncratic career counselling needs of clients, allow me to reflect on a few implicit participant response that may yield additional insights in this regard. To begin with, it would seem as though the three male and the two female participants respectively differed in their stated request for assistance and motivation to volunteer for the study. The three males appeared to seek more certainty regarding their pre-determined career trajectory, whereas the two female participants expressed the frustration they were experiencing with apparent career indecision. Off the bat, it became clear that the male and female participants harboured different expectations of the intended intervention. Once the study was underway more idiosyncrasies could be distinguished, such as: The Giver's described conflict between pursuing her own interests versus her mother's wishes for her future career trajectory; the Idealist's perceived limitations related to his mentioned learning difficulty; The Duty Fulfiller's concern with time and workload management; The Executive's desire to place financial security above all other values and The Scientist's inherent need for absolute certainty. Based on the frequency of the themes and sub-themes identified (See: Chapter 5, Tables 5.4.; 5.5.; 5.6.; 5.7. and 5.8. for a more detailed exposition of these themes), the participants' discussion of the various factors that play a role in their career decision-making processes was clearly depicted. Most of these factors extended beyond the existing career model's emphasis on interest, personality and aptitude.

Considering each participant's above stated needs and/or career influences, it is necessary to consider the extent to which these needs would have been revealed and ultimately catered for by the existing career counselling approach. Life-design counselling offered at both an individual and group-based level, on the other hand appeared to unlock a richer discussion of the multitude of factors that have shaped each participant's life experiences and ultimately their current career trajectory.

### **7.2.2. What is life-design counselling and career adaptability and what are their values and limits?**

Chapter 2 and 3 respectively provided a comprehensive overview of some of the existing literature on life-design counselling and career adaptability. The later chapters (See: Chapter 5 and 6) further provided a detailed account of how life-design counselling and career adaptability manifested in my research study<sup>2</sup>. One of the values highlighted by four of the participants' reflection on the process of life-design counselling was its theoretical grounding in constructivism – more particularly social

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<sup>2</sup> See: Chapter 6, paragraphs 6.2.9.2.; 6.2.9.3. and Chapter 5, paragraph 5.3.3.3, (xii) and (xiii)



constructionism. This aspect created room for group-based interventions, as is the case in my research study, which in turn utilised the power of the audience to reflect on, co-construct and contribute to their fellow participants' identity formation. The participants also appeared to attach value to the focus given to personal narratives as a means of offering unique insights into how specific life-experiences have shaped their identity formation, general outlook on life and career trajectory. This tendency was most notable in the participants' discussion of their life-stories, mottos, earliest anecdotes and life-line activities. Overall, the value of life-design counselling appeared to be rooted in its ability to facilitate discourse through the use of various life-design activities. These activities stimulated the participants' ability to take stock of their lives and conscientiously structure or design their future career journey.

Some limitations of life-design counselling were also noted. Since this approach relies heavily on the art of discussion to enhance meaning-making, it can be rather time-consuming. If offered in a group context, care should be taken to allow others the space to share their stories and contribute insights to other members. The shifting role of the career counsellor from an expert position to that of a co-constructor may also be challenging at first for both the counsellor and the clients.

The life-design activities completed by the group members also revealed aspects related to career adaptability. Ensuing discussions of these activities uncovered the pre-determined themes associated with career adaptability, namely career concern, control, curiosity and confidence. The degree to which the participants were able to plot their career trajectory could easily be associated with the afore-mentioned terms. This helped to plan the steps required to shape their future career trajectories. The value of career adaptability therefore lies in harnessing its associated theoretical concepts and applying it to life-design counselling on a practical level. Possible limits to career adaptability were not encountered in my study.

### **7.2.3. How does culture impact on the utilisation of life-design counselling?**

Culture did not appear to play a significant role or make a subsequent difference to the utilisation of life-design counselling. Perhaps the participants' higher socio-economic class may have levelled out any perceived differences in how the programme could otherwise have been received.

### **7.2.4. What possible implication does this study hold for the application of life-design counselling?**

I would like to believe that this study contributes to the application of life-design counselling in a number of ways. Firstly, it acknowledges the viability of implementing such a programme as part of a school-based career counselling initiative. Secondly, it discusses the effectiveness of a group-based intervention aimed at using the power of the audience as well as the theoretical presuppositions of

constructivism to enhance the goals of life-design counselling. Thirdly, the findings from my study suggest that life-design counselling served as an effective means of facilitating career adaptability for the five participants involved in my study and, lastly, that the participants involved in my study preferred life-design counselling to the more traditional career approaches.

#### **7.2.5. Revisiting the primary research question**

The choice of a collective case study has permitted me to employ various descriptive data sources, such as participant responses, transcribed interviews, recollections ... *to create mental images that bring to life the complexity of the many variables inherent to the phenomenon being studied* (Hancock & Algozinne, 2011:16). Case studies grounded in a constructivist paradigm further allow researchers to focus on the *subjective human creation of meaning* (Crabtree & Miller, 1999:10). With this in mind, I am cognizant that my particular study cannot be generalized to larger populations and am therefore inclined to rather reflect on the above problem statement with reference to the **particular** context and participants that I have worked with.

Based on these participant responses (See: Chapter 5 and 6) it would appear as though life-design counselling has had a positive effect on my participants' career adaptability. A supplementary discussion of the one to follow, can also be found in the summary of results provided in Chapter 6 (See: Chapter 6, paragraph 6.3). In addition, four of the five participants were also given the opportunity to reflect on the process of life-design counselling and subsequently reported that they had experienced the intervention as beneficial to their overall career adaptability. To further illustrate the effectiveness of life-design counselling as a means of improving the participants' career adaptability, a discussion of the four C's in relation to my study will follow.

##### **7.2.5.1. Career concern**

Lower-end<sup>3</sup> career concern was initially displayed by two of the participants (The Giver and The Scientist) in that they demonstrated an overall lack of planfulness and indecision towards designing their future career trajectories. They also demonstrated little interest in committing to any specific career plans. They did, however, demonstrate some anxiety and worry in that they both reported feeling rather surprised that other aspects of their lives have been planned out, but that they had not given their career trajectory much thought. As the counselling sessions progressed their responses began to reflect less indifference

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<sup>3</sup> Lower- and higher-end descriptions aim to demonstrate the degree to which the specific career adaptability function was demonstrated. See: Chapter 3, section 3.4.3. for a more detailed account.

towards their future and more decision-making behaviours. Although, the other three participants' responses reflected high-end career concern at the start of the intervention, the life-design counselling programme nonetheless seemed to complement their already existing efforts to pursue their chosen career trajectories. This might be attributed to the value they attached to sharing their plans and decisions with one another and receiving affirmation of their plans.

#### **7.2.5.2. Career Control**

With regards to career control, the same two participants as mentioned above, displayed lower-end career control in that their career planning behaviours were inhibited possibly due to the traces of perfectionism and procrastination witnessed in their responses. Towards the end of the life-design counselling programme The Giver and The Scientist displayed an increased interest in various career options. Another participant (The Duty Fulfiller) initially demonstrated some lower-end career control in that his sense of personal mastery and belief in his competencies and abilities had made him question his choices. As the sessions progressed, he seemed to regain his confidence in this regard as he mentioned the strategies that he had employed to increase his sense of competency. The Idealist demonstrated lower-end career control in suggesting that his learning difficulty had narrowed down his choice of possible careers. His later responses began to reflect a more open attitude towards other possibilities, suggesting that his level of career control has increased. The fifth participant (The Executive) seemed to exercise a large degree of career control right from the start as indicated by his steadfast decision to maximise his skills and abilities to secure his future career trajectory.

#### **7.2.5.3. Career curiosity**

Although all five of the participants appeared to hold rather realistic views of the future world of work, they differed in their efforts to obtain career-related information. Initially the two female participants' (The Giver and The Scientist) responses reflected the little effort that they had made to arm themselves with occupational knowledge. During our weekly sessions, these two participants began to describe the steps that they had begun to take in collecting more information about their future possibilities. This tendency hints at the possibility that their level of career curiosity likely improved due to their involvement in the study. The same appeared to ring true for The Idealist who also demonstrated a greater awareness of his future career plans during his post-interview session. Two other participants (The Duty Fulfiller and The Executive) displayed higher-end career curiosity as suggested by their willingness to engage in a job-shadowing opportunity; the number of conversations they had with friends and family regarding careers, and their knowledge of career trends, university courses and tertiary admission

requirements. It could, however, be suggested that the same two participants had perhaps prematurely locked down their choices, which left little room for further exploration of other alternatives. Their decision to minimize further career exploration efforts seemed to be based on a number of factors such as their values, economic considerations and to some extent parental influences. Based on their increasingly more noted willingness to explore other alternatives, it might be possible that their participation in the life-design counselling sessions has encouraged them to continue being curious and open to new possibilities.

#### **7.2.5.4. Career confidence**

Three participants (The Executive, The Idealist and The Scientist) demonstrated career confidence as early as during their pre-interviews. The afore-mentioned participants' responses reflected self-assurance with regards to implementing their career plans and negotiating change in the future. The Giver, on the other hand, demonstrated confidence in her abilities but nonetheless demonstrated career inhibition. As discussed previously, (See: Chapter 5 and 6) her reluctance to make career related decisions appeared to be influenced by amongst others, her parents and low-end emotional intelligence competencies. Progression could be noted in her responses from the pre- to the post-interview, as well as her responses transcribed during the group counselling sessions. The Duty Fulfiller seemed to fluctuate in his displayed level of career confidence. At the start of the research study he seemed particularly worried about his ability to implement plans and seemed to already struggle with the concept of change (as based on his anxiety linked to the possibility that he may not be accepted for his chosen tertiary course). Responses documented later on in my study, begin to show traces of improved career confidence.

#### **7.2.6. Overall reflection**

Based on the above description of how each participant's progress could be noted from his/her initial responses documented during the pre-interviews to the group counselling sessions and finally the post-interview, the possibility that all five participants were likely to have experienced an increased level of career ability is plausible. The extent to which each participant may have benefited from the intervention is likely to depend on their initial presentation of each function prior to the commencement of these sessions. Some participants, such as the Giver and The Scientist, might have stood to gain from more focus being given to certain functions such as career concern and curiosity, whilst others may have required less. The qualitative nature of my study also allowed for the emergence of other contributing factors that may have played a role in the development of the participants' career adaptability, such as parental involvement, values, self-efficacy beliefs, emotional intelligence competencies, adolescent development *et cetera*. At the start of the initiative three participants required assistance in confirming that they are on the right career

track and two other participants requested assistance with regards to making a career choice. Analysis of later group counselling sessions and the post-interview suggest that all five participants appeared to be more certain of their aspiring career trajectory; the steps involved in realising it and a displayed confidence in their abilities and belief that they would be able to negotiate change in their future lives. Hopefully, this realisation could be seen as a small attempt at answering my primary research question.

### **7.3. IN RETROSPECT – WHAT WOULD I HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?**

Looking back at the data collection process, I would have perhaps wanted to supplement the rich qualitative data with a quantitative component for triangulation purposes. This would most likely have heightened the validity of my reported findings. I would have also liked to make use of a quantitative means of recording the participants' experiences of the life-design counselling process. Furthermore, I would have considered doing a follow-up individual interview with each participant three to six months after participating in the research intervention to determine the sustainability of the findings reported in my research study.

### **7.4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.4.1. Recommendations for the improvement of practice**

The value of life-design career counselling as a means of improving learners' career adaptability should enjoy further application in career counselling practices. Having already done so myself, I thought it well to offer the following recommendations in this regard:

- Ensure that group-based interventions also leave room for individual sessions to validate each participant's contribution in greater detail. One participant in particular, The Executive, did not feel comfortable to share personal events with his fellow group members. He was, however, more at ease to do during his individual post-interview session.
- Allow sufficient time for the participants to complete the suggested life-design activities. Participants in my study utilised more time than was originally planned.
- Ensure that participants update their research journals more frequently in an effort to track their thought progression.
- The value of grouping together participants that were already familiar with one another seemed to ease rapport, which in turn appeared to facilitate the flow of conversation and general level

of comfort with one another. The group's dynamic must be evaluated and taken into account should a group-based intervention be considered.

- Be prepared to engage in further discussions with participants to elicit more information regarding the life-design activities. Participants in my study seemed to prefer talking about their experiences as opposed to detailed written accounts.
- Make provision for follow-up interviews to monitor and discuss the participants/clients' progress and continued development of their observed insights and skills.

#### **7.4.2. Recommendations for further research**

Further research initiatives are needed to elaborate on the value of group-based life-design counselling interventions aimed at increasing learners' career adaptability. It might also be interesting and, in fact essential, to replicate the study with a larger group of diverse participants.. The association between life-design counselling and adaptability could perhaps also be more thoroughly explored from a quantitative perspective to generate an even better understanding of how career adaptability can be enhanced. It might also be interesting to conduct a similar study in a government school to observe possible differences between Grade 11 learners' experiences in different schooling systems. Another aspect that may add depth to an intended research study may be to compare participants' experiences of life-design counselling with those of traditional counselling methods in greater detail.

#### **7.4.3. Recommendations for theory building in Educational Psychology**

As described in previous chapters (See: Chapter 1, 2 and 3) today's youth can anticipate a career world that is likely to be seeded with unpredictability and uncertainty. The future work force is therefore expected to familiarise themselves with the nature of change and the saving grace of career adaptability. The field of Educational Psychology is likely to play a large role in promoting post-modern interventions that not only serve to adequately prepare learners for the school-work transition, but also for the continuous transitions expected to occur as they move between jobs. Research endeavours should therefore actively seek to explore various alternative programmes to facilitate the development of career concern, control, curiosity and confidence whilst at the same time considering the effect that an ever-changing environment is likely to have on an individual's sense of self.

As presented in my research findings (See: Chapter 6), the participants in my study seemed to benefit from participation in a group-based life-design counselling initiative offered at their school. It therefore seems plausible to suggest that the future research might indicate or confirm that the intervention

proposed in my study may serve a possible vehicle for achieving the above-mentioned goal. Similar initiatives should therefore be aimed at developing a sense of continuity in learners' lives by unveiling their self-identity as key to successful career adaptability. This can be achieved through the sharing of personal narratives to uncover recurrent themes in a person's life that could potentially contribute to a more meaningful understanding of change, the different roles he/she portrays and the multitude of contexts he/she is immersed in. The existing and emerging theoretical initiatives in both the field of education and psychology should continue to prompt research undertakings in this regard.

Referring back to my theoretical and conceptual framework presented in Figure 1.1. (See: Chapter 1), I am able to appreciate the inter-relatedness amongst the various theories and constructs with new vigour. The conceptual framework proposed appeared to make sense within the realm of my study. More emphasis could, however have been placed on the ecological systems theory based on the amount of references the participants made to their social life and family environment. In hindsight, two additional theories that would quite easily have integrated with my existing theoretical framework is the theory of emotional intelligence (Bar-On, 2007) and the social learning theory, specifically pertaining to self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura *et al.*, 2001).

#### **7.4.4. Recommendations for policy makers**

Based on the discussion of my research findings (See: Chapter 6), policy makers may want to consider the inclusion of life-design counselling as a means of improving adolescents' career adaptability as part of the school curriculum. This will ensure that learners are able to meet the changing demands of the future career world with confidence.

#### **7.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The basis for representational generalisation in qualitative research differs from quantitative research (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). The possible limitations of my study therefore firstly pertains to the use of a case study, which by its very nature is not intended to be statistically generalised to the population as a whole (Stark & Torrance, 2005). Counselling in itself is also an intricate, multi-faceted activity which complicates the measurement of its effectiveness, especially when one considers the embedded theoretical framework that each researcher uses to interpret the findings (McLeod, 2003). A third possible limitation is therefore also the lack of a follow-up assessment to *confirm the stability* of my findings (Hughes & Sullivan in Di Fabio & Maree, 2012:105).

## **7.6. A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH STUDY**

### **7.6.1. Findings that I expected**

Three of the five participants confirmed my expectation that Grade 11 learners were likely to have given much thought to their future career plans. I had also anticipated behaviours related to career adaptability, such as career concern, control, curiosity and confidence to peak during my study given that participants were about to engage in conversations about career management. I also expected the sharing of narratives to elicit certain pre-determined themes and of course some emergent ones like the influence of parents in the adolescents' career planning processes. I also expected the participants to show some awareness of the uncertainty associated with the world of work.

### **7.6.2. Findings that surprised me**

I was very surprised by two of the participants' (The Giver and The Scientist's) high level of career indecision, because I had prematurely assumed that the tertiary application process towards the end of Grade 11 might have prompted more career exploration efforts. I was surprised by the positive response that life-design counselling received from the participants. In terms of the group-based intervention design, I did not consider the ease at which the participants would be able to engage in discourse and meaning-making with one another as suggested by the findings reported on the insights that the different group members shared with each other.

I was also rather surprised by the participants' accurate perception and understanding of one another's narratives and the useful feedback or co-constructions that could be derived from it. Apart from The Executive's case, I was pleasantly amazed by the overlap and notable consistency of the participants' written content, the accounts of it shared during the group counselling sessions and the degree to which it was discussed during their individual sessions. I was further astonished by progression of each participant's story line as they became aware of how they were able to control their enactment, direction and shape of their future career trajectory. This was particularly notable in the responses shared by The Giver and The Scientist when describing their life story chapters. I also did not expect the emergence of emotional intelligence to form such a predominant role in life-design counselling.

Another surprising element was the lack of cultural discrepancies expected from a diverse sample group. Very few differences in cultural expectations, experiences and/or influences were noted.



Another positive element that was revealed throughout my study was four of the five participants' dedication towards achieving success in their future careers as a testament to their parents' investment in their education and lifestyle.

### **7.6.3. Findings that disappointed me**

I was disappointed that The Executive and to a certain extent The Duty Fulfiller were able to acknowledge the importance of certain aspects in their lives, but opted not to accommodate these (to the extent I had hoped) within their future narratives.

### **7.6.4. Findings that I did not expect**

I could not foresee the positive effect that life-design counselling would have on the participants' design of their future lives and the commitment they showed towards the process. I also did not expect the far-reaching effect that life-design counselling was likely to have on other aspects of the participants' lives (especially in the case of The Giver). This truly spoke of the encompassing nature of life-design counselling to blur the boundaries between life and career. I too, was able to now acknowledge Epston, White and Murray's (1992:98) claims that:

*It is the stories in which we situate our experience that determine the meaning that we give to experience. It is these stories that determine the selection of those aspects of experience to be expressed. It is these stories that determine the shape of the expression that we give to those aspects of experience. It is these stories that determine real effects and directions in our lives and in our relationships.*

### **7.6.5. What this study meant to me personally**

As I am typing this paragraph, a sudden sense of disbelief, relief and joy began to overwhelm my thinking. Right from the start my study has been a constant travel companion on my personal and professional journey. As with any journey, I experienced moments of pure elation followed by valleys of despair.

At particular times, I experienced the tiresome aspect of documenting and recording my findings enormously taxing. By nature I struggle to commit to long-term tasks and I began to see the journey as tedious, long and quite honestly, endless. It was during these times that I sought solace in my photo albums

since these served as a visual timeline of my life-story; re-enforcing my belief that I have the ability to achieve the goals that I have set for myself. Occasionally I would also page through my travel albums revealing my temporary desire to go home; frustration at being in transit for a long time or, as was the case on my honeymoon, being in an accident and missing our flights back home. These travel experiences are nonetheless often marked as highlights on my imagined lifeline and served to once again remind me that my research journey is likely to rank up there with the best experiences of my life. Now that I am beginning the descent, I am becoming increasingly aware of the immeasurable influence that my study has had on my life.

Immersing myself in the theoretical and practical field of life-design counselling and career adaptability has also added significant value to my professional practices. I have come to rely heavily on my and others stories to improve meaning-making and promote adaptability. I have also thoroughly enjoyed seeing the value it has added to the research participants' lives. Although I have not documented my follow-up interactions with the participants, informal conversations with them has revealed the enduring and positive influence the intervention has had on their career and personal development. I am also grateful for the opportunity to have contributed to this exciting and fairly new field of research. As a practitioner I have a new found respect for the fundamental work and vital role that researchers play in scientifically developing new theoretical concepts and models that enhance my confidence in utilising these techniques with my clients.

On a professional level I have familiarised myself with the art of collecting, analysing and interpreting data. I especially enjoyed immersing myself in the rich source of scientific journals that I was able to access online through my association with the University of Pretoria. I have also rediscovered the wealth of information at my fingertips when visiting the Faculty of Education's library. The biggest asset of the afore-mentioned faculty was, however, the exceptional guidance I received from my promoter. Not only did his interminable faith in my abilities serve as a lighthouse when I steered off course, but his example of methodical research practices informed my respectful understanding and use of the processes involved in designing a research study. It will be an honour to complete my studies in an internationally recognised Faculty of Education that places such a high value on academic achievement and strives to provide its students with the best possible resources, including compulsory post-graduate research support sessions (See: Annexure G).

Since I can remember my life motto has always been *this too shall pass*. It has reminded me of the temporary nature of events. Throughout my research study, I have been mindful of the joy experienced when a participant demonstrated the intended purpose of my study or provided an insightful contribution that seemed to have a profound effect on their meaning-making processes. I rejoiced in the completion of each chapter and beamed at my promoter's approval of my work. Looking back, this journey has in so many

ways been life-changing and I am convinced that it will continue to have a rippling effect on both my professional and personal endeavours.

## 7.7. CONCLUSION

In this study the effect of using life-design counselling to develop career adaptability was explored. Based on the reported findings, life-design counselling can be regarded as an effective means of achieving the afore-mentioned goal, since it allowed the participants in my study to experience the value of their lived experiences and stories as a vehicle for navigating their way through an uncertain future. The identified themes and sub-themes revealed the intricate nature of their lives as they discussed the various interwoven influences (including the multiple contexts and roles they portray in each) that have and are likely to continue to affect their identity development. A group-based intervention further stimulated the co-construction of insights that could hopefully assist with their attempts at making meaning of their life stories.

Research efforts aimed at facilitating the above outcomes reinforce the use of post-modern counselling techniques that ascribe to the principles of constructionism, social constructivism and interpretivism (Savickas, 2001; Del Corso & Briddick, in press). The process of career counselling therefore becomes more individualised as it encompasses other aspects of a person's life, such as the influence of others. It is sincerely hoped that my study will be another drop in the larger bucket of research interventions heeding the call for more post-modern career interventions to meet the changing demands of the current and future career world.

Hoffman's (1992) reflection on Chatwin's (1987) mention of the significance that the Australian aborigines have attached to "song lines" is a memorable way of concluding my body of work. The aborigines believed that they were inherently blessed with a song line at birth and that they were destined to embark on a musical journey (or a knowledge quest) to meet others who may be able to contribute to the joint composition of a stanza. Hoffman (1992:8) reflects on the relevance of this myth with regards to career counselling by suggesting that it serves as a metaphor for the *individual identity that is not within the person or any other unit. Instead, it consists of temporal flows which can be simple, like a segmented path, or complex, like a moiré pattern.* I hope that my study has not only allowed each participant the opportunity to add a song line or two to their stanzas, but that I have also added a song line to the euphonic symphony known as post-modern career counselling.

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## ANNEXURE A

### **The interview schedule followed during the semi-structured individual pre-interviews**

1. Have you given much thought to your future, in particular career choice?
2. What is your attitude towards your future and career choice?
3. Have you made an effort to gain more information regarding careers?
4. Are certain qualities needed to succeed in a career? If yes, name or describe these qualities.
5. What do you understand under the term “adapting” or “adaptation”
6. Are certain qualities necessary for a person to “adapt”? If yes, name or describe these qualities
7. Do certain factors make it difficult for a person to “adapt”? If yes, name or describe these factors.
8. In your opinion, what consequences could a person face if they have difficulty with “adaptation”?
9. In your opinion, what role does goal setting play in “adapting”?
10. How do you feel about your future?
11. Do you expect to gain skills from your participation in a “life design counselling programme”. If yes, what skills do you expect to gain?

## **ANNEXURE B**

### **CD – containing relevant qualitative data:**

- Transcriptions of the pre- and post- interviews
- Transcriptions of the group-based life-design counselling sessions

## ANNEXURE C

### Request for informed consent - headmaster

Attention: The Headmaster: [REDACTED]

**RE: CONSENT FOR PHD RESEARCH AT [REDACTED]**

I am currently enrolled for my PhD (Educational Psychology) at the University of Pretoria. The purpose of my study is to explore the effect of life design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context.

For the purpose of my study, I will require 5 learners to participate in a life-design counselling programme; a pre-interview and a post-interview. They will also be expected to complete post-modern career counselling activities. We hope to meet once a week for approximately 60 minutes for a period of four months.

Participation in the study will be voluntary and the learners will be informed that they are allowed to withdraw from the research at any time. Informed consent will be obtained from both the learners and their parents. The learners' identities will be protected, their privacy respected and all the information will be managed confidentially. The school's name will also not be mentioned in the above study, unless otherwise requested.

Your favourable consideration of my request for permission to conduct my research at [REDACTED] will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_

Claire Symington

**Researcher**

.....

#### DECLARATION

Herewith I, the undersigned, grant Claire Symington permission to conduct her research study (as discussed and stipulated in the letter) at [REDACTED]

\_\_\_\_\_

[REDACTED]

**Headmaster**

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## ANNEXURE D

### Request for Informed consent – the participants’ parents

Dear Parent(s)

Your child is invited to participate in a research study. The following information regarding the study is provided to help you decide if you would like him/her take part. Note that his/her participation is voluntary and that he/she may withdraw from the study at any time.

I am currently enrolled to complete a PhD (Educational Psychology) at the University of Pretoria, and the purpose of this study is to explore the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context.

For the purpose of this study, five participants will be asked to participate in a pre- and post-interview, eight life-design counselling sessions as part of a group and complete written post-modern career counselling activities. The life-design counselling sessions will take place at the school and will be offered once a week for approximately 60 minutes for a period of four months.

Possible benefits of your child’s participation in this study includes the fact that he/she may gain further insight about him/herself from participating in the interviews and group-based counselling sessions.

The following ethical principles apply:

- *Participation is voluntary.*
- *There are no costs involved for you.*
- *Your child is free to withdraw from the project at any stage if he/she wishes to do so.*
- *All information provided by your child will be treated confidentially and anonymously.*
- *Ethical guidelines have been followed to ensure that no participating party will be harmed or placed at risk of any kind. Hence there are no known risks involved in the research and at this stage we are not aware of any possible short-, medium- or long term negative effects of participating in the research.*
- *No reference will be made to any information that may convey any particular personal or identifiable information.*
- *You and your son reserve the right to access any information that has been collected throughout the research process at any time.*
- *You and your son reserve the right to withdraw any information or data that you wish not to be released for publication.*
- *The research findings might be published in an accredited research journal, but confidentiality and anonymity will be honoured.*

By signing this letter of informed consent you are giving permission for the following sources of data to be released:

- - The verbatim transcription of the content recorded during the group-based life-design counselling sessions.
  - The verbatim transcription of the content recorded during the individual pre- and post-interviews.
  - The analysis, interpretation and reporting of the content discussed during the above-mentioned occasions.
  - The analysis, interpretation and reporting of the post-modern career counselling activities.
  - Notes and reflections made by the researcher throughout the research process.
  - Reflective journal entries written by the participants
  - Written consent will be requested for the use of data not listed above.

If you have any queries before or during the pilot study, or after its completion, you are welcome to contact myself ( [REDACTED] ) or [REDACTED] ( [REDACTED] ).

Yours sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Claire Symington

**Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prof. J.G. Maree

**Supervisor**

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### *Informed consent*

Having read the attached request for informed consent, I declare that I am fully aware of the nature and purpose of the study conducted by Claire Symington. I understand that all information will be treated anonymously and as strictly confidential. I further understand that all ethical considerations, as outlined in the request for consent, will be adhered to.

I hereby agree to allow my child to:(a) participate in pre- and post-interviews (b) make himself available for the group-based life-design counselling sessions (c) complete the post-modern career counselling activities and (d) keep a research journal. I also consent to the publication of the research findings, subject to anonymity and confidentiality.

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ANNEXURE E

### Request for informed consent –the participants

Dear participant

You have been invited to participate in a research project aimed at exploring **the effect of life-design counselling on the career adaptability of learners in an independent school context**. I am attempting to establish the four developmental lines of career adaptability which will serve to enhance the participant's ability to consider future prospects and feel optimistic, increase self-regulation through career decision making; take responsibility for the future; promote an inquisitive attitude that could lead to productive career exploration and promote the ability to solve problems and develop self-efficacy. This research project may contribute to the research field and support other researchers to develop related strategies that can be implemented at other schools.

Participation in this research project will involve the following:

- Participation in a semi-structured pre-interview (individual) to establish your understanding of “career adaptability” and “life-design”.
- The application life-design counselling for the duration of 8 sessions of approximately 60 minutes each. This will be initiated after the pre-interview.
- Participation in a post-interview after completion of the last-mentioned sessions.
- The following guidelines in this regard will guide my attempts at facilitating career-adaptability
  - Exploring the concept of “adaptation”
  - Exploring the concept of “career choice”
  - Exploring the concept of “life design counselling”
  - Completing activities that centre on identifying individual resources.
  - Completing activities that centre around goal formation
  - Reflecting activities aimed at identifying the role of context and career-adaptability.
  - Completing activities aimed at developing and exploring levels of:
    - Concern
    - Control
    - Confidence
    - Curiosity.

- Keeping a reflection journal to monitor and reflect on your daily/weekly experiences and progress.
- Reflecting on each session completed.
- Drawing up a life line on a blank sheet of paper and then proceeding to recall significant milestones or experiences of life and record them chronologically.
- Writing the chapters of your life story
- Recalling your three earliest recollections
- Drawing up a family genogram

**Please note the following:**

1. The sessions will be recorded by means of audio-tape and the *verbatim* transcriptions of the conversations will be typed, analysed, and quoted in the final dissertation.
2. I intend to use the data obtained for research purposes in a **completely anonymous and confidential manner.**
3. You are assured that your identity and responses to the questionnaires will be regarded as **extremely confidential at all times and that they will not be made available to any unauthorised user.**
4. Participation in this research is voluntary and you may decide to withdraw at any stage.
5. There is no known risk involved in the research. Possible benefits include the fact that participation will probably help to improve your career adaptability, which refers to your sense of control, curiosity, concern and confidence regarding career choice.
6. There are no costs involved.
7. Written consent will be asked to use material not specified above.

If you agree to participate in the study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent. This confirms your compliance with the project and your involvement.

Signature of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

You are more than welcome to contact me with any further queries on the following number: XXXXXXXXXX  
Should you wish to speak to my supervisor, Prof. J.G. Maree, I will gladly supply his contact details upon request.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Ms. C. Symington**  
**Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Prof. J.G. Maree**  
**Supervisor**



## ANNEXURE F

### Ethical clearance certificate

## ANNEXURE G

### Certificate of attendance

## **ANNEXURE H**

### **Letter from the external coder**

## ANNEXURE I

**Table of insights provided to the participants by their fellow group members**

**Table of insights provided to the participants by their fellow group members**

Directed at	Statement made
<b>The Giver</b>	<b>Her awareness of others' opinions</b>
	<p><i>“She doesn’t really like ... or she isn’t really aware of what is happening at that moment, so she doesn’t really process the emotions like normal people would” (1;2;C;2;64).</i></p>
	<p><i>“That she is very conscious of who she is and at the same time ... she doesn’t really want to care about what other people think, but still, in the back of her head ... she thinks: ‘what if?’” (5;6;G;9;191).</i></p>
	<p><i>“I think she is still trying to please her parents with like the job and ... work and stuff. Like she wants to do her own thing, but she is still looking for her parents’ approval. I don’t know how true this is, but that’s my opinion” (1;6;G;9;193).</i></p>
	<p><i>“She is reflecting on how her parents have decided what career she must do and which subjects she must take ... so that’s playing through. That she doesn’t make decisions for herself” (2;3;D;2;35).</i></p>
	<p><i>“I don’t think she is fully aware of her potential ... like other people, like her parents and that, so they like feel the need to decide for her, because I don’t think that they think that she can make the decision on her own because she is not so aware of what she can do and stuff” (1;2;C;3;47).</i></p>
<b>Her strengths</b>	
<p><i>“She is not scared to do anything. She does what she wants and she carries it through and she finishes what she started” (3;6;G;2;32)</i></p>	
<p><i>“It taught The Giver how to handle the situation and she doesn’t look at the now, she looks at the future and she analyses the situation ... about how big it is and how it is going to affect everyone and not just her” (2;2;C;4;57)</i></p>	
<p><i>“Well she didn’t over-react. In the situation that she is ... she can stay calm ... I’ve noticed that about you, so it’s a good thing ... you can stay calm and you can think about the whole big picture and focus on what is happening to you right now” (3;2;C;4;55).</i></p>	
<p><i>“She doesn’t give up also and when she plans on doing what she does, till the end ... like your piano” (3;2;C,7;265)</i></p>	
<b>Suggestions</b>	
<p><i>“Well, she has a lot of problems with her deciding and her parents and everything, but because she is getting advice from other people it will make her choice easier, because they see what she is good at and that can maybe help her” (3;2;C;1;39).</i></p>	

	<p><i>“Yes, go and consult her parents and do what they want to do, but then put her own twist on it and do something that she actually wants to do” (3;6;G;2;196)</i></p> <p><i>“No The Giver has the right idea of who she is, but she doesn’t know what to do with who she is” (5;3;C, 10:419).</i></p>
<b>The Idealist</b>	<b>Career needs</b>
	<p><i>“It’s really hard ... you are really hard. He needs to go into a career where they don’t care” (4;6;G;9;169)</i></p> <p><i>“Yes, but he needs to freedom to be able to ...or needs to know that he can do what he wants, when he wants and not like be strict about it. It’s not that he will, but he needs to know that he can” (4;6;G;9;175).</i></p> <p><i>“He is very wise. Like he doesn’t conform to society. He is an asset to the world in saying things from like a different perspective. To be able to tell people to look at what they are doing – it’s not right” (4;3;D;12;109)</i></p> <p><i>“He is very wise. Like he doesn’t conform to society. He is an asset to the world in saying things from like a different perspective. To be able to tell people to look at what they are doing – it’s not right.” (4;2;C;10; 409)</i></p> <p><i>“He needs to do something where he can express himself” (3;6;G;9;177)</i></p> <p><i>“Life would be boring without people like that” (3;2;C;3;107)</i></p> <p><i>“Be his own boss” (1;6;G;9;172)</i></p> <p><i>“Like I was going to say that he needs something arty ... not that he needs it, but he has to go into something arty” (1;6;G;9;181).</i></p> <p><i>“There is no restrictions ... they just put everything on paper or on a canvas, unless it is music” (1;6;G;9;185).</i></p>
	<b>Personality descriptions</b>
	<p><i>“Because of all his art and stuff, I think that is how he expresses himself and that is how his thoughts and personality comes out” (3;6;G;9;179)</i></p> <p><i>“It’s because his role-models and stuff are people who don’t really care about what other people think. I think artists are like that” (1;6;G;9;183)</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t know what to say to The Idealist, because from a certain point, I don’t really understand him. Cause, I don’t understand where he is coming from, because his story, his childhood story ... is like ok, he is curious ... he doesn’t mind getting his hands dirty and his parents just don’t care what he does ... and it does hurt him, but he has this ‘I don’t care’ attitude and he kind of uses it like a defence mechanism. If I can say that ... he is just like I don’t care, I don’t care ... but he does care, but he would never admit it ... and to a certain point, you won’t get anything out of him, because he just won’t open up” (4;2;C;12;202).</i></p>
<b>The Scientist</b>	<b>Personality descriptions</b>

	<p><i>“Yes, because The Scientist is The Scientist. She is like very, very smart... like she lets you think what you want to think about her ... right ... and she leaves you” (3;6;G;10;209).</i></p> <p><i>“She is a good girl, she has got the good marks and everything. But, I’m pretty sure that The Scientist has got a wild side that like only a few people know about ... and she is very smart in hiding it...very!” (3;6;G;10;213).</i></p> <p><i>“She’s a very intelligent lady” (5;2;C;5;202).</i></p> <p><i>“I agree with them. She’s like even like with touch rugby. I haven’t seen her play, but everyone says she is good ... even when she realised she was good, she said I am going to make Northerns and that. And the same with baking. When she realised she was good ... I tasted that red velvet cake, it was brilliant” (1;2;C;9;359)</i></p> <p><b>Strengths with regards to her future career path</b></p> <p><i>“The Scientist wants to know what happens in certain in situations before she does them. She wants to know before she can do them. Like if I was to say, move that chair from there ... she won’t just do it ... she would be like ‘Why?’ and if you say ... ‘No just do it’ ... she would be very cautious of what she is doing ... she won’t really be like ‘Ok’” (5;6;G;10;215)</i></p> <p><i>“She is unable to adapt to situations” (1;2;C;8;133)</i></p> <p><i>“You just have to follow rules” (4;2;C;8;134)</i></p> <p><i>“You have to figure things out at university” (4;2;C;8;140)</i></p>
<p><b>The Duty Fulfiller</b></p>	<p><b>Work versus social</b></p> <p><i>“I think he knows what he wants and he will do whatever he wants to do ... and he knows himself” (3;6;G;10;217).</i></p> <p><i>“I also think that he knows himself ... he knows himself very well ... it’s just that he is not in a rush to do things. Because, he knows himself so much – he knows when to get stuff done and he knows right now ... he doesn’t need to rush, because he’s still got university ... so he’s like ‘I’m still going to have fun, I’m still going to go party” (;6;G;11;218).</i></p> <p><i>“The Duty Fulfiller knows what he wants, but also he wants to impress his family – he wants to be the one who steps up to the plate – but he also wants to sit back and be like ‘Woo hoo ... party” (5;6;G;10;218).</i></p> <p><i>“He is an undercover naughty guy. He is undercover. He is a hard worker, but his weakness is that he leaves it until the last minute. He likes cars and stuff, but he has to hit the gym more – he should join us in the gym more often” (2;3;D;12;421).</i></p> <p><i>“Hard working and studying” (2;3;D;12;423).</i></p>
<p><b>The Executive</b></p>	<p><b>Consideration of social aspects</b></p> <p><i>“His mind is telling him to stop socialising ... or go into a social career” (4;2;C;1;12)</i></p>

*“Yes, because mechanical and chemical engineering don’t do a lot of social” (4;2;C;1;14)*

*“I think, he does what he loves and he doesn’t do what other people want him to do – he will do his own thing, which is a good thing. He doesn’t care about what other people think” (3;2;C;10;425).*



## ANNEXURE J

### Frequency of response table