

# **Exploring learners' management of career-related transitions through career and self-construction**

*by*

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I, Antoinette Vieira Cook (24179168), hereby declare that **Exploring learners' management of career-related transitions through career and self-construction** is my own original work and that all the resources that were consulted are included in the reference list.

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Antoinette Vieira Cook July 2015

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# EXPLORING LEARNERS' MANAGEMENT OF CAREER-RELATED TRANSITIONS THROUGH CAREER AND SELF-CONSTRUCTION

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DEGREE: PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

DEPARTMENT: EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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The purpose of my study is an exploration of the extent to which an intervention programme, based on career and self-construction, helps learners from diverse backgrounds manage career-related transitions. Two groups from two contrasting educational settings participated in a career intervention programme that is based on career and self-construction, and another two groups continued to participate in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons offered by their schools.

A multilinear approach, with constructivism as the main theoretical framework, is utilised in developing the overall theoretical framework that underpins my research. A mixed method design that collects, analyses and reports on quantitative and qualitative data is used to provide in-depth answers to the questions I ask in my study. More specifically, in terms of the former data, a *quasi-experimental, pre-test-post-test comparison group design* using the results of the *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS)* (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), is employed. Responses from focus group interviews and reflective journals constitute the qualitative data.

In terms of the quantitative data, the results suggest that the intervention programme did not improve participants' career adaptability compared to the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons as measured by the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). However, the qualitative findings indicate that my intervention programme enhanced the career adaptability skills in participants in the experimental groups from both schools. Overall findings suggest that participants from both schools benefitted from taking part in my intervention programme in terms of managing career transitions.

Key words: adaptability, adolescence, career construction, career counselling, career transitions, constructivism, group-based intervention, life design, narration, self-construction.

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## **CHAPTER 1: PREVIEW OF MY STUDY**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

Childhood marks the *dawn of vocational development* as individuals strive to master developmental tasks, associated transitions and change in their lives (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2008, p. 63). The authors also discuss the importance of preliminary self-exploration activities in the world of work. These can potentially influence the formation of identities that resonate with an individual's interests and personality.

The importance and benefits of offering support to learners as they negotiate what are often stressful career-related transitions, is emphasised time and time again in literature (Pietarinen et al., 2010). Learners who received this support in high school are seen to manage career transitions more effectively throughout their lifespans (Lapan et al., 2003). Concern was however expressed when researchers examined the nature of support offered to learners in that regard (Lapan et al., 2003). My experience as a career counsellor prompted me to think about the extent and quality of career development programmes in South African schools. The lack of support offered to learners in the context in which I work became apparent over time, culminating in the questions I asked in my study.

This chapter covers the background, purpose and rationale for my study and puts it into context by outlining the changing role of career counsellors as well as the current status of career facilitation in South Africa and in South African schools. The assumptions made; clarification of terms and the research questions asked will also be discussed. The research paradigm and theoretical framework underpinning my study are identified. My role as researcher, the ethical considerations and limitations of my study are also covered. The chapter ends with the outline and organisation of my study.

### **1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The potential for education services to enhance and support learners' career development is emphasised in literature on the subject. Savickas (1999) states that individuals who recognise and acknowledge the importance of making career choices, and who understand the consequences of these choices, manage work-related challenges more effectively. He went on to identify the following strategies as ones that enhance this process:

- Implementing education programmes that give learners the necessary skills for career planning and exploration
- Offering ongoing coaching to help learners manage their careers more effectively
- Engaging in role rehearsal tasks for career preparation
- Making learners aware of job requirements and possible decisions that might need to be made in their careers.

Successful career management strategies for adolescents should aim specifically at helping them become more planful (sic), adaptive (Savickas, 1999), proactive (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998) and more resilient by developing the following skills:

- Develop self-efficacy expectations, outcome expectations and career-enhancing attributes (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994; Luzzo & Jenkins-Smith, 1998).
- Explore their options and develop meaningful goals (Flum & Blustein, 2000; Robbins & Kliewer, 2000).
- Integrate work readiness behaviours into everyday activities (Bloch, 1996).
- Identify possible career paths based on fields of interest.
- Become effective students who are self-regulated, and remain life-long learners (Lapan, Kardash & Turner, 2000).

(Lapan et al., 2007)

The naming of these skills informed my understanding of what career support services should strive to achieve.

In a related study on competent career development services, Lapan et al. (2003) conclude that these need to be consistently provided to all students. Maree (2009) states that inadequate support at school inevitably leads to poor academic achievement, resulting in limited career opportunities. These individuals will, in all likelihood, not reach their potential and fail to make a significant difference to society (Maree, 2009). My curiosity in exploring whether or not more meaningful career-support programmes can be implemented into schools arose in response to this.

I was particularly interested in studying the potential benefit of a support programme in the rich context offered by Penryn College<sup>1</sup>, an independent school with approximately 1 200 learners. Penryn College has the largest school-based outreach programme in Southern Africa. Penreach is a non-profit Whole School Development Programme operating in schools in disadvantaged rural communities in the Mpumalanga region and is aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. The programme currently reaches more than 2000 teachers a year and represents over 900 schools, with more than 350 000 learners (see Penryn College website, [www.penryn.co.za](http://www.penryn.co.za)). Mthombo High School is a Penreach affiliated school.

Working as an educational psychologist at Penryn College gave me the ideal opportunity to research the management of career transitions faced by learners. It was my intention to explore the extent to which current school-based support services develop the aforementioned skills in learners at Penryn College and Mthombo High School in Nelspruit, South Africa, as they strive to manage career transitions. The diverse context provided by Penreach potentially offered avenues for research with learners from disadvantaged communities as well.

### **1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The purpose of my study is to explore the extent to which an intervention programme based on career and self-construction can help learners from diverse backgrounds manage career transitions.

### **1.4. RATIONALE**

The fundamental reasons for my study will be discussed according to my personal rationale based on my life experiences, as well as an academic rationale that developed in response to the nature of an ever-changing world and literature I reviewed in the field of career psychology.

#### **1.4.1. Personal rationale**

In 1991 I worked as an education coordinator involved in teacher training and development for a non-governmental organisation focusing on disadvantaged schools. This experience has always made me acutely aware of the needs of learners in these schools.

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<sup>1</sup> The term *college* is used in South Africa to denote the phase of schooling for high school learners in Grade 8 to Grade 12.

An informal, exploratory phase of my study began in January 2010 when I started making observations regarding the career needs of learners in the senior phase of schooling in an independent school. In my current capacity as a school-based educational psychologist I assist learners in making career choices through the administration of formal assessment batteries. Insights into the career needs of these learners were obtained. I also give special attention to what learners say in terms of the extent to which their schools support them in managing their career transitions. Furthermore, I received information on the content of the Life Orientation syllabus pertaining to the career needs of learners through an informal meeting with the head of the Life Orientation department at Penryn College during this phase of my study. My previous experience as a Life Orientation educator also gave me useful insights into the career development opportunities this learning area affords learners.

Working in the unique context Penryn College offers in terms of its affiliation to Penreach (as discussed in section 1.2) developed my interest in exploring the career needs of learners in these diverse educational settings. I subsequently attended a certificate course in Career Construction for Life Designing in October 2011 at the University of Pretoria. This training course developed my understanding of career construction using life design techniques.

An extensive and ongoing review of literature related to the field of career psychology started at the end of 2011. This informed the questions I ask in my study pertaining to learners in Penryn and Penreach schools and played a crucial role in initiating the research process, culminating in this report.

#### **1.4.2. Academic rationale: impact of a changing world**

Maree and Pollard (2009) state that contemporary society is characterised by the rapid advancements in information technologies and globalisation, which heralded the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A need for the development of innovative skills and changes in attitude towards work requirements has arisen in response to these rapid advancements (Maree, 2009). Savickas et al. (2010) argue that it is becoming increasingly challenging to predict what the future holds for individuals in a globalised world. Job prospects are diminishing and individuals are faced with more frequent and complex career transitions than two decades ago (Savickas et al., 2009). Workers between the ages of 18 and 46 are experiencing an average of 11.3 career changes in their lifetime as a consequence of the aforementioned factors (US

Department of Labor, 2012). Ultimately, lifelong employment or promotion with one organisation cannot be guaranteed and employees do not necessarily remain loyal to a specific organisation in their career lifespan (Maree, 2013a). Adolescents are among those who ask questions pertaining to what they are going to do with their lives in this ever-changing world as they negotiate the many transitions they face (Savickas et al., 2009). It is crucial to support students as they negotiate the changes and challenges that confront them (Maree, 2009). These are questions learners ask me on an ongoing basis in my capacity as a career counsellor.

Savickas (2008b) argues that the methods used by career counsellors need to be re-evaluated as they address the diverse needs of clients in the world of work. Western career facilitation practices, characterised by individualism, rationality and empiricism, will be irrelevant to many cultures in a globalised world (Marsella, 1998). Chung (2007) calls for the globalisation of these practices rather than their westernisation.

In related discussions, Maree, Bester, Lubbe and Beck (2001) argue that traditional psychometric assessment tests (developed or adapted for use in South Africa) are limiting in that they do not give individuals extensive opportunities to explore and develop. A contemporary reconceptualisation of the term *develop* is *utilise the opportunity for self-construction* (J.G. Maree, personal communication, September 14, 2015). Furthermore, these assessment instruments are only available to select groups of individuals and are not suitable for diverse South African cultures (Maree et al., 2001). Career counselling practices that are mostly reliant on these assessment instruments will therefore have limited outcomes in terms of meeting the career needs of diverse groups of people.

Maree (2010, 2013a, 2015) argues that the ultimate aim of career counselling is to help clients design lives that are conducive to helping them manage repeated transitions when they are faced with challenges. Assessment instruments potentially offer counsellors the means through which they enable clients to manage career-related transitions more effectively. Campbell and Ungar (2004) suggest that life design counselling has the potential to enhance the design of individuals' lives in response to the many challenges they face. This form of counselling translates Guichard's (2005) self-constructing theory into practice (Savickas et al., 2009). Self-construction theory sees individuals actively constructing themselves through narration or story telling in social interaction.

This notion resonates with my own experience and eagerness to find alternative ways of working with individuals who strive to manage transitions in their lives.

## **1.5. CONTEXTUALISATION**

In order to place my study within a broader context, the changing role of career counsellors worldwide will firstly be discussed. Secondly, the nature of career counselling in South African schools will be described, culminating in a discussion of these practices at Penryn College, one of the research sites for my study.

### **1.5.1. The changing role of career counsellors**

Maree (2010b, p. 361) maintains that a *fresh paradigmatic approach* in career counselling developed in response to the aforementioned changes in the world of work. A shift in paradigm necessitates a shift in the role of career counsellors. This has become increasingly more apparent in my own work as a career counsellor at Penryn College. The counsellor's role in the career facilitation process, prior to the development of a global economy, often disempowered clients. Career counsellors were traditionally seen as the sole experts in the lives of their respective clients (Maree, 2009). As such, clients were likely to be excluded from the decision-making process and in so doing gave the counsellors full control over choices that are made. Instead, clients are to be seen as *active agents* in this process (Savickas, 2007b, as cited in Maree, 2009, p. 447).

Counsellors can no longer assume that they can make accurate predictions in an unpredictable world. Savickas et al. (2009) state that career counselling needs to move beyond simple advice giving. A dynamic, non-linear process ensues when clients are helped to formulate their identities through articulating their life stories. Central life roles are identified in this process as clients respond to the feedback given in dialogue with their counsellor. Individual expectations are also expressed and ways of reaching these are discussed. Ultimately, counsellors can potentially help clients by enabling them to define their priorities, identify supports, cultivate resources, and engage them in activities that help them discover what is meaningful in their lives (Savickas et al., 2009). Career counsellors therefore need to be involved in *active listening* (Brott, 2001, p. 49) as they assist clients in making sense of their careers and ultimately their lives (Savickas, 2010a).



Savickas et al. (2009, p. 247) describe the changing role of counsellors as *change agents*, as opposed to diagnosticians who predict fixed outcomes. Techniques that *enable*, rather than *fit* should be sought by career counsellors (Maree, 2009). It is important for counsellors themselves to have clear identities and to display adaptive skills (Savickas et al., 2009). This applies to all categories of counsellors. Lapan et al. (2003) emphasise that one of the central roles for school counsellors is to acknowledge that career development programmes should be sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of all learners. The need to design and implement such a programme is apparent in the context in which I work.

Swanson and Fouad (1999) state that learners need time for exploration so that sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge about the world of work can be achieved. The costs incurred by doing this one-to-one can potentially be avoided if learners are given opportunities for self-exploration in class. Cost reductions in the implementation of my career-support programme were an important consideration in my study to ensure that the intervention strategy offered to learners was also accessible to individuals from disadvantaged communities. Hence the idea for the implementation of a school-based career-support programme was born.

### **1.5.2. Career facilitation in South African schools**

Black learners generally do poorly in their Grade 12 examinations particularly in learning areas such as Mathematics and Physical Science (Maree, 2012a). This consequently limits their access to university. The failure rate at university is currently close to 40 per cent in the first year of study (Mkhabela, 2004; Pandor, 2005, 2008; as cited in Maree, 2012a). Many of the students who fail their first year are black.

Another reason cited for the high failure rate at university is that many individuals choose inappropriate fields of study because they had little or no career counselling at school (Maree, 2012a). Career counselling in South Africa is primarily reserved for those who can afford it (Maree, 2009). This is seen to contribute to the high dropout and failure rate at university. Furthermore it perpetuates the low social and economic position of disadvantaged people (Maree, 2009).

My experience as an educational psychologist at Penryn College has shown that even learners in private school settings are finding it challenging to cover the costs incurred in private career counselling services. Repeated discussions with these

learners have highlighted their plight in terms of needing adequate and affordable career development to address their diverse needs. Exacerbating the situation is the fact that career guidance was reintroduced into South African schools in 2002 by incorporating it into the Life Orientation syllabus (Maree, 2009). This only constitutes 20 per cent of the curriculum, limiting its potential impact. Moreover, teachers have little or no formal training in career counselling.

I became interested in finding ways of making career counselling more accessible and affordable to learners. This prompted me to think of ways of achieving this primarily through incorporating it into the Life Orientation curriculum.

### **1.5.3. Career facilitation at Penryn College and Mthombo High School**

Career counselling in South Africa was traditionally used as a political instrument to perpetuate racism and preserve the economic power of white supremacy (Maree, 2009). Leach, Akhurst and Basson (2003) argue that career counselling in South Africa was employed to reserve specific careers for whites. Counselling services were also costly and lengthy (Maree & Beck, 2004). Maree (2009) urges career practitioners to find ways of empowering disadvantaged young people (such as those from Mthombo High School) to become motivated adults through their careers.

Learners at Penryn College and Mthombo High School are not exempt from the afore-mentioned challenges. It was through my work at Penryn College that I had access to the learners in that institution and those in Mthombo High School, an affiliated outreach school.

## **1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In exploring learner's management of career-related transitions through career and self-construction, the research questions can be formulated as follows:

### **1.6.1. Primary research question**

*To what extent can career and self-construction interventions enhance learners' ability to manage career transitions?*

### **1.6.2. Secondary research questions**

The research question is sub-divided into the following sub-questions:

1.6.2.1. What is the nature of current school-based (career facilitation)

programmes in helping learners from diverse backgrounds manage career transitions?

1.6.2.2. How is self-construction facilitated by means of the intervention explained in my study?

1.6.2.3. What is career construction and how is it facilitated by means of the intervention explained in my study?

1.6.2.4. To what extent will career and self-construction address the career transition needs of diverse groups of learners?

## **1.7. ASSUMPTIONS**

The following assumptions are made in pre-empting the questions asked in section 1.6:

I assume that:

- Participants' responses will shed light on the extent to which schools strive to meet their career needs by describing current practices employed in Life Orientation lessons.
- The career and self-construction intervention programme will enhance participants' career adaptability scores.
- The aforementioned intervention programme will also help participants identify their respective career interests.
- Career and self-construction can successfully be integrated into the Life Orientation syllabus as stipulated by the Department of Education (2003) ultimately to enhance learners' ability to cope with career transitions. This is applicable to independent schools and to those that are educationally disadvantaged.

## **1.8. AIMS OF MY RESEARCH**

The research covers the analysis of the nature of current school-based support strategies offered to learners. The extent to which these practices meet the career needs of learners from diverse backgrounds is examined. The meaning of career and self-construction develops in the context of my research and underpins the support programme offered to the participants. The primary aim of my research is the exploration of the extent to which career and self-construction helps learners manage career transitions. This is done by implementing a career intervention programme (see

section 1.10.1) for learners in Grade 11 in an independent school setting and in a disadvantaged educational setting respectively. The implementation of the programme will be school-based and aimed at reaching all learners in a cost-effective way by incorporating it into the Life Orientation syllabus.

## **1.9. CLARIFICATION OF TERMS**

### **1.9.1. Adaptability**

Savickas (1997a) defines adaptability as the individual's ability to cope effectively with predictable situations and unpredictable adjustments that occur. Adaptable individuals behave appropriately in specific situations (Maree et al., 2010). The authors further explain that adaptive individuals inevitably use creative problem-solving strategies to master new challenges or stressful situations.

### **1.9.2. Adolescence**

Adolescence is preceded by childhood and followed by adulthood (Hartung, 2008; Gouws, 2012). This developmental stage starts between the ages of 10 and 13 and ends between 17 and 22 years old (Gouws, 2012). Erikson (1968) names the formation of identity as a crucial developmental task of adolescence. Gouws (2012) expands on the notion of identity formation by including the establishment of gender roles as well as career and ethnic identities as important developmental tasks associated with adolescence. Stringer, Kerpelman and Skorikov (2011) define career identity as the part of one's overall identity that is derived from the sense of self that develops in a work role. One of the key features of adolescence is that career decisions are made at distinct points during this developmental stage (Super, 1963a). Vanhalakka-Ruoho (2010, p. 111) contends that *decision-making is tested, practiced and negotiated* during adolescence. Adolescence is denoted as the developmental stage during which self-concept implementation takes place as individuals explore the world of work through part-time jobs (Hartung, 2007). Guichard (2012) expands on this by explaining how adolescents construct themselves and their careers by participating in various activities in different contexts. Dialogues and exchanges in these activities give them the opportunity to construct, amongst other things, diverse competencies and skills, as well as a chance to clarify their fields of interest.

Vanhalakka-Ruoho (2010) names autonomy and self-directedness as two important developmental tasks adolescents inevitably strive for as they develop their

identities. Autonomy is the process of self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2006). It refers to the ability to formulate and ultimately make decisions independently (Steinberg, 1999). Guidance and encouragement from significant adults are named as important support mechanisms as adolescents negotiate the challenges they face in striving to establish an identity (Gouws, 2012). As the author explains, the need for feedback and affirmation is advocated in spite of the fact that adolescents gradually progress from being dependent on parental figures to closer identification with peers, and ultimately independence, in adolescence. That is, the individuation differentiation process from the family of origin is still occurring in adolescence and is largely dependent on the extent and nature of the feedback and opinions received from significant others. This feedback is ultimately used to validate self-perceptions in adolescence (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015).

### **1.9.3. Career adaptability**

Career adaptability refers to the extent to which individuals can deal effectively with barriers to career goals (Stringer, Kerpelman & Skorikov, 2011). More specifically, career adaptability is defined as the propensity of an individual to anticipate changes and conceptualise a future embedded in a context characterised by ongoing changes (Savickas 1996, 2011c). An operational definition conceptualises career adaptability as the extent to which successful transitions are made when individuals are faced with unforeseen changes in the labour market (Savickas, 2008a).

Savickas (2006) identifies four dimensions of career adaptability: concern, control, curiosity and confidence. Adaptive individuals are concerned about their career futures, believe they have some control over their lives, are curious about their future prospects, and are confident about achieving their desired career aspirations even in the face of adversities (Savickas, 2002a, 2002b). The *Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS)* (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) *will be used* in my study in order to assess career adaptability.

### **1.9.4. Career construction**

Career construction is the process of deriving a sense of self in relation to one's work role (Stringer, Kerpelman & Skorikov, 2011). This process of self-construction unfolds as individuals become accountable for their lives by linking who they are to what they do (Savickas, 2011c). Maree (2009) rephrases this by stating

that individuals give meaning to their work and other life experiences. In so doing they construct their lives and careers. Savickas (1993; 1997c) states that career counselling in this context should foster self-affirmation in their clients, as they are employees who strive to find meaning in their work beyond economic reward.

Career construction as a *life project* (Savickas, 2011c, p. 12) is the process whereby individuals reflect on their experiences and focus on what is meaningful in their lives. The author promotes the use of narration to help individuals co-construct their careers when they are in dialogue with practitioners. He explains that, in sharing their life stories with practitioners, individuals reach a better understanding of experiences and are then better equipped to make future decisions regarding their careers.

### **1.9.5. Career counselling**

Career counselling in the context of this study is not a singular process focused on helping clients make career choices (Brott, 2001; Hartung, 2007). It is a lifelong process aimed at addressing a range of career concerns through a variety of interventions (Herr, 1997). Guindon and Hanna (2002) describe career counselling as a potential tool individuals can use in planning their lives. Clients are encouraged to respond to challenges they face by reflecting on the deeper meaning associated with significant life events in the counselling process (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008). The focus of career counselling therefore extends beyond helping clients make career choices; it assists them when they design a meaningful life (Maree, 2013a). Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2008) furthermore state that career counselling should encourage clients to find meaning in their work or to work in ways that resonate with their core values and priorities. The counselling process should ultimately help people manage life transitions caused by foreseen and unforeseen changes so that they can control them and not be controlled by them. People can potentially move beyond these challenging situations by their participation in the counselling process (Duarte, 2004; Watts, 1980).

Savickas (2011c, p. 38) emphasises that career counselling is, in essence, *a relationship in which a career is co-constructed through narration*. As such, clients are viewed as authors who are encouraged through dialogue with practitioners to narrate their experiences. The creation of safe environments that permit repeated, authentic reflections on reflections is a primary task of effective career counsellors

(Maree, 2013a). Savickas (2011c, p. 39) explains that clients are enlightened during this meta-reflective process as they realise that much of what they thought they knew about their lives remains *obscure* and *ambiguous*. Effective career counselling practitioners ask questions that clients answer. Through this process, clients strive to clarify details of their narrations and to make sense of their lives.

#### **1.9.6. Career transitions**

Learning and developmental opportunities are potentially provided as individuals negotiate the many transitions they face in school (Pietarinen et al., 2010). In the context of my study, *career transitions* focus more specifically on how well individuals manage the demands and challenges they face in preparing themselves for the move from adolescence to adulthood, from being a learner at school to a learner at a tertiary institution, or from their role as a high school learner to an employee in the world of work.

Career transitions could be unanticipated or unwanted when, for example, individuals lose their jobs (Savickas, 2011c). Either way, these transitions are ideally dealt with by the development of career plans and diminished career indecision with heightened career decision-making (Stringer et al., 2010). Savickas (2011c) advocates that career transitions can be seen in a positive light when they are used as opportunities for growth and development as individuals change direction in life. Career transitions potentially lead to self-transformation when individuals work through change by linking *past negative experiences to current strengths and future opportunities* (Savickas, 2011c, p. 110).

#### **1.9.7. Self-construction**

Guichard (2009) argues that it was appropriate to talk about *career choices* a century ago but this phrase is irrelevant in the modern, globalised world. He explains that globalisation has resulted in increasing economic competitiveness resulting in the development of two distinct groups of employees. Most businesses have a stable, *core* group of qualified employees (Guichard, 2009, p. 251) who ask how they can capitalise on their experiences and identify future career prospects. The second group comprises of *peripheral workers* (Guichard, 2009, p. 251). These employees ask how they can cope with the many transitions they will inevitably face in their lives. Giddens (1991) maintains that peripheral workers continually need to construct

themselves in the face of the ongoing challenges and uncertainties in contemporary society (Guichard, 2009).

Guichard's (2005) theory of self-construction addresses the core issues of personal and career development in a globalised world. In essence the theory identifies the main factors and processes that influence how individuals design their lives in striving to cope with the challenges they face (Guichard, 2009). The author maintains that knowledge and identity are cognitive processes that occur through dialogue in specified contexts (Savickas et al., 2009). Further to this, individuals engage in activities and partake in verbal discourse in various life roles. These experiences potentially give individuals the opportunity to identify factors that resonate with their core selves and ultimately result in the construction of self, *id est* the development of a self-concept in relation to experiences they have. In this thesis, I will operationally define *self-construction* as career interventions and processes, which help individuals, gain self-knowledge on how they operate in and make sense of their lives. I will expand on the widely accepted understanding of the term *self-construction*, after exploring the extent to which the self-concepts of participants (from diverse backgrounds) developed in response to their involvement in my study.

## **1.10. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGIES**

The research paradigm and design used will now be discussed, followed by a brief outline of the data collection and analysis processes.

### **1.10.1. Intervention strategy followed in my study**

Eight lessons were used for the participants from the experimental group to participate in the intervention programme while participants from the comparison groups took part in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons (see Annexure L) taught by their teachers over a period of two months. Activities in the intervention programme were selected on the basis of the extent to which they would enable participants to relate their life stories to ultimately identify what was meaningful in their lives. Moreover, the tasks needed to be sustainable in contrasting educational settings characteristic of the two schools in my study. The activities are outlined in Table 1.1.



**Table 1.1: Description of intervention activities**

| <b>Activity</b>                                  | <b>Process<sup>2</sup></b>  | <b>Number of lessons</b> | <b>Duration</b>          | <b>Expected outcomes</b>  |
|--|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) | Pre intervention administration of CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) | 1                        | Approximately 45 minutes | The CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) results would be used to assess whether the pre-intervention, CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) scores of the two schools were significantly different from each other (between school comparisons) with the intention of determining whether or not there was initial bias between schools and groups. The pre intervention CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) scores would also be used in the final analysis of quantitative data (see session 8). |
| <i>CIP</i> (Maree, 2010c)                        | Completion of the narrative questions in the <i>CIP</i> (Maree, 2010c)              | 2                        | Approximately 45 minutes | The aim of this activity was to identify and explore the participants' interests according to their opinions and understanding of their life experiences. It was anticipated that the participants would gain insights into what was meaningful in their lives and  |

<sup>2</sup> Participants completed the pre- and post CAAS independently. They were given the choice of completing the remaining activities in the intervention programme independently and/or in discussion with their peers.

|  |  |   |                          |   |
|--|--|---|--------------------------|---|
|  |  |   |                          | acquire self-knowledge.   |
| Collages   | Making collages depicting how participants saw themselves                                | 2 | Approximately 45 minutes | The purpose of these activities was to enable the participants to narrate their life stories; ultimately giving them the opportunity to identify life themes inherent in the story-telling process. In so doing participants could potentially identify what was meaningful in their lives.   |
| Lifelines  | Drawing lifelines noting significant life events   | 2 | Approximately 45 minutes | Participants were given the opportunity to make sense of their lives and further identify life themes by considering the past and present as well as anticipated (future) life experiences.   |
| Post intervention administration of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) | Post intervention administration of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) | 1 | Approximately 45 minutes | The post intervention CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) results were statistically analysed with the pre intervention CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) results to ascertain whether or not the intervention programme significantly improved participants' career adaptability compared to the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons. |

|                 |  |   |                           |  |
|-----------------|--|---|---------------------------|--|
| Journal entries | Participants from the experimental groups from both schools kept journal entries on their experiences of my intervention programme after each activity | 8 | No time limit was imposed | Reflections in the journal entries potentially gave participants deeper insights into their life worlds. In so doing they could identify life themes to ultimately arrive at more meaningful understandings of themselves and their lives. |
|-----------------|--|---|---------------------------|--|

### 1.10.2. Research paradigm

The paradigm underpinning my study is interpretivism with traces of positivism. Although seemingly contradictory, my choice in that regard was guided by the questions I asked when trying to understand the phenomena pertaining to my study. This concurs with Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) who argue that underlying research question/s influence which methods and approaches are used when conducting research. They should not be chosen on the basis of preconceived biases in terms of the most highly regarded approaches in social science research, but are selected on the basis of their usefulness in generating relevant data to answer the questions asked.

Interpretivism recognises the complexity of the world and acknowledges that reality can only be accessed *through the social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings* (Nieuwenhuis 2007, p. 58). Chapter 2 discusses the main tenets of interpretivism in greater detail. Constructivism will also be discussed as the main theoretical framework from which I intended drawing on to interpret my data. This framework is rooted in the interpretivist paradigm in that it recognises and focuses on the meanings people assign to their experiences. Constructivist principles will be used to interpret the research findings and ultimately illuminate what is meant by the data in terms of the extent to which career and self-construction helps learners manage career transitions (Chapter 5).

### 1.10.3. Research design

The research design that will be used will now be outlined. This is followed by an overview of the data collection and analysis processes that are discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

#### 1.10.3.1. Mixed methods research design

A mixed method study collects, analyses and reports on quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2003; 2005; Plano Clark, Huddleston-Casas, Churchill, O'Neil Green, Garrett, 2008). Johnson et al. (2007) maintain that mixed method designs provide depth and breadth of understanding of the phenomena at hand (Angell & Townsend, 2011). Social scientists are encouraged to use a combination of these data methods because social phenomena are integrated and are less likely to be fully understood using a single approach (Mouton & Marais, as cited in De Vos, 2000). A mixed method approach is used in my study as the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data is seen to be necessary in striving to answer the research questions asked. Mixed method research approaches are perceived to be more sophisticated in that they necessitate the inclusion of inductive and deductive reasoning processes affording the researcher the opportunity to draw on the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, as cited in De Vos 2000).

Angell and Townsend (2011) distinguish between five different types of mixed method approaches. The following three characteristics are used to differentiate between them according to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2006):

- The *priority* assigned to the quantitative and qualitative data.
- The *sequence* of collecting the respective quantitative and qualitative data.
- The *data analysis technique* used, referring to either a combination of the data analysis processes or analysing the data as separate entities.

A QUAN+QUAL, *Concurrent Triangulation Design* lends itself to my study, as equal priority is given to the quantitative and qualitative data as it is collected at approximately the same time. Thereafter, the respective data sets are analysed independently before being integrated in the interpretation phase of the study.

### **1.10.3.2. Case study design**

The research design in my proposed study is a case study focusing on the career transition experiences of Grade 11 learners in two contrasting educational settings, before and after two groups from the respective settings participated in a career intervention programme that is based on career and self-construction. Another two groups continued to participate in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons offered by their respective schools.

### **1.10.3.3. Experimental design**

A *quasi-experimental, pre-test/post-test comparison group design* is used in my study to determine the extent to which the career adaptability of the participants, who were exposed to the afore-mentioned intervention programme, changed. The programme, characterised by career and self-construction principles, is identified as the isolated variable and was made available to two experimental groups; namely a Grade 11 class in Penryn College and Mthombo High School respectively. Two other Grade 11 classes from these schools serve as comparison groups, which did not participate in the intervention programme but continued to participate in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons offered by their schools.

The CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) was administered prior to and following a career intervention programme. Pre and post- (quantitative) results of this questionnaire are analysed for the experimental and control groups. This process is discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

### **1.10.4. Research process**

The research process will now be outlined to highlight the purpose of the literature review, and to describe how the participants in my study were selected. The data collection process will also be described before discussing how the data is to be analysed.

#### **1.10.4.1. Literature review**

An ongoing literature review was done and is discussed in depth in Chapter 2. This review discusses the contemporary arrangement of the world of work and the quality of support offered to learners who attempt to manage career-related transitions. In essence, the literature review identifies and discusses the salient

features of theoretical perspectives that strive to become aligned with the changed and new ways of thinking about the world of work and the meaning of work in one's life.

#### **1.10.4.2. Participants**

The participants' profile will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3. An introductory profile is given here to acquaint the reader with them.

Non-probability sampling is used in my study. Convenience and purposive sampling procedures as opposed to random sampling procedures are utilised to this end. Convenience sampling is chosen when participants are selected because they are accessible. Researchers make judgements in purposive sampling strategies intentionally to select participants who are seen to represent characteristics that are relevant to the research topic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Learners (boys and girls) from Penryn College and Mthombo High School were selected as I am interested in exploring the career transition experiences of individuals in contrasting educational settings; that is, disadvantaged learners from lower socioeconomic backgrounds following a state-based education system, and more privileged learners from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in an independent school setting. More specifically, Grade 11 learners were chosen as it is likely that they have numerous career needs due to the fact that provisional acceptance into South African universities is based on their academic performance in that grade.

Two groups of learners from each school took part in a career intervention programme. Another two (comparison) groups participated in a career programme designed according to the prescribed Life Orientation curriculum (Department of Education, 2003).

#### **1.10.4.3. Data collection and instrumentation**

Pre-test and post-test scores from the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) were analysed in conjunction with information obtained from qualitative data. Qualitative data was generated from the focus group interviews and responses in the reflective journal kept by the participants in the experimental groups in my study.

#### 1.10.4.4. Data Analysis

Classifying my intended research project as a mixed method research study necessitates that distinct quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques are used in striving to answer the research questions. These respective approaches to analysing the data generated by the data gathering techniques are now outlined.

- **Quantitative data analysis**

Data analysis was carried out between and within schools by comparing the learners' scores in the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) before and after the experimental groups take part in the career intervention programme. The following statistical procedures and comparisons were carried out in collaboration with Department of Statistics from the University of Pretoria:

- One-way frequency tables were drawn up to organise and summarise response frequencies.
- Two-way frequency tables were used when the relationships between variables are analysed.
- Inferential statistics are used when further comparisons are made for data analysis purposes within- and between groups. Mann-Whitney U tests and the Kruskal-Wallis test were carried out.

- **Qualitative data reduction**

Qualitative data analysis processes focus on understanding how participants make meaning of given phenomena *by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences* (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 99). Following the guiding principles set out by the author, themes were identified in the qualitative data obtained in my study before inductive reasoning processes are applied to them. This process culminates in the formulation of my research findings, which are discussed in Chapter 5.

Seidel's (1998) non-linear model is useful in explaining the ongoing and iterative, inductive reasoning processes that were alluded to in the previous paragraph (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The chosen qualitative data analysis process is based on

Creswell's (2003) approach that sees data reduction as a process of specified steps with multiple levels of analysis. This is discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

### **1.11. ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

Nieuwenhuis (2007) contrasts between the objective role researchers assume in quantitative research and the subjective role they need to assume in qualitative research. The mixed method nature of my study therefore demands flexibility in terms of my role as I moved between these roles according to the data collection strategy at hand.

At the outset I needed to be transparent to all role players regarding the purpose of my study and to obtain informed consent from the headmasters of the two schools, chief executive officer of Penreach, representative from the Department of Education, participants and their parents to conduct the research. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any stage. Leading and guiding participants through the focus group interviews in a professional manner was another role I assumed. Permission to record and transcribe the interviews was obtained from participants. My role as an administrator of the tests to be used in the study was apparent. I was also responsible for scoring and interpreting the tests and their respective findings. I assumed the important role of implementing the intervention programme in an environment conducive to learning. Participants from the experimental groups also needed to be given ample opportunities to reflect on their experiences of the intervention programme and were allocated sufficient time to complete their journal entries.

### **1.12. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) emphasise the importance of ethical guidelines in educational research. Since the project at hand involved human beings, I adhered to the ethical guidelines specified in the Ethics and Research Statement of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria and The Professional Board for Psychology at all times.

In striving to safeguard the wellbeing of all role players in my study, a number of steps were followed. These included being transparent in making the purpose of the research clear to them and in clarifying their respective roles and rights in terms of their participation. Informed consent to conduct the research was obtained at the outset. The voluntary nature of participation was also emphasised throughout the



study. At no stage could data be linked to individual participants by name, thus maintaining confidentiality. The results of the study were communicated to participants to verify findings and avoid misinterpretation of data.

Finally counselling services were made available to individuals who manifested behaviours and emotions in response to their participation in my study. Arrangements in this regard were made with a fellow psychologist to ensure that my role as a researcher was not integrated and confused with my role in my profession.

### **1.13. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The data in my study is gathered from a relatively small group of learners from specific educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Cohen et al. (2001, p. 184) identifies the inherent limitation in this by stating that the quantitative findings of my study might *not be generalisable except where other readers/researchers see their application*.

It is important to acknowledge that Mthombo High School is not fully representative of the majority of schools from disadvantaged backgrounds due to the financial and academic support it receives from Penreach. This limits the generalisability of the quantitative findings of my study further.

The Halo Effect is described as a cognitive bias in which the researcher's knowledge or perception of the participants, influences judgements made in terms of research findings (Cohen et al., 2001). This limitation is applicable to my study as I am more familiar with Penryn College and many of the learners there in my capacity as an educational psychologist at the school. In contrast, I have had no prior exposure to the learners from Mthombo High School. In Chapter 3 I do, however, discuss the steps taken to reduce the Halo Effect in my study.

Since the learners from the respective classes allocated to my study had the opportunity to withdraw from the project at any stage, it could have significantly reduced the size of the sample group. However, none of the participants chose to leave my study.

### **1.14. OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS**

Underpinned by interpretivism, this case study explores learners' management of career-related transitions through career and self-construction. In **Chapter 1**, I contextualise my study by discussing the changing role of career counsellors in contemporary society. Thereafter, I discuss the status of career facilitation in South

Africa and in South African schools. The rest of this chapter summarises what my study entails. **Chapter 2** covers a review of selected literature to examine the nature of the world of work and the extent to which schools support learners who strive to manage career-related transitions. In particular, this review focuses on the development of a comprehensive theoretical framework for my study. **Chapter 3** is a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology that will be used in my study. This clarifies how the participants were selected and gives details of the data collection and analyses processes used in my study. A presentation of the data results is contained in **Chapter 4**. In **Chapter 5** all these results are integrated with constructivism and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Some conclusions are made regarding learners management of career-related transitions through career and self-construction. Finally, recommendations based on this understanding are made in an effort to improve the quality of future school-based learning support strategies.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

The primary purpose of my study is to explore the extent to which learners manage career-related transitions through career and self-construction. In striving to address this comprehensively, it is imperative to understand what these *career-related transitions* are in contemporary society, and to identify what support strategies can potentially help learners manage them. This chapter thus starts by explaining what these key components of my research are by discussing literature in that regard. Secondly, the extent to which current support strategies offered to learners are successful in helping them manage career-related transitions, is discussed. Thirdly, the need for updated theoretical perspectives in the field of career psychology emerges in the literature review as it becomes apparent that more traditional approaches do not account for the new demands people face in the world of work. These theoretical perspectives are explained in detail. The theoretical framework of my study is developed in response to this part of the literature review. This framework is discussed after salient attributes of the updated theoretical perspectives are identified as important in terms of being able to inform my research findings.

### **2.2. CONTEMPORARY ARRANGEMENT OF WORK**

Growing uncertainty regarding occupational opportunities and job security has arisen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to globalisation and ongoing advancements in information technologies (Usinger & Smith, 2010). Globalisation is seen to account for fewer job opportunities for adolescents and young adults in particular (Bynner, 2001; Gutman & Schoon, 2012). Employees in current workplaces are generally faced with more frequent transitions (Kallinikos, 2004) and inevitably work in organisations with decentralised management structures, where delayering is common practice (Sewell, 2005). Organisations today generally have fewer tiers in their hierarchical structures. Individuals inevitably have to deal with more risks and uncertainty in the current global economy that necessitates the development of new skills so that they are up to date with job requirements and new technologies (Savickas, 2006). Karasek (1979) identifies a low sense of control over one's job coupled with high levels of psychological job demands, as the root causes of job-related stress many individuals experience when confronted with the aforementioned salient features of the contemporary world of work.

The skills, knowledge and abilities of employees who are currently employed no longer guarantee that individuals will have jobs for the duration of their lives (Savickas et al., 2009). It is therefore crucial for them to become lifelong, flexible learners who are equipped to use sophisticated technologies and ensure that they maintain employability or create their own employment opportunities in striving to address the afore-mentioned challenges. Brown, Bimrose, Barnes and Hughes (2012) maintain that individuals need to engage in formal learning or training in working environments every five to ten years with the intention of updating their skills or to acquire new skills. Individuals who do not have the propensity to become lifelong learners are inevitably vulnerable in the labour market, as they are less adaptable when transitions or unforeseen changes occur (Brown, Bimrose, Barnes, Kirpal, Gronning & Daehlen, 2010).

Duarte (2009, p. 259) argues that the term *employment* is out-dated in contemporary society. It is more appropriate to use the term *employability*. The author's statement that a career belongs to the person and not to organisations, reflects the need for individuals to assume control over their career development (Usinger & Smith, 2010). Savickas (1993) also expresses this sentiment by arguing that they need to assume responsibility and be accountable for the management of their careers. A study by Brown et al. (2012) concluded that individuals who take responsibility to their learning and development and ultimately for their careers, inevitably make successful life transitions. Cochran (2007) also emphasises that it is crucial for individuals not to lose sight of who they are in this process and where they want to be in the future.

Guichard (2006) argues that contemporary personal and career developmental issues are summarised by the following three questions which individuals inevitably ask themselves:

- Learners ask: What academic path should I select in school?
- Adults with some sense of control over their careers ask: How do I develop myself further by making use of my diverse experiences?
- Adults with uncertain job opportunities ask: How do I manage and deal with the many transitions I face?

The author summarises the afore-mentioned questions by advocating that all individuals inevitably ask themselves how they can manage their lives in the unique contexts in which they find themselves.

Complex career challenges, characteristic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, necessitate that individuals extend their questioning beyond only asking what jobs they will choose and answer the following in striving to preserve their identities (Rafael, 2007):

- How will I keep my job?
- How can I balance the various roles I assume in my life as their relative reciprocal relationships are considered?
- Which life roles are important to me?
- To what extent are my various life roles in conflict with one another?

Shifts in theoretical presuppositions in the field of career psychology are necessitated so that the career counselling practices they inform are more useful to individuals as they attempt to answer these questions. Oyserman, Bybee and Terry (2006) call for dynamic approaches to career counselling practices. Moreover, these practices should emphasise individual creativity when career possibilities are explored. Theories of career psychology have consequently evolved from positivist to postmodern approaches in becoming aligned with the changed and new ways of thinking about the world of work and the meaning of work in one's life. Three theoretical perspectives will be discussed in section 2.4 to elaborate on this; namely theories of person-environment fit, lifespan career development theory, and career construction theory.

### **2.3. SCHOOL-BASED CAREER TRANSITION SUPPORT**

Rafael (2007) maintains that individuals of all ages are required to manage career demands in response to an ever-changing world. Pietarinen et al. (2010), for instance, examined the nature of transitions faced by 15-year-old Finnish learners. Their conclusion is that transitions can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety. Del Corso and Briddick (2015) reiterated this by stating that adolescents are often anxious in response to experiencing the first major career transition: leaving home.

Pletarian et al. (2010) call for programmes to be put in place in schools to support learners in managing the transitions they face. Needs Assessment Surveys

show that adolescents acknowledge and value support offered to them in their career-development journey (Lapan, Aoyagi & Kayson, 2007).

In related research, Lapan et al. (2003) found, in a longitudinal study with adolescents in rural schools, that learners who received career development support in high school were more successful in managing career transitions throughout life. The authors found that curricula strategies potentially support learners' career development. In addition, the study shows that career support at school makes learners aware of the fact that educational endeavours are useful in helping them attain their career goals. It is of paramount importance to provide *consistent and competent* career development support to all learners (Lapan et al., 2007, p. 266).

Lapan et al. (2003) expressed concern when they examined the extent to which current career counselling practices meet the afore-mentioned criteria for success. They argue that these need to be evaluated, as they are not seen to provide the necessary support to learners in educational settings. Learners should have the opportunity to prepare for future jobs by acquiring employability skills at school (Cotton, 2008; Poole & Zahn, 1993). Employers name effective communication, problem solving and teamwork skills as the three most important employability skills when recruiting graduates (Archer & Davison, 2008). However, Cranmer (2006) has found that skills that are generally taught at school do not correspond with the demands of the labour market.

To summarise: career-related transitions can potentially be stressful for learners if they do not receive adequate support at school. Unfortunately, a lack of support in that regard appears to be the general trend in current educational settings.

## **2.4. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

Traditional and updated theoretical perspectives are now discussed. Theories that are seen to be useful in terms of informing my research findings are augmented as far as possible, culminating in the theoretical framework for my study.

### **2.4.1. Theories of person-environment fit**

Positivist theories of person-environment fit characterise the industrial era and reflect the bureaucratic and hierarchical structure of large organisations that dominated the last century (Savickas, 2003). Swanson and Fouad (1999) name two such theories that were prominent at that time. Holland's (1997) model of vocational

type emphasises the *vocational choices* individuals make, whereas Dawis and Lofquist's (1984) theory of work adjustment focuses on the *career adjustments* made in the world of work. These theories are seen to complement each other and are ultimately based on three main assumptions:

- People will engage in activities that give them the opportunity to actualise their skills, abilities, and values (Holland, 1997).
- Theories of person-environment fit do not focus exclusively on skills specified by potential employers but also consider the individual needs of potential employees (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). Reference is made here to the individual skills, interests and values individuals choose to develop in correspondence or fit the careers they will ultimately have. Job satisfaction and performance achievement can potentially be enhanced if there is suitable fit between people and their work environment. Knowledge acquisition is of paramount importance in this process. Parsons' (1909, 1989) model emphasises the need for the acquisition of knowledge related to self and the world of work. As such, schools should give learners the opportunity to gain knowledge about themselves and the world of work to enhance their capacity for achieving the necessary fit between their skills and future careers (Swanson & Fouad, 1999).
- Theories of person-environment fit incorporate aspects of systems theory in proposing that people and their environments reciprocally shape each other Swanson and Fouad (1999). Dawis (1996) expands on this by providing a rationale for why people choose specific careers. He argues that interactions take place between people and their environments with the intention of obtaining “reinforcers” from each other.

#### **2.4.2. Lifespan, life-space career development theory**

Lifespan, life-space career development theories focus on the various life roles (child, parent, worker etc.) people play out in *real life theatres* including, amongst other contexts, the family, school and work environment (Chen, 2007). The work role is perceived as one of many life roles and is not given primary focus by isolating it and disregarding other life roles (Hartung, 2007). Instead emphasis is placed on how individuals develop over time in relation to the meaning they give to work.

Super (1957, 1990) offers a developmental approach to vocational choice that dominated thinking in the field of career psychology in the mid-twentieth century (Hartung, 2007). Super (1963) names five stages in this theory:

- **Growth (4–13)**

This is the first stage of career development and relates closely to the formation of a self-concept. This primary goal of the growth stage develops in response to the question, “Who am I?” A future orientation is potentially derived as individuals form a mental representation of their strengths, interests and values when formulating answers to this question.

- **Exploration (14–24)**

Individuals gather information about themselves and the world of work in this developmental stage. Hartung (2007, p. 109) maintains that *vocational maturity* develops as individuals become *planful* (sic) and *curious* about the world of work.

- **Establishment (25–44)**

Individuals are seen to realise their self-concepts by engaging in meaningful activities in life roles (Hartung, 2007). The author goes on to say that meaning can potentially be added to their lives when they have established themselves in work roles that resonate with their self-concept.

- **Maintenance (45–65)**

Skills are acquired and jobs are retained or changed in response to presenting career needs during this fourth career development stage. Hartung (2007) states that it is important for individuals to stay motivated in their work role and to implement the necessary changes if they are not.

- **Decline (65+)**

Retirement or leaving the work role is common during this developmental stage. Individuals focus on adjusting to the changes that accompany this stage, and adapting to other roles as they accelerate time spent in preferred life theatres (Usinger & Smith, 2010; Hartung, 2007).

Exploration and establishment take place primarily in adolescence (Usinger & Smith, 2010). Crystallisation is the developmental task associated with early and



middle adolescence (14 to 18 years old) and is described as a cognitive process in which a vocational goal or choice is ultimately made (Usinger & Smith, 2010).

The following diagram represents the five stages of Super's Lifespan, Life-space theory:



**Figure 2.1: Graphical representation of the five stages in Super's Lifespan, Life-Space theory**

### 2.4.3. Career construction theory

The postmodern theory of career construction updates and advances the lifespan theory by integrating the various components of this approach (Hartung, 2007). Savickas (2005) maintains that careers are actively constructed through the interpretive processes of social interaction and meaning-making. Giddens (1991) notes that individuals experience less support and security in the world of work and have to deal with ongoing changes and risks in contemporary society. Maree, Erasmus, Hansen, Nkambule and Symington (2010) reiterate this, saying that job transitions are more frequent and more complicated than they were in the past. The future is no longer predictable (Maree, 2010b). Questions individuals ask themselves shift from, "Which career shall I choose?" to "What am I going to make of my life?" (Savickas et al., 2010a). The overriding question in this process is, "What matters most to me?" (Giddens, 1991). Postmodern approaches shift the attention from career to "the place of work in people's lives" (Richardson, 1993) and from development to management (Savickas, 2003). In essence work is seen as one way of helping people find meaning in their lives and to make a contribution to society (Savickas, 2002a, 2005, 2009).

Postmodern approaches to career counselling necessitate a revised way of looking at the role of career counsellors. Their goal is to be *useful* to their clients and not to be *precise and exact* (Savickas, 2005). As such, counsellors use approaches that enable, rather than to fit (Savickas, 1993, 2004).

The main features of career construction theory focusing on enabling individuals are:

- **Life structures**

All life roles including the work role are acknowledged and considered (Savickas, 2005). The author maintains that the latter is not necessarily the most significant life role and urges career counsellors to consider the meanings ascribed to various life roles over the lifespan in dialogue with their clients. The work role is not conceptualised in isolation and is seen to find expression and meaning in relation to other life roles (Maree, 2013a). Career construction takes into account how individuals organise various life roles and cope with career developmental tasks (Hartung 2007; Savickas 2002a, 2005).

- **Life themes**

Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie (1979) define a life theme as the *forming composition of meaning*. Relating life stories can unlock meaning when life themes emerge (Savickas, 2007a). This can potentially take place through dialogue with an inquiring counsellor. In essence, life themes or repetitive interactions (Savickas, 2005) merge into a unified storyline which individuals use when trying to understand themselves and their world (McAdams, 1993). In particular, life themes can give insight into why individuals move in particular vocational directions (Hartung, 2007).

- **(Vocational) personality**

Individual differences in values, abilities, needs and interests are acknowledged in career construction theory (Savickas 2005a; Hartung, 2007). Other aspects of self-concept such as motivation and drive are also deliberately considered (Hartung, 2007).

- **Career adaptability**

Adaptability refers to one's capacity to cope with unforeseen challenges in one's career (Stringer et al., 2010). Individuals who are willing to adapt (adaptivity) and able to adapt (adaptability) are likely to make successful transitions and adaptations in changing environments (Tolentino, Garcia, Lu, Restubog, Bordia & Plewa, 2014). Attitudes, beliefs and competencies are

core issues of career adaptability (Savickas 2002a). Optimism in particular is identified as a key attitude as it facilitates the manifestation of flexibility in individuals who are proactive and more responsive in changing environments (Aspinwall, Richter & Hoffman, 2001). Career construction theory maintains that success in each developmental stage builds an important foundation for the next stage to be negotiated. This improves the chances for adaptability and decreases the likelihood of difficulties arising in later stages (Hartung et al., 2008).

Savickas (2005) maintains that relating life stories helps individuals understand the aforementioned issues of career adaptability better. Personal stories develop in relation to life experiences (Brott, 2001). A client's life world is explored through these stories that are co-constructed and deconstructed in dialogue with a career counsellor (Brott, 2001). Career counselling should extend beyond narration to uncover and relate a more constructive story that resonates with who the client is and where he is going (Cochran, 2007). As such, the process starts with *where they are and ends [with] where they want to be* (Cochran, 2007, p. 16).

Super et al. (1996) updated the growth stage to 4–13 years with four revised sub-stages that are characteristic of adaptive individuals. Maggiori, Johnston, Krings, Massoudi and Rossier (2013, p. 438) refer to these stages as *psychosocial resources* or *self-regulation capacities or skills* that individuals utilise when trying to cope with and manage challenges they face in life. Each stage deals with specific developmental tasks (Hartung, 2007):

- **Concern**

Concerned individuals show interest as opposed to indifference about their career futures. The primary question asked at this stage is, “Do I have a future?” (Hartung et al., 2008).

- **Control**

A sense of control exists when individuals believe that they have some influence over their lives. Individuals in this stage of development typically ask, “Who owns my future?” (Hartung et al., 2008).

- **Curiosity**

This stage is characterised by active exploration. Jordaan (1963) describes exploratory behaviour as physical and/or mental activities that elicit information about the individual or the environment. These can potentially assist in career choices or suitable adaptations being made as they ask themselves, “What do I want to do with my future?” (Hartung et al., 2008).

- **Confidence**

Confident individuals are not deterred from their career goals even when they face challenges in trying to answer the question, “Can I do it?” (Hartung et al., 2008).

Career adaptability resources are not perceived as fixed, stable traits (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Instead the authors maintain that they change over time and in different situations. Savickas (1997a) highlights the importance of developing career adaptability in adolescence as individuals start preparing for their future careers. Maree (2013b) emphasises the importance of improving adaptability as a general goal of career counselling.

Adaptive individuals make vocational choices that express their self-concept and validate who they are (Usinger & Smith, 2010). Individuals need to be acknowledged as experts of their own lives (Savickas, 1993) and should be confident, knowing they can potentially master this validation process. Subjective meaning-making is therefore recognised and emphasised in the career construction process (Chen, 2001).

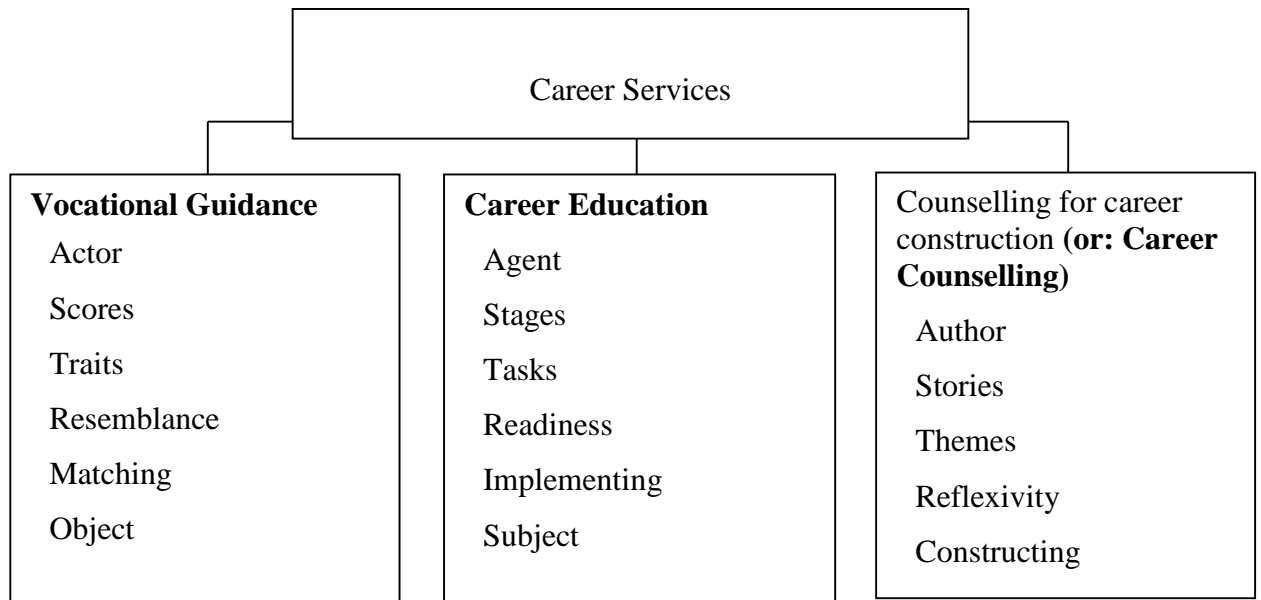
The impetus for meaning-making is derived from one of two sources. Usinger and Smith (2010) distinguish between externally and internally driven individuals. The former are committed to prove their success to themselves and to others whereas the latter group focus on using their careers to help themselves become who they want to be. A study conducted by Usinger and Smith (2010), shows that adolescents need an internally derived sense of self to make their career exploration more meaningful.

Patton (2007) maintains that career counselling should be perceived as a continuum of intervention processes that address, among other things, the facilitation of self- and occupational awareness, exploration of possibilities, acquiring career planning skills, stress and anger management and developing skills to manage work

adjustment issues. Di Fabio and Maree (2013) expand on this by stating that, in reviewing the difficulties that clients share, career counsellors ultimately assist them in managing career related challenges related to career adaptability. In other words: career counselling strives to improve clients' career adaptability in terms of the extent of concern they have for their work, the amount of control they perceive to have over their careers, whether or not they are curious about job prospects and opportunities and the level of confidence they have in making meaningful career choices (Savickas, 2010c). Ebersöhn (2007) concurs with the author in stating that career counselling aims at helping clients decide on a life to live. Assessment in constructivist career counselling focuses on the counselling process and extends beyond mere data gathering (Patton, 2007).

To summarise: postmodern approaches to counselling based on career construction theory emerged in response to the current social order of the world of work. Career services evolved from offering services related to vocational guidance (focusing on identifying skills and interests that are matched to specific occupations) (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013; Savickas, 2011b), and career education (educating people in terms of their personal development and learning how to manage work demands) (Savickas, 2011b). Instead, career counselling focuses on enabling individuals to design lives through exploring the self in dialogue with other people (Savickas, 2005, 2011c). As such, individuals are encouraged to become the authors of their respective life stories and identify life themes in these stories to clarify what is meaningful to them. Reflexivity (considering possibilities for the future) is encouraged over and above reflection (considering past events) as they construct their futures (Savickas, 2015a). The following diagram illustrates the evolution of career counselling services:

**Figure 2.2: A diagram of the Career Construction Theory, compiled as described by Savickas (2011b, p. 7)**



#### **2.4.4. Life design framework**

As discussed in section 1.4.2, the life design framework translates Guichard’s (2005) theory of self-construction into practice. The major tenets of this framework will now be discussed.

##### **2.4.4.1. Presuppositions of the life design framework**

This framework emphasises the co-evolution of individuals, economy and society (Savickas et al., 2009). Individuals are seen to empower themselves through meaning-making as life stories are written. A major shift in perspective from traditional person-environment fit theories is achieved in emphasising the meaning-making process that ultimately enables individuals to *construct* rather than to *choose* their careers (Maree, 2009, p. 84). In Table 2.1, I discuss the shifts in theoretical perspectives from traditional theories to life design frameworks.

**Table 2.1: Shifts in theoretical perspectives**

| <b>Traditional theories</b>   | <b>Life design framework</b>  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Traits and states in stable work environments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective measures of stable personal characteristics</li> <li>• Availability of secure jobs</li> <li>• Person-environment fit</li> <li>• Leading questions: “How to match individuals and occupations?” and “How can careers develop over time?”</li> </ul> | <p><b>Contextual possibilities in unpredictable work environments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identities are changing patterns as individuals adapt to changing contexts</li> <li>• Identities are derived from client’s stories and not from objective measures</li> <li>• Leading question: “How do individuals construct themselves through their jobs?”</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Prescription</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More stable world allowed for predictable choices to be made: “What to do?”</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Dynamic process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unpredictable nature of the world: “How to do?”</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Linear causality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fixed aptitudes and interests</li> <li>• Simple advice-giving</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Non-linear progression</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process of co-construction (Savickas, 2011d) using different methods (Herr, 1997)</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Scientific facts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objective realities focusing on career choices (Hartung, 2007)</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Narrative realities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjective realities focusing on career adaptability (Hartung, 2007)</li> <li>• Activities for meaning-making</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Describing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliant on test scores and profile interpretations (Savickas et al., 2009)</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Modelling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using client stories and activities to validate self-concepts through meaning-making (Savickas et al., 2009)</li> </ul>  |

(Compiled by the researcher)

#### 2.4.4.2. Structure of the life design framework

The life-design framework is structured to be:

- **Lifelong**

Employees need ongoing training to facilitate the development of skills needed in the rapidly changing world of work (Maree, 2009). This is a lifelong process. Through the life design process, self-construction takes place as individuals are guided in determining which skills and knowledge they value, how, where and when they may be acquired and who can potentially support them in the skills and knowledge acquisition process (Savickas et al, 2009).

- **Holistic**

The life design framework is holistic in that it is structured to focus on all life roles, not just work, as careers are constructed. As such, career construction is one aspect of self-construction because it is not necessarily the salient life role for all individuals (Savickas et al., 2009).

- **Contextual**

Savickas et al. (2009) emphasise the role of the environment in the life design framework. As such, individuals' observations and interpretations of both past and present environments are stressed. With this in mind the authors perceive the life design process as inclusive, as all roles and environments should be considered as career stories are constructed. Parker (2007, p. 1) noted that *behind any autobiographical act is a self for whom certain things matter and are given priorities over others. Some of these things are not only objects of desire or interest, but command the writer's admiration or respect. These are the key "goods" the writer lives by, shaping her acts of ethical deliberation and choice.* The author maintains that these key goods lay the foundation for life narratives in that they shape the stories that individuals tell. Savickas (2009) argues that that life design interventions should help individuals identify *key goods* in relation to the context in which they live. This identification process can potentially help individuals resolve challenges that they face by matching their needs to those encountered in the context in which they find themselves.



- **Preventative**

Life design interventions should not be reserved for transition times only but should adopt a preventative function as well (Savickas et al., 2009). Individuals are therefore encouraged to be proactive and consider their futures early on and prior to major transitions, so that they have more opportunities to make comprehensive life (and career) choices.

#### 2.4.4.3. Goals of life design interventions

Savickas et al. (2009) state that career counselling is useful when it is instrumental in making positive changes to life stories. The authors expand on this by naming the following goals of the life design process:

- **Adaptability**

Adaptable individuals behave appropriately in specific situations (Maree et al., 2010). Adaptability is linked to change and denotes how well individuals manage and adjust to changing situations (Hamtaux, Houssemand & Vrignaud, 2013). Life design interventions facilitate the articulation of life stories that help individuals cope more effectively with developmental tasks, career challenges, transitions, and changing environments. In so doing, success in the components of adaptability, namely concern, control, curiosity, confidence and commitment, can be attained (Savickas, 2005). Individuals are encouraged to employ creative problem-solving techniques, to handle unpredictable situations, to be confident in handling new situations, to show personal and cultural skills that enable them to deal effectively with change, and to manage stress (Pulakos, Schmitt, Dorsey, Arad, Hedge & Bornman, 2002).

- **Narratability**

Successful life design interventions are reliant on the quality of communication that takes place between client and counsellor (Savickas et al., 2009). Dialogue is aimed at helping clients improve their understanding of their own stories and corresponding life themes, vocational personality and adaptability resources (Savickas, 2005). Individuals can examine their past and present experiences through the stories they tell (Brott, 2001).

- **Activity**

Active engagement in various activities gives individuals the opportunity to gain insight into the abilities and interests that are gratifying for them (Savickas et al., 2009). This potentially informs the discourse and feedback they ultimately receive from others as they re-interpret their self-concepts and life themes. New perspective can thereby be gained in terms of what is actually significant in their lives.

- **Intentionality**

On-going reflection on what matters to individuals highlights what is important to them (Savickas et al., 2009) and creates an awareness of alternative work opportunities and prospects (Savickas, 2010c). They can subsequently engage in activities to validate who they are and what they consider important. These actions are intentional when they involve *behavior (sic) and meaning* as they reflect *possible selves and life in the future* (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 246).

#### **2.4.4.4. Steps in the life design process**

The life design intervention strategy is reliant on story telling (a narrative approach) and is action-oriented as opposed to being reliant on test scores and profile interpretations (Savickas et al., 2009). The strategy translates the theory of career construction into practice (Hartung, 2007). Stories help us make sense of our experiences and ultimately the world (Thrift & Amundson, 2007). Life stories develop to help people organise the past and establish a sense of continuity and understanding (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Stories are constructed socially and are embedded and influenced by the historical-cultural context in which they are found (Combs & Freedman, 1994). Cultural diversity and the influence of family should be recognised and explored in showing appreciation of the uniqueness of individuals (Chope & Consoli, 2007).

The narrative approach in career counselling gives clients the opportunity to make sense of their lives through story-telling (Maree, 2009). The story-telling process transforms clients' roles to that of active agents as their future career stories are constructed or designed in the narration process (Patten & McMahon, 2006a). Emotions and passions are emphasised in the stories told (Savickas, 2007b).

The following six steps are identified as part of the story-telling process:

- **Problem identification**

The problems encountered by clients are named and goals for the intervention process are specified (Savickas et al, 2009).

- **Exploration of identity**

Clients express how they see themselves, name and talk about significant relationships, and share life experiences as well as expectations they have for themselves and their futures (Savickas et al., 2009). Chen (2007, p. 27) referred to this as the process whereby the individual *composes a life history* to enhance their level of self-awareness and clarify personal goals. Maree (2013a) argues that clients are the only people who can validate what they are invited to share during counselling sessions. Counsellors merely repeat what clients say to ensure that the story-telling process is authentic. In so doing they provide an audience for clients and point out salient features of their stories (Di Fabio & Maree, 2011).

- **Extending the perspective of the client (revisiting the client's story)**

Clients may be the main characters of their stories but not the authors of the stories being told when they passively act in work roles scripted by others (Maree, 2013a). In these instances it is inevitable that they will not find meaning in their work and ultimately in their lives (Christensen & Johnston, 2003). Clients become the authors of their life stories when they narrate them clearly and actively (Maree, 2013a). It is therefore important to put stories into perspective to authenticate them (Maree, 2010b). This can be achieved when clients retell their stories after uncovering silenced stories or those modified when aspirations were silenced (Savickas et al., 2009). In addition, family, societal and cultural factors, such as gender stereotypes, cultural factors, rules in the family system, legal status language, religion, and demographics, should be challenged to determine the extent to which they are barriers that prevent clients from achieving their career goals (Chope & Consoli, 2007). In so doing, scripts that prevent clients from finding resonance between their self-concepts and career aspirations are challenged (Maree, 2010b).

- **Positioning the problem in the client's revised story**

Schultheiss, Watts, Sterland, and O'Neill (2011) state that there are numerous ways in which life experiences can be interpreted. This understanding gives clients opportunities to develop alternative views of themselves and of their lives. In line with this assertion, Chen (1997, 2007), Logan (2004) and Maree (2015a) argue that individuals are not obliged to live passively by stories that do not reflect who they really are. That is, they can actively script and live by more productive stories; ones reflect what is meaningful to them. A storied approach to counselling gives clients the opportunity to deconstruct past, unproductive life stories so that new, functional stories can develop through discourse with counsellors (Brott, 2001). Savickas (2008a) maintains that stable identities develop when clients know their unique stories and in so doing develop authentic self-views. Career challenges can also be repositioned into a new context in stories by facilitating the development of new ways of looking at the self in future narratives (Chen, 2007; Maree, 2015a; Savickas et al., 2009; Schultheiss et al., 2011).

- **Identification of activities**

Tiedeman (1964) refers to purposeful or intentional action being taken that can ultimately actualise possible selves. Increased activity levels in that regard can give individuals opportunities to identify which abilities and interests they prefer, i.e. experiences that are congruent with who they really are or who they choose to see themselves as (Super 1957, 1990). Although the subject of career counselling interventions is an individual's future, the present is also considered as it has implications for that future (Chen, 2007).

- **Follow up**

The counsellor reviews the outcomes of the counselling process and makes recommendations and provision for future intervention where it is deemed necessary (Savickas et al., 2009).

#### **2.4.4.5. Life design process in adolescence**

Decision-making is named as an inevitable developmental task faced by adolescents in section 1.9.2. Important choices pertaining to careers are some of the many life decisions negotiated in adolescence. Savickas et al. (2009) stress that every day experiences provide the context in which these decisions are made. Decision-

making contexts are heterogeneous and culture-dependent according to Schlegel (2000). The freedom of choice and parental input given to individuals varies from culture to culture.

Phillips, Christopher-Sisk and Gravine (2001) emphasise the consultative nature of the decision-making process in adolescence. As such, adolescents do not make life decisions independently and in isolation. The relational aspect of the decision-making process is advocated as individuals seek out support and guidance from significant people in their lives before choices are made and career-related transitions are negotiated. This is re-iterated by Young, Marshall, Domene, Arato-Bolivar, Hayoun, and Marshall (2006) who stress that career-related decisions in particular, are collaborative processes between adolescents and their parents. In addition, the role peers play in this decision-making process was previously acknowledged (Young, Antal, Bassett, Post, Devries, & Valach, 1999).

Vanhalakka-Ruoho (2010) analysed 146 narratives written by ninth grade learners from four schools in Finland. The author concluded that individuals develop life-designing skills from exploratory learning experiences that are shared with others through reflective discussions. *When adolescents design their career and life-course, they act as partners in a variety of relationships* (Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2010, p. 112). The essence of this statement is captured in the proposition made by Savickas (2005) and Savickas et al. (2009) who argue that narratives potentially shed light on the life constructions people make and develop an understanding of the context in which these constructions take place. Further to this, the authors advocate that narratives also identify significant people used in the collaborative, career-design process.

## **2.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF MY STUDY**

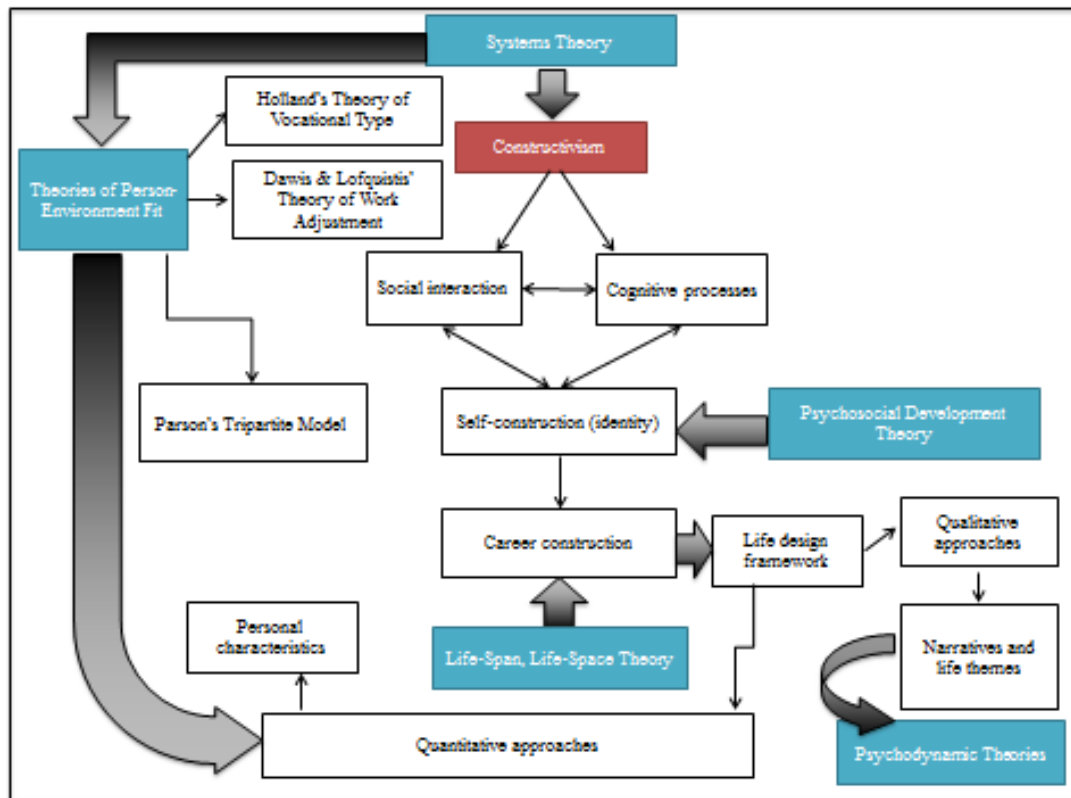
It is widely accepted that individuals of all ages have career needs and concerns because of the nature of contemporary society (Rafael, 2007). This was mentioned in section 2.2. For example, older people now have an increased life expectancy and have career needs and expectations that extend later into life. Rafael (2007) named the effective management of change as an important task in career psychology as individuals face ongoing changes in the world of work; changes in their respective views regarding the role work plays in their lives; and changes in their needs, values and expectations. Employees inevitably need to balance the various domains in their lives particularly the interactions that take place between their work and family life

given the flexible and temporary nature of their jobs in contemporary society (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013). Furthermore, the meaning work holds in one's life varies from person to person (Ferreira Marques, 1998; Herriot, 2001) and changes over time in the same individual (Herriot, 2001).

Given the unpredictable nature of the world and the many changes individuals now face, it is unlikely that a single theory is adequate for offering comprehensive explanations for career behaviour and a framework for career interventions. Savickas and Lent (1994) support the convergence of different theoretical perspectives as they inevitably have common elements or are seen to complement each other. In so doing it is more likely that answers to complex questions pertaining to the field of career psychology can be provided. Rafael (2007) maintains that these answers need to be multi-linear and inter-linear, as linear answers will not suffice in answering complex career questions. This understanding is useful in that it underpins the theoretical framework of my intended study.

Constructivism was named at the main theoretical framework underpinning my study in section 1.10.2. A multi-linear approach was adopted in formulating the my overall theoretical framework by converging (as far as possible) developmental systems theory, theories of person-environment fit, lifespan, life-space theory, psychodynamic theories and psychosocial development theory with each other and with constructivism. This process is conceptualised in the following diagram:

**Figure 2.3: Graphical representation of my theoretical framework**



(Compiled by the researcher)

Relevant aspects of the main theories that inform the theoretical framework of my study will now be discussed. Where possible these primary facets will be augmented with each other and with the overriding meta-theory of my framework, namely constructivism. In essence the theoretical framework of my proposed study is underpinned by Savickas' conceptual framework that I intend drawing on to interpret my data.

### 2.5.1. Developmental Systems Theory

Norbert Weiner (1961) and Ludwig von Bertalanfy (1968) were the earliest system theorists (Sinnott, 1987). Systems are defined as *a network of related components and processes which work as a whole* (Sinnott, 1987, p. 3, 4). Linkage or interaction is named as an important feature of systems, i.e. whatever influences one part of the system influences the whole system. Patton and McMahon (2006b, p. 154) argue there are *a range of interpersonal influences on career development, such as personality, ability, gender and sexual orientation* within each individual system. Systems are also interconnected and interact with other systems. The influence

broader environmental and societal systems have on individual systems is acknowledged in the relationships systems share with one another (Patton & McMahon, 2006b). Sinnott (1987) describes the results of the interactions between systems in terms of resulting states of equilibrium or balance. Feedback from within leads to homeostasis or equilibrium within the system, whereas feedback from without the system leads to balance between systems. All systems have boundaries but these should not be overly permeable as this will inevitably result in the system merging with other systems.

### **2.5.2. Theories of person-environment fit**

Super (1981) classified the initial theories of career development that spanned the first 75 years of inception, starting in the early 1920s, into three categories. Person-environment fit theories fall into the first category. The categories are divided into the following:

- Those that match people and occupations.
- Those that describe development leading to matching.
- Those that focus on decision-making.

(Herr, 1986)

A primary assumption of all person-environment fit theories is that people shape their environments and their environments shape them (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). In this context, people and their environments are seen as systems. Interactions take place between these systems so that each extracts the required reinforcers from the other (Dawis, 1996). Traces of systems theory are inherent in this.

Incongruence between people and their environments can be avoided by effectively matching people and their environments (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). These matching processes are also useful in predicting the extent of congruency between individuals and the contexts in which they function.

The following three theories of person-environment fit will now be discussed (according to Holland, Dawis and Lofquist, and Parsons):

#### **2.5.2.1. Holland's theory of vocational types**

The theory of vocational type emphasises the vocational choices individuals make (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). Six personality types, namely artistic, conventional,



enterprising, investigative, realistic or social are named. Most people can be classified in some distribution across three of the personality types and are not necessarily classified as one particular type.

Environments are categorised into the corresponding classification of personality to facilitate the matching and prediction process (Rafael, 2007). The assumption is that people select contexts that others with similar values and interest seek. Effective career counselling or guidance ultimately results in congruent matching between personality style and the characteristics of the work or educational setting (Herr, 1986). Some individuals are better matched to some environments and some environments are better matched to some individuals (Gottfredson & Johnston, 2009).

#### **2.5.2.2. Dawis and Lofquist's theory of work adjustment**

According to this theory, work is seen as an interaction between an individual and a work environment in which each has requirements of the other. The work has requirements to be met and the worker brings skills to perform the tasks specified by the job at hand. In return, compensation is given to the individual for work performance. Other employee requirements include a safe work environment; a comfortable place of work a competent supervisor; and opportunities for achievement. Interaction is maintained as long as the environment and the individual continue to meet each other's requirements. This forms that basis of work adjustment that is defined as *the mutual responsiveness of the worker and the work environment to each other's requirements* (Dawis & Lofquist, 1969, as cited in Dawis, Lofquist & Lloyd, 1981, p. 9).

Vocational or work adjustment is emphasised in Dawis and Lofquist's theory (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). The following implications for job satisfaction are derived from the concept of work adjustment:

- Job satisfaction can be predicted from the correspondence between the reinforcers provided by the work environment and an individual's needs. This prediction will be more accurate if the worker is competent and seen to meet the job requirements.
- It is possible to name the required work reinforcers when the needs of workers are known.

- The converse applies, namely: when the reinforce patterns of the work environment and the satisfaction levels of established workers in each of the environments are known, it is possible to infer the needs and values of these workers.
- Knowledge of job satisfaction will improve the prediction of worker performance and productivity from the correspondence between worker needs and reinforcers provided by the work environment.

(Dawis & Lofquist, 1981)

Dawis and Lofquist (1969) therefore view satisfaction as a function of the correspondence between the reinforce system of the work environment and the individual's needs, provided that the individual's abilities correspond with the ability requirements of the work environment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1981).

### **2.5.2.3. Parsons' tripartite model**

Swanson and Fouad (1999) explain that Parsons' tripartite model, which incorporates three steps in the vocational guidance process (to be defined below), is not focused on development. Instead, emphasis is placed on identifying and describing the factors or traits that account for individual differences in learning or in job performance. The origins lie in differential psychology and have been shaped by the psychometric or testing movement in vocational guidance. This suggests that individuals have characteristics or have a constellation of traits that can be observed and measured. In the same vein, different occupations can be described in terms of their unique requirements for different combinations or quantities of these individual traits (Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

Parsons (1909) specifies three steps necessary in the process of vocational guidance for individuals:

- Obtaining a clear understanding of themselves, their aptitudes, interests, resources, limitations, and other qualities.
- Acquiring knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work.

- Individual patterns of traits and the job requirements can be profiled. When the profiles are compared or matched, it is then possible to identify what the individual can do, or has the potential to do, and what the job requires the person to do if he or she is to be successful or satisfied in that situation. True reasoning (or decision-making) is used to determine the relationship between these two sets of facts.

(Herr, 1986)

Parsons' (1909) model advocates that individuals possess unique, measurable characteristics (Maree & Beck, 2004). Tests and inventories to assess individual characteristics have been developed in response to this. Job analyses and occupational aptitude profiles are used to create classifications of occupational information, and the formulation of predictive systems for assessing the weight or the importance of individual traits in the accomplishment of various occupational tasks. Test results are used to match careers that have specified employee characteristics: the more effective the match between the person and the career, the greater the possibility for success. Knowledge of self, knowledge of the world of work and true reasoning are prerequisites for success in this regard. True reasoning as a cognitive process is advocated above emotions. Quantitative measures are used to discover facts and personal values are excluded (Maree & Beck, 2004).

### **2.5.3. Lifespan, life-space theory**

As discussed in section 2.4.2, Super's (1957, 1990) lifespan, life-space theory is the most widely recognised approach that sees career development as a lifelong process starting in childhood and extending across an individual's entire lifespan. The developmental tasks identified by Super, namely growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline, take place in five periods across the lifespan (Herr, 1986). Each of these is divided into substages that identify developmental tasks the individual must confront and master for effective career development. Difficulties completing tasks associated with particular life stages, will inevitably affect an individual's ability to cope with later developmental tasks, ultimately resulting in impaired career development (Super, 1990). The author maintains that vocational maturity potentially develops through exploration (between the ages of 14 and 24) as individuals become playful, gather information about careers, and start making

decisions about their futures. Participation in the work role is seen as one of many life roles giving people the opportunity to develop (Super, 1957; Super, Savickas & Super, 1996).

Lifespan, life-space theories extend trait-factor-approaches by viewing occupational choice as a process as opposed to a specific act (Herr, 1986). This is achieved by emphasising that career development takes place across an individual's lifespan instead of confining it to a particular point in time. The roots of this process lie in early childhood and reoccur throughout one's lifespan as individuals adopt various life roles.

Life roles are seen to play out in real life theatres where career narratives take place (Chen, 2007). Grounded within the developmental systems approach, the author argues that individuals seldom act alone since narratives often involve significant others. Contextual factors are such as institutional, social, and economic variables are also seen to impact on career narratives (Savickas, 2002a; Super, 1957; Super et al., 1996). In addition, the importance of exploring cultural diversity and family influence are emphasised as important overt attempts to appreciate the uniqueness of clients and their respective cultures (Chope & Consoli, 2007).

#### **2.5.4. Psychodynamic theories**

Freud's (1900, 1915) psychodynamic theory identifies three components of the mind, namely the unconscious, the pre-conscious, and the conscious (Saavedra et al., 1980). The unconscious stores repressed memories of traumatic or unpleasant experiences as well as unfulfilled wishes or desires. These remain buried in the unconscious and do not emerge in the conscious mind. The content of the unconscious mind is generally inaccessible. The conscious mind consists of mental images available to the mind at any given time. The pre-conscious mind is an intermediate area between the conscious and the unconscious that stores the memories of experiences, images, feelings and ideas that had once been in the conscious mind but no longer are.

The link between psychodynamic approaches and career construction theory will be made in section 2.5.6.2. In essence, psychodynamic approaches are relevant in career construction theories in that they both advocate the use of early life stories in the counselling process.

### 2.5.5. Psychosocial development theory

Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development names identity formation as the primary developmental task as individuals move from adolescence to early adulthood (Stringer, Kerpelman & Skorikov, 2011). The authors explain how the theory presents human development as a series of conflicts or developmental crises with corresponding strengths and weaknesses that need to be negotiated by individuals. Crisis in this context has a developmental undertone which denotes turning points of increased vulnerability or heightened potential (Light, 1973). Each of the following stages challenges new growth and provides opportunities for past weaknesses and defences to be overcome.

- Basic trust vs mistrust
- Autonomy vs shame and doubt
- Initiative vs guilt
- Industry vs inferiority
- Identity vs identity diffusion (role confusion)
- Intimacy vs isolation (Light, 1973).

Identity formation takes place in more than one context including career and relationships. Career identity is defined as: *the sense of self derived from one's development of an occupational career and is an important component of one's overall identity* (Stringer et al., 2011, p. 158). Erikson argues that without gratifying work, or with a negative career identity, career transitions are inevitably challenging.

### 2.5.6. Constructivism

According to Gergen (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2005), constructivism has altered the nature of educational psychology by challenging established notions of the learning process. Constructivism advocates that learning takes place through a continual process of constructing, interpreting and modifying learners' representations of reality based on their own experiences as opposed to a static process of discovering facts through scientific endeavours (Creswell 2003; Donald et al., 2005). As such, learning is seen as an active process that engages learners' attention when they take part in constructing knowledge (Hedberg, 2003). Learners have the potential to make

meaning of their social and physical environment by actively engaging in the learning process (Collins 2003; Donald, et al., 2005). The authors maintain that this can be achieved when learners take part in experiences, activities, and in discussions. In so doing learners have the potential to reach a more comprehensive understanding of these environments and are then able to adapt to the demands of the world in progressively more effective ways.

Systems theory and constructivism are related in perceiving individuals as systems *within which is depicted a range of interpersonal influences on career development, such as personality, ability, gender and sexual orientation* (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 154). Moreover, individual systems are human systems that operate interdependently with other systems (Patton, 2007). The author furthermore maintains that learning takes place through complex, dynamic processes between the afore-mentioned systems.

#### **2.5.6.1. Self-construction theory**

Constructivism advocates that knowledge (what individuals know) and self-identity (who individuals are) are constructed through discourse in social interactions (Savickas et al., 2009). Cerebral processes are inherent in the afore-mentioned interactions, i.e. individuals are encouraged to think about what they know and who they are in dialogue with other people. These cerebral processes have the potential ultimately to motivate individuals to make choices and engage in activities in a range of life roles and domains that reflect their self-concepts. As such, self-identity is not seen as a fixed entity but can potentially change as individuals imagine *possible selves* through active participation in new experiences; particularly through the feedback they receive from other people (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 242). This conceptualisation forms the foundation of Guichard's (2005) self-constructing theory and extends developmental theories that see identity formation unfolding as individuals move through fixed stages in a linear order. Self-construction theory, on the other hand, sees individuals actively constructing themselves through discourse in social interaction. Co-construction as opposed to individual construction of the self takes place in the various interactions that take place between people in their social groups and the communities in which they live (Savickas, 2011d). The author conceptualises the self as a project that is essentially a process of interpersonal construction.

### 2.5.6.2. Career construction theory

Maree (2013a) points out that career construction theory merges different theoretical perspectives by integrating narrative (including psychodynamic) approaches with differential and developmental perspectives. Traces of developmental approaches are noted in career construction theory in acknowledging various life roles across an individual's lifespan (Savickas, 2005). "Worker" is seen as one role in an array of life roles (Hartung, 2007). Aspects of Bordin's psychodynamic model of career choice and satisfaction are noted in this conceptualisation of the work role in considering individuals as a whole and not only as their role as a worker (Rafael, 2007).

Career identity is defined in Erikson's psychosocial developmental theory (1968) as the *sense of self derived from one's occupational career* (Stringer et al., 2011, p. 158). Work experiences give individuals the opportunity to develop various competencies, clarify interests and establish value systems (Guichard, 2012). It is therefore possible that the activity of working can transform individuals.

Career construction is less general than self-construction in that the former only focuses on the construction of an identity derived from one's career (Savickas, 2005, 2010a; Di Fabio & Maree, 2013). Savickas (1997) urges individuals to see work as a *quest for self* (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008, p. 319). This quest is seen as one aspect of self-identity (Maree, 2013a). This is achieved when individuals have a sense of personal achievement through their work efforts and make valuable social contributions through work endeavours (Savickas, 2002a; 2005). Counselling practises are seen as processes aimed at supporting an individual's self-concept through participation in a work role (Savickas, 2001).

Individuals will inevitably find career transitions difficult to manage if they have negative career identities or have work that is not gratifying. Underpinned by self-construction principles, the primary question individuals strive to answer is: "What gives them meaning in their lives?" (Guichard, 2010, as cited in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013). The author formulates the less general question asked in career construction theory as: "What does career mean in an individual's life?"

According to career construction theory, careers develop over time as individuals attribute meaning to their respective work experiences (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013). Moreover, the transitions through the various life roles are seen as a

dynamic, fluid process of meaning-making as opposed to a linear, fixed process of information gathering (Hartung, 2007). The non-linear nature of career construction theory is in essence an exploratory process wherein individuals explore themselves, their respective environments, and the relationship between the self and the environment (Guichard, 2005; Guichard & Dumora, 2008). As such, career construction theory updates and advances salient features of the lifespan, life-space theory. Career identities and ultimately self-identities develop through interpretive and interpersonal processes that individuals experience as they are driven to adapt to the environment (Usinger & Smith, 2010). These processes are described in the following four dimensions of vocational development implicit in career constructivism:

- **Life structure**

Career constructivism extends lifespan, life-space approaches by emphasising that the work role is not necessarily the most important role but is viewed as one of many life roles. It is important for individuals to consider the relative importance they ascribe to each of these roles over their lifespans.

- **Career adaptability**

Career adaptability is defined as one's ability to foresee changes in one's career and to perceive one's future embedded in a context characterised by further, ongoing changes (Savickas 1996, 2011d). Savickas (2002a) names the career adaptability model as a useful conceptual framework for career intervention strategies (Hartung et al., 2008). The approach focuses on the coping strategies individuals use in dealing with developmental tasks and role transitions over the span of their lives (Hartung, 2007). Reference is made here to the coping mechanisms individuals use to manage developmental tasks and role transitions with the accompanying challenges they face in the world of work. This incorporates and advances Super's (1990) developmental stages. Success in each stage builds an important foundation for mastery in the next stage by making individuals more adaptable to future changes and transitions. Savickas (2010c) avers that career counselling interventions should strive to increase clients' career



adaptability in terms of the amount of concern they express for their careers; the extent to which they feel they are in control of their careers; the level of curiosity they express regarding their career options; and the level of confidence they having in making suitable career choices.

- **Thematic life stories**

The theories of self-construction and career construction are translated into practice using the narrative paradigm incorporated into life-design intervention frameworks (Savickas et al., 2009). The importance of uncovering why individuals make particular career choices or move in chosen career directions is emphasised through story telling. Narration or story telling is seen as the most natural way to express the innate structure of personal lives (Barresi & Juckes, 1997). Di Fabio and Maree (2013) define stories as meaning that individuals attribute to their experiences. The authors explain how the story telling process potentially enables individuals to achieve an authentic sense of self. This is achieved through narrating cohesive storylines that help individuals understand who they are and who they want to be (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015). In so doing, the self-construction process is realised. New narratives develop in response to changes or transitions (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015). These ultimately serve to preserve an individual's identity (Savickas, 2011a).

Life themes inherent in stories told could give individuals insight into what is meaningful in their lives and can uncover the motivations and drives that influence the decisions they make in life (Hartung, 2007). Counsellors have a crucial role in helping their clients identify their respective life themes and ultimately to use their stories to negotiate transitions and build possible futures (Savickas, 2011d; Di Fabio & Maree, 2013). "Biographicity" is the term used to denote this key concept of career construction theory.

Components of systems theory are incorporated into the story-telling process as individuals socially construct narratives as they interact with others (Combs & Freedman, 1994). The systems theory framework recognises numerous diverse and often complex factors (systems) that interact with each other and ultimately influence the careers of individuals

(Stebleton, 2010). Feedback generated through these interactions ultimately shape and reshape individuals in a circular, rather than a linear, manner (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015). Interests, personality, beliefs, values, and ethnicity are named as overlapping components of the intrapersonal system by the authors. The importance of significant relationships is emphasised on an increasing basis in the field of career-related research (Richardson, 2004; Schultheiss, 2003) and in the life-design process of the youth (Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2010). Life design frameworks conceptualise relationships as a subset of social, historical and cultural contexts. These contexts include an individual's relational network. More specifically, Stebleton (2010) identifies parents and peer group influences as integral components of the social (relational) system. The findings of a study conducted by Pizzorno, Benozzo, Fina, Sabato and Scopesi (2014) concluded that career stories are constructed by individuals and are co-constructed with parents. The authors assert that career is in essence a *family undertaking* as career stories are *unequally constrained by the power imbalances enacted in the family* (Pizzorno et al., 2014, p. 429). Further to this, geographical location, socio-economic circumstances and globalisation are elements of the environmental-societal system (Stebleton, 2010). Implicit in the identification of the afore-mentioned systems is the fact that individuals involve and make use of other people as they design their careers (Phillips et al., 2001).

Narrations or self-narrations describe individuals' perceptions of themselves and their world (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015). The authors explain that individual identities and self-narratives develop through interactions and are embedded in a particular social, historical and cultural context. Life roles are enacted in real life theatres such as the family, school and work. These provide the context where career narratives take place (Chen, 2007).

The self is inextricably linked to the feedback received from an audience within the context of narratives (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015). Del Corso and Briddick (2015, p. 255) define an audience as *the critical people in the client's life*. The authors identify parents or caregivers as the first audience followed by the extended family, teachers and friends. Peers

become significant audience members in adolescence. Counsellors are also viewed as a potential audience (Savickas, 2005, 2011a) by serving as observers who are attentive to details of clients' stories (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015).

Traces of psychodynamic theories are also inherent in the story-telling process as subjective perspectives (Hartung, 2007), while past stories (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015) are acknowledged and recognised in the career construction process. Del Corso and Briddick (2015) explain that narrations of past audience members facilitate the identification of their authentic selves. As such, development is seen as a function of *parent-child relationships, childhood memories [and] family* (Hartung, 2007, p. 106). In so doing, emphasis is placed on conscious and unconscious aspects of the human mind (Rafael, 2007). In particular, recollections of early childhood memories are named as important determining factors when individuals make decisions and choices in their lives (Maree, 2013a). Di Fabio and Maree (2013) describe career construction theory as a dynamic model that integrates meanings people ascribe to experiences, past memories and future aspirations, into life themes.

Rafael (2007) argues that it is important to analyse the individual's entire history in the counselling process to understand how they visualise themselves. Career counsellors should be attentive to client's subjective perceptions of facts narrated instead of focusing on facts per se (Savickas, 2001).

- **Personality style**

Over and above having an understanding of the world of work and knowing one's story, Savickas (2008) maintains that individuals need to have a clear picture of themselves (Maree, 2009). It is therefore useful to know what abilities, needs, values and interests are incorporated into one's personality style and ultimately form part of one's self-concept. Quantitative approaches used in Parsons' trait-factor theory could therefore be useful in getting this information (Rafael, 2007). Patton (2007) argues that the integration of these quantitative techniques with qualitative ones authenticates the counselling process. Inclusive approaches are promoted to

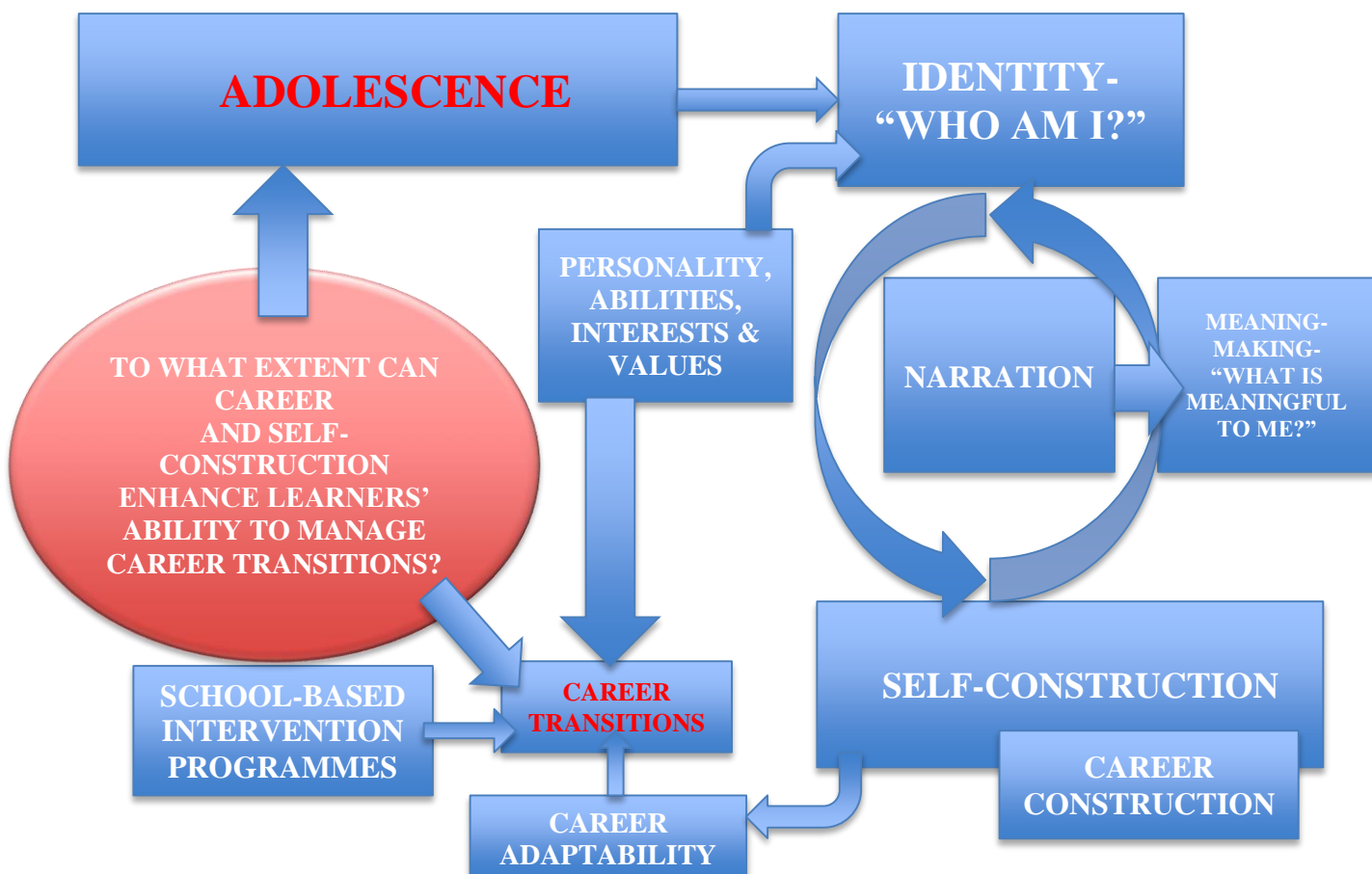
enrich the counselling process (Maree, 2010b). Depth is therefore added to theories that combine these approaches which are, in essence, seen to complement each other.

(Hartung, 2007)

## 2.6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Basically, the conceptual framework of a study links key concepts or principles with the intention of ultimately explaining events that unfold in the research process (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2011). The research questions asked in section 1.6. directed the design of my conceptual framework. Underpinned by theories relating to my research topic, my conceptual framework illustrates the development of my thoughts and ultimately links the key concepts in my study with one another. The following visual representation illustrates this progression:

**Figure 2.4: Visual representation of the conceptual framework**



(Compiled by the researcher)

The initial conceptualisation of my study took place within the context of my work with adolescents as a career counsellor and my desire to explore alternative and possibly more effective ways of helping them manage career transitions. Current school-based career support programmes are analysed to determine the extent to which they address the career needs of learners.

Technological advances and globalisation characteristics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century necessitate that individuals ask more complex career questions in response to an ever-changing world. The incorporation of several theories in my conceptual framework is supported by Savickas and Lent (1994) who argue that more than one theory is inevitably needed when answering the afore-mentioned questions.

My study is restricted to the domain of adolescence. Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development names identity formation as a primary developmental task in adolescence. This concept is inherent in Super's (1957, 1990) developmental approach to vocational choice when he discusses the exploratory stage of life that takes place between the ages of 14 and 24 years. Developmental theories are of interest to me as they facilitate my understanding of adolescence and the corresponding challenges faced as career transitions are negotiated. The quest to gather information about themselves continues in this developmental stage as adolescents strive to establish their sense of self or self-view by attempting to answer the question, "Who am I?" Answers to this question are sought in conjunction with information gathered about the world of work as individuals become increasingly interested in this arena of life.

Traces of systems theory are inherent in the emphasis Erikson places on the social aspect of identity formation. That is, he acknowledges that people are embedded in broader contexts in which various life roles are assumed. Cohen-Scali (2014) states that individuals rely on perceptions they have regarding how they think other people see them in the identity construction process. It is useful to incorporate lifespan, life-space career development theories as a reminder that the work role should not be the exclusive focus of my study. The work role needs to be conceptualised as one of many life roles (Hartung, 2007). Emphasis is then placed on how individuals develop over time in relation to the meaning they give to work.

Niles (2003) states that it is helpful but not sufficient to impart information to clients through the use of standardised tests. Savickas (2008) agrees that it is useful to know what personality traits, needs, values and interests are part of one's self-concept

(Maree, 2009). The usefulness of quantitative approaches in Parsons' trait-factor theory in uncovering these components cannot be negated in my conceptual framework (Rafael, 2007). I am, however, reminded in considering lifespan, life-space developmental theories, that although person-environment fit theories acknowledge the reciprocal relationship between people and their environments, development takes place through an individual's lifespan and not at a specific point in time.

I am drawn to use constructivism as the main theory in my conceptual framework due to the premise that what people know and who they are (identities) develop through experiences and social discourse between people (Savickas et al., 2009). The notion that people and their environments shape each other resonates with systems theories and provides the link between people and their environments. Guichard's (2005) self-construction theory is grounded in constructivism and advocates that identities develop as individuals actively participate in social realms. Constructivism conceptualises identity as a self-construction process that develops over time into a life story life (McAdam, Josselson & Lieblich, 2011; Savickas, 2011b).

Savickas (1997c) and Pizzorno et al. (2014) name the career context as a potential domain in which identities can develop. The development of self in this context (career construction) takes place through new experiences and social exchanges in the world of work. In essence, the career story *helps a person define who she or he is and how she or he should act within a career context* (Meijer & Lengelle, 2012, p. 157). Career adaptability, or the coping mechanisms used to manage career challenges and transitions, is a useful concept to incorporate in my conceptual framework as it provides the link between people and their environments. The career intervention programme that will be implemented in my study aims at enhancing the career adaptability of participants.

The theories of self-construction and career construction are translated into practice using the narrative paradigm incorporated into life-design intervention frameworks (Savickas et al., 2009). The career intervention programme in my study encourages participants to narrate and become the authors of their life stories. Narrative approaches that conceptualise careers as stories, draw on systems theory by asserting that chapters in life stories are interrelated. Each chapter in an individual's life story builds on previous chapters and is related to future chapters as all life

experiences are intertwined (Maree, 2013a). That is, current experiences inevitably have an impact on future ones.

Psychodynamic approaches are also relevant in the narrative paradigm as the use of early life stories is encouraged in the narration process. Life design intervention frameworks ultimately encourage individuals to identify and reflect on what is meaningful in their lives as they attempt to manage significant and complex career transitions successfully.

## **2.7. CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE REVIEW**

The discussion in this chapter commenced with a summary of literature pertaining to the nature of the current world of work. The changing career needs of individuals in response to the demands made on them in the labour market were also highlighted in the literature. My understanding of the afore-mentioned topics was thereby enhanced. Furthermore, the information gained was used to inform some of the questions I asked in my study. It is however important to note that there is a limited amount of literature linking developments and changes in the world of work in the South African context, to the field of career psychology. This compels one to be cautious in generalising discussions of this nature across diverse contexts.

The evolution of career development theories is emphasised extensively in the literature I reviewed. Salient attributes of the various theoretical frameworks were clarified in this process. My understanding of how the different theoretical perspectives relate to one another also developed in analysing related literature. A comprehensive understanding of these theories was essential in informing my research questions further. Further to this, the data analysis process of my study took place against the background of these theories (see Chapter 5).

Theories of person-environment fit, lifespan, life-space theories, and postmodern theories of career construction (based on self-construction) are the main theoretical perspectives discussed in the literature I reviewed. Assertions made by Stead and Watson (1988), as well as Schultheiss and Van Esbroeck (2009) regarding the sustainability and relevance of traditional theoretical perspectives in the current world of work, resonate with my critique in that regard. More specifically, it is short-sighted to propose that suitably matching personal characteristics to job requirements will guarantee job satisfaction and career achievement given the unpredictable world of work as suggested by theories of person-environment fit. This is particularly true

when one considers the South African labour market, a market embedded in a third world country with a high unemployment rate. It is also unlikely that individuals will progress in a predictable sequence as a school-leaver, to work and ultimately to retirement in an unpredictable world, as advocated by lifespan, life-space theories. Postmodern theories of career construction that advance the afore-mentioned perspectives are more applicable in contexts that demand ongoing adaptations.

Working as an educational psychologist with learners from diverse backgrounds has prompted me to question the capacity of traditional, objective (positivist) career counselling practices, to address the needs of diverse groups of people. My criticism in that regard resonates with the sentiments expressed by Marsella (1998), Kim, Park and Park (2000), Maree, Bester, Lubbe and Beck (2001), McMahon and Patton (2002), Savickas (2003), as well as McMahon and Yuen (2009). The authors argue that objective testing in particular marginalises and disempowers certain population groups and disregard subjective experiences that are meaningful to clients. For example, until recently, traditional and more popular tests were only available to English and Afrikaans speaking people in South Africa (Maree, 2009).

I made reference to the findings of studies that discussed the importance of offering career development support in schools in my literature review. Maree and Beck (2004) highlight the plight of South African learners in terms of the availability, accessibility and lack of diversity that career support instruments currently offer them. Discussions of this nature, pertaining to the career development needs and corresponding support offered to South African learners, are limited in the literature I reviewed. I am in agreement with Maree (2009, p. 445) who argues that *research on the identification of appropriate assessment instruments for career counselling in South Africa's diverse context (and, indeed, in Africa in general) is in its infancy and needs to be broadened.*

It is essential to be aware of the existing gaps in literature as researchers endeavour to make meaningful contributions, particularly in terms of linking theory to practice in the field of career psychology.

## **2.8. CONCLUSIONS**

Updated theoretical frameworks in the field of career psychology have developed in response to the fundamental changes in the nature of the world of work



and the related challenges individuals face in meeting the demands they confront in that context. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning my study developed after literature pertaining to the former was reviewed. This exercise also highlighted how career related transitions are often stressful for learners who strive to manage them effectively in an ever-changing world. The benefits of offering support to learners in that regard is emphasised in the literature I analysed. After reviewing studies on the nature of school-based support strategies currently offered, it was apparent that they often fail to address the career development needs of learners adequately. My study focuses on the extent to which a specific school-based intervention programme helps learners from diverse backgrounds manage career-related transitions. As such, it has the potential to add to the existing body of literature. Having discussed the literature I reviewed throughout my study, the following chapter discusses the research design and methodology I used.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGIES**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of my study is to explore the extent to which a Life Orientation programme based on career and self-construction can help learners from diverse backgrounds manage career transitions. Literature pertaining to developmental systems theory, theories of person-environment fit, lifespan, life-space theory, psychodynamic theories and psychosocial development theory, is reviewed in Chapter 2. These theoretical frameworks were converged, as far as possible, with constructivism: the main theoretical framework underpinning my study. This chapter covers a discussion of the underlying research paradigm that frames the research design chosen for my study. In this chapter the methods used in the data collection process are justified, and an overview of the actual processes used in this regard is given. The data analysis process is explained and issues relating to the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of my study are discussed. My role as researcher is described. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations as well as the methodological limitations of my study.

### **3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is described as *a plan or strategy moving from underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used, and the data analysis to be done* (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 70). Lee (1991) maintains that it is crucial to consider the aims of the research enquiry at hand, the anticipated role of the researcher, as well as the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participants, when choosing the research methodology. Quantitative designs are more suitable when dealing with numerical measurements of specific aspects of the phenomenon at hand (Creswell, 2005). The author contrasts this with qualitative modes of inquiry that are more appropriate to use when trying to understand phenomena in terms of the meanings individuals attribute to them.

#### **3.2.1. Mixed-methods research design**

Qualitative approaches focus on understanding the complex processes inherent in life stories as well as the social and cultural contexts of human behaviour (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The question I asked in section 1.6.2.1, dealing with the extent

to which schools strive to meet learners' career needs, necessitates that qualitative data is gathered to unlock the meaning infused in the responses (stories) related in that regard (see section 2.4.3). Qualitative data was useful in striving to answer the sub-questions asked in sections 1.6.2.2, 1.6.2.3, and 1.6.2.4 pertaining to self-construction and career construction.

Quantitative data obtained from the results of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) was used to complement the afore-mentioned qualitative data by providing statistics on the extent to which the intervention programme I implemented in my study affected the career adaptability of learners. These data were ultimately used to answer the sub-question asked in section 1.6.2.4.

Creswell (2003; 2005) defines approaches that collect, analyse and report on quantitative and qualitative data as *mixed method research studies*. Social scientists are encouraged to use a combination of these data methods because social phenomena are integrated and are less likely to be fully understood using a single approach (Marais, 2012a). Ivankova, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 263) contend that mixed method designs offer *a more elaborate approach to the research problem and will produce its deeper understanding*. These research approaches are seen to be more sophisticated in that they necessitate the inclusion of inductive and deductive reasoning processes affording the researcher the opportunity to draw on the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2003).

### **3.2.2. Case study design**

Edwards and Talbot (1999) define a case study as a unit of analysis comprising of an individual or work team that has a set of inter-relationships binding them together and enabling them to interact with the world. Case studies observe the *effects in real contexts, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effect* (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001, p. 181). Furthermore, case studies are in-depth investigations of specified characteristics of a programme, event or activity carried out individually or in groups over a period of time (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The research design in my study is a case study focusing on the career transition experiences of Grade 11 learners in two contrasting educational settings, before and after two groups from the respective settings participated in a career intervention programme that is based on career and self-construction, and

another two groups which continued to participate in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons offered by their schools.

### **3.2.3. Experimental design**

An experimental design is described as the most effective way to examine the causal effect of an isolated variable on something (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). An intervention programme, characterised by career and self- construction principles, is identified as the isolated variable and was made available to two experimental groups, namely, a Grade 11 class in Penryn College and Mthombo High School respectively. Two other Grade 11 classes from these schools served as comparison groups that did not participate in the intervention programme but continued to participate in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons offered by their schools.

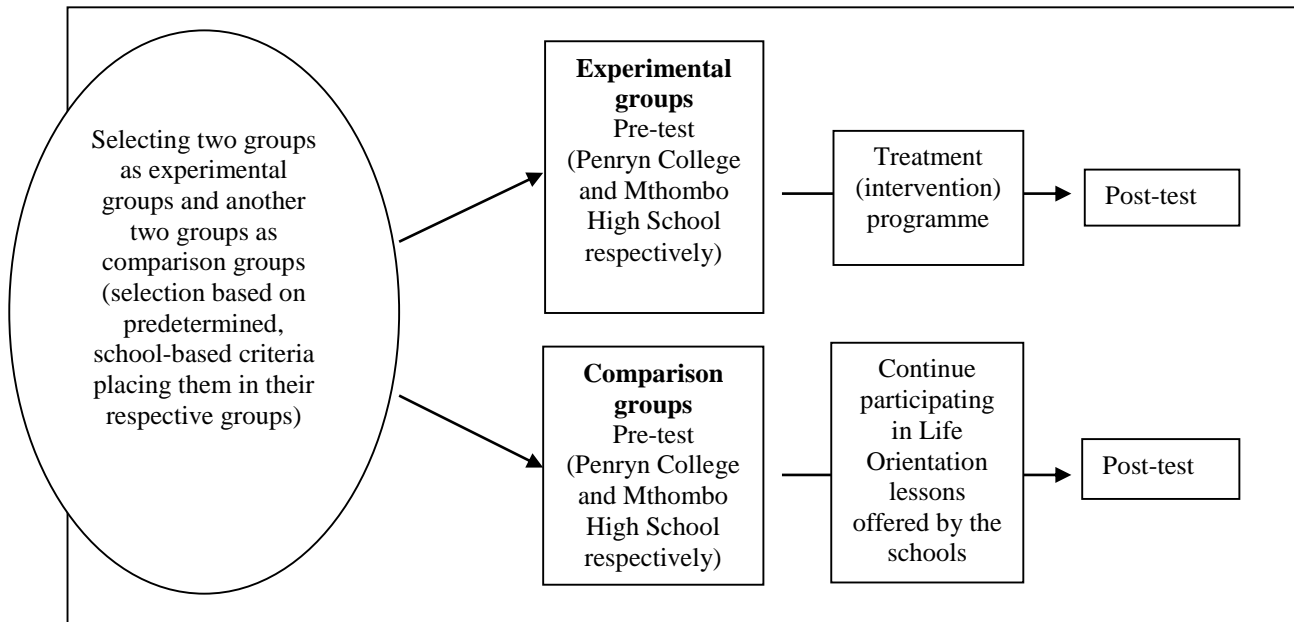
More specifically a *quasi-experimental, pre-test/post-test comparison group design* was used in my study to determine the extent of change in the career adaptability of the participants who were exposed to the aforementioned intervention programme compared to the extent of change in this regard in participants who took part in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons. Two diverse sample groups from Penryn College and Mthombo High School constituted the experimental groups. Two other Grade 11 classes from these schools were selected as participants in the comparison groups in my study. Intervention occurred in both experimental groups of participants in the form of a career and self-construction programme that was implemented during Life Orientation lessons. Learners in the comparison groups participated in the Life Orientation lessons presented by their teachers.

The design for my study is not a true experimental design in that the learners in the afore-mentioned groups were not randomly selected due to predetermined, school-based criteria placing them in their respective groups (namely, their classes). Although the individual participants were not randomly selected, the Grade 11 classes that were chosen were randomly selected.

The dependent variables for all participants were their respective career adaptability scores. These scores were obtained by administering the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) before and after the implementation of the intervention programme (see section 3.3.2). The answer to whether or not this intervention had an effect compared to the standard, traditional Life Orientation

lessons was obtained by comparing the differences between the pre- and post-test CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) scores for each of the four groups from the two schools in my study. This process is outlined in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1: The pre-test/post-test comparison group design**



(Adapted from Maree & Pietersen, 2011:150)

### 3.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.3.1. Sampling

Non-probability sampling was used in my study. This sampling procedure is commonly used in educational settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Non-probability sampling does not include any form of random sampling (Maree & Pietersen, 2011).

More specifically, two specific types of non-probability sampling, namely convenience and purposive sampling, were utilised in my study. Convenience sampling is chosen when participants are selected because they are accessible. Participants in purposive sampling are selected as they are seen to represent characteristics that are of interest to the research topic at hand (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The authors state that in purposeful sampling, the researcher makes judgements regarding which subjects should be selected.

I worked with two groups of Grade 11 learners (boys and girls) from Penryn College and Mthombo High School respectively. These groups were selected, as I

was interested in exploring the career transition experiences of learners in contrasting educational settings, i.e. disadvantaged learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds following a state-based education system, and more privileged learners from higher socio-economic backgrounds in an independent school setting. Learners in Grade 11 were purposefully selected in my study as career preparation activities escalate in this grade according to themes covered in the Life Orientation curriculum (Department of Education, 2003). It was likely that these learners had numerous career needs due to the fact that provisional acceptance into South African universities is based on their academic performance in Grade 11. Learners from Penryn College were accessible to me as my educational psychological practice is based at this school. Learners from Mthombo High School were accessible to me through their affiliation to Penreach.

Written permission to conduct research at Penryn College and Mthombo High School was granted by the headmasters, Mr Chris Erasmus and Mr Sam Nkosi respectively. The Mpumalanga Department of Education also granted permission for me to conduct my research in Mthombo High School. I held informal meetings with the director of academics and head of the Life Orientation department at Penryn College, the CEO of Penreach, and the head of Life Orientation at Mthombo High School, to discuss any practical and unforeseen issues that could arise in implementing my intervention programme into the Grade 11 scheme of work for Life Orientation.

### **3.3.2. Data collection**

Quantitative and qualitative data were simultaneously collected and then integrated in striving to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem (Creswell, 2003). Scores from the *CAAS* (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) were analysed in conjunction with information obtained from qualitative data.

Qualitative data was generated from the focus group interviews conducted with all four groups and the responses in the reflective journals kept by the participants from the experimental groups from the two schools in my study. As such, I used a multi-method approach, as outlined in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Multi-method data collection plan**

| <b>Research design</b> | <b>Group</b>  | <b>Data-generating activity</b>  | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Method of documentation</b>              |
|------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Qualitative            | Experimental and comparison groups                        | Focus-group interviews (pre- and post-intervention)  | A sample of participants was selected from the experimental and comparison groups respectively to participate in focus group interviews | Audio-recording and verbatim transcriptions |
| Quantitative           | Experimental and comparison groups                        | Completion of the following questionnaire (pre- and post-intervention): CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) | Participants completed the questionnaire before and after the career intervention programme   | Responses taken from the questionnaire      |
| Qualitative            | Participants in the experimental groups from both schools | Journal entries  | Participants from the experimental groups were asked to record their reflections of their experiences of the intervention programme     | Written journal entries                     |

### **3.4. PLANNING FOR DATA ANALYSIS**

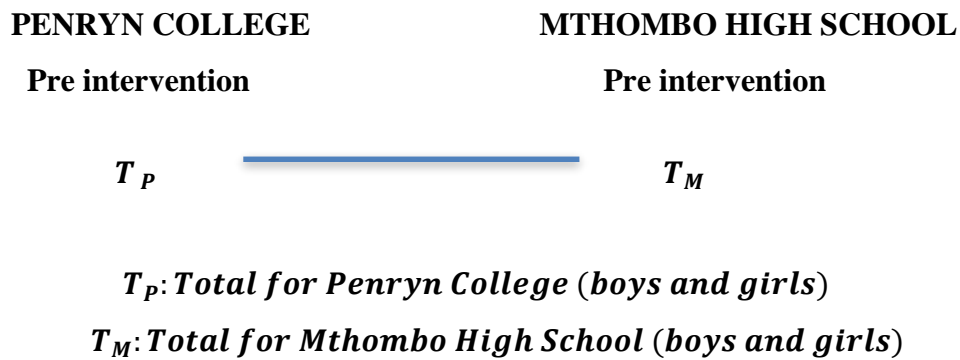
Data was gathered for individuals from two schools, namely Penryn College and Mthombo High School. Data analysis was carried out between and within schools by comparing the following:

**Between school comparisons of results (pre intervention)**

Whole school results (total for boys and girls) for Penryn College learners ( $T_P$ ) and whole school results (total for boys and girls) Mthombo High School learners ( $T_M$ )

This data analyses process is outlined in Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2: Pre intervention data analysis process (between school comparisons)**

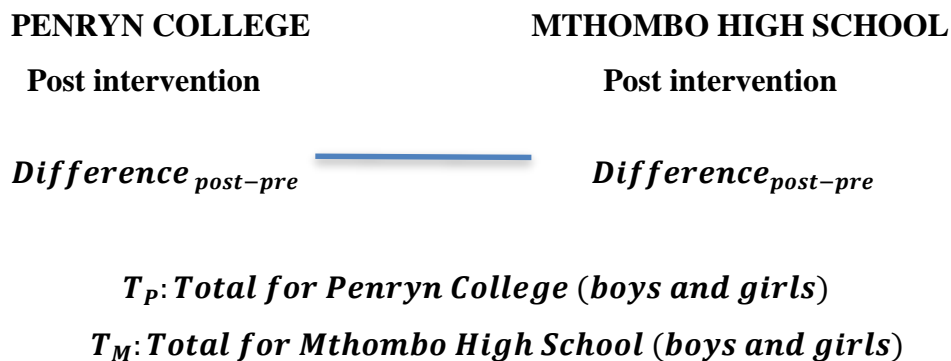


**Between and within school comparisons of the differences between the pre- and post intervention results**

Groups involved: Penryn College experimental group, Penryn College comparison group, Mthombo High School experimental group and Mthombo High School experimental group

This data analyses process is outlined in Figure 3.3.

**Figure 3.3: Post intervention data analysis process (between and within school comparisons)**





Classifying my research project as a mixed method research study necessitated that distinct quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques are used in striving to answer the research questions. These respective approaches to analysing the data generated by the data gathering techniques (see section 3.3.2) are now discussed.

#### **3.4.1. Quantitative data analysis**

The CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) was administered to all participants before and after the participants in the experimental groups participated in my intervention programme, generating data that was analysed using quantitative data analysis techniques. Statistical comparisons were made between the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) scores of the experimental- and comparison groups (*between-group comparisons*) *before and after the former groups take part in the intervention programme*. This was done to determine the extent to which the different groups of participants were “similar” pre-intervention (i.e. to detect possible bias). Furthermore, between-group comparisons took place when the differences between the pre- and post- intervention scores for all four groups in the respective schools were compared with each other.

The following statistical procedures and comparisons were carried out in collaboration with Department of Statistics from the University of Pretoria:

- One-way frequency tables were drawn up to summarise the distribution of the data and sample size
- Descriptive statistics regarding the means and standard deviations for pre- and post-intervention were described
- Two-way frequency tables were used when the relationships between variables were analysed.
- Inferential statistics was useful when further comparisons were made for data analysis purposes and between groups. Mann-Whitney U tests and the Kruskal-Wallis test were carried out.

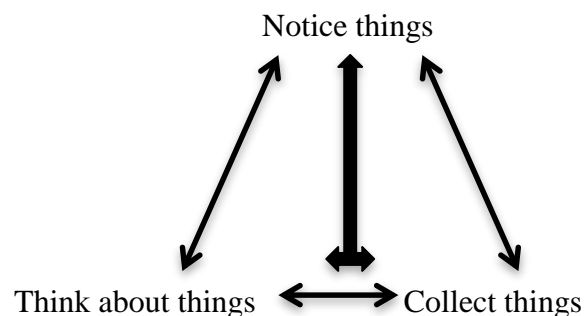
#### **3.4.2. Qualitative data reduction**

The qualitative data analysis processes focus on understanding how participants make meaning of a given phenomenon *by analysing their perceptions*,

*attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences* (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 99).

### 3.4.2.1. Data reduction

Further to this the Nieuwenhuis (2007) explains that inductive reasoning processes are used to generate research findings that emerge from the themes inherent in the qualitative data. Seidel's (1998) model is useful in explaining the ongoing and iterative, inductive reasoning processes that are used in my study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Information was gathered and organised by assigning codes that clustered the data into categories based on my reflections. The reflective journal I kept for the duration of the study is particularly helpful in this regard. The process of clustering data is depicted in the following diagram.



**Figure 3.4: Seidel's (1998) interim data analysis model**

(Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 100)

Creswell (2003) sees data analysis as a process consisting of specified steps with multiple levels of analysis. The qualitative data in my study was gathered from the pre- and post-intervention focus interviews and entries in the reflective journals kept by the participants in the experimental groups.

Content analysis is carried out when the researcher analyses the data from different angles to identify key concepts; particularly when narratives, journals and focus group interviews are used as data sources (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Content analysis was therefore useful in my study given the techniques I used to gather my data.

Narratives that were told during the focus group interviews were analysed using narrative analysis. Nieuwenhuis (2007) describes two procedures in narrative analysis that were useful in my study. Formal analysis focuses on the structure of the

participants' stories and examines how the story develops and where it begins and ends. Functional analysis pays careful attention to what is being told in the story. *Narrative strings* are common themes that are found in stories whereas *narrative themes* are the major themes that become apparent as the analysis process develops (Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 103). These themes were identified during the course of my study.

The data in my study were analysed according to the following six steps:

**Table 3.2: Qualitative data analysis techniques in my study**

| Steps | Data analysis technique   | Description of technique in my study  |
|-------|---|---|
| 1     | Organisation and preparation of data  | Relevant focus group interviews were transcribed and reflective journal material was identified   |
| 2     | Reading the data  | Obtained a general sense of the information gathered by reading and re-reading through all the data. Further entries were made in the researcher's journal with reflective notes and new understandings pertaining to the data. |
| 3     | Initial data analysis process using coding procedure                                  | Coding the afore-mentioned transcribed material and journal entries   |
| 4     | Identifying sub-themes and themes   | Combined related codes into themes or categories. Each category was labelled.   |
| 5     | Discussion of themes  | Discussed the findings of the analysis  |
| 6     | Interpretation of the data by discussing meanings attributed to the research findings | Integrated the research findings by drawing on the theoretical framework of the study   |

(Adapted from Creswell, 2003: 192; Nieuwenhuis, 2007: 103-105)

### 3.5. QUALITY ASSURANCE CRITERIA

Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that the two terms *reliability* and *validity* are congruent in qualitative research, since studies that are valid are inevitably reliable

as well. These authors propose that the term *trustworthiness* of a study should be used when referring to issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research. Since my study utilises a mixed-method research design, with quantitative and qualitative data, the terms *validity* and *reliability* are used when discussing quality criteria pertaining to the quantitative data, and the term *trustworthiness* is used in the context of qualitative data.

### 3.5.1. Quantitative quality assurance

#### 3.5.1.1. Reliability of quantitative data

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 244), reliability *refers to the consistency of measurement – the extent to which the results are similar over different forms of the same instrument or occasions of data collection*. I report on the reliability coefficient of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) as used in my study.

- **CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012)**

Harry and Coetzee (2013, p. 5) describe the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) *as a multi-factorial self-rating measure designed to assess career adaptability* (see section 1.9.3). The *CAAS-South African Form* consists of four scales. Each of these scales have six items that measure the following subscales: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. These subscales are *psychosocial resources for managing occupational transitions, developmental tasks and work traumas* (Maree, 2012a, p. 730). The *CAAS-International Form* contains 24 items that combine to yield a total score indicating career adaptability.

Maree (2012a) reports on the following psychometric properties of the *CAAS-South Africa* based on 435 Grade 9 and Grade 11 learners, with a mean age of 15.49 years (SD = 1.32), who took part in the test. Their participation was voluntary. Fifty-nine point percent of the participants were girls, 92.18% Africans, 7.36% Caucasians, .23% Asians, and .23% are from other races or are biracial. The participants came from three English-medium secondary schools in the Molopo area in Mafikeng. Two of the schools are public schools and one is a private school. All three schools are multiracial, with

English as the language of instruction. The mother tongue of the learners comprised one of the 11 official South African languages and one or more of other African languages. The test was administered in English as this was a language they all had in common. Participants were asked to answer each item on a scale from 1 (not strong) to 5 (strongest).

The total score for the *CAAS-International* has a reported reliability of .92, which is higher than the subscale scores for concern (.83), control (.74), curiosity (.79) and confidence (.85) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The reliabilities for the *CAAS-South Africa* are slightly lower than those for the total international sample. The reliability for the total score is .91, which is higher than the subscale scores for concern (.77), control (.71), curiosity (.78) and confidence (.80). Based on the results of the statistical analyses reported here, Maree (2012a) concludes that the *CAAS-South Africa* performs similarly to the *CAAS-International* in terms of reliability.

The *external* reliability of my study was addressed by selecting participants from two groups of learners, namely learners from varying educational backgrounds. In so doing data were collected on more than one occasion from different groups of participants. These data were cross-referenced to enhance their reliability over the different data collection stages. Further attempts to enhance the reliability of my study were potentially achieved by ascertaining the extent to which the data were consistent across the various data collection strategies that were used (see section 3.3.2).

Creswell (2003) brings to researcher's attention the lapses in time that could occur during an experimental treatment as such time frames that could be accompanied by events that are unrelated to the experimental treatment. Nevertheless, lapses in time could influence the outcome of a study. Tests that were used in my research were administered directly before the intervention programme and directly after it to minimise any potential threat of external influences on the reliability of the results.

The pre- and post-tests extended over a two-month period to learners in Grade 11. Avoiding long, drawn-out time periods for test administrations and the implementation of the intervention programme minimised the possibility of varying maturation levels that could have influenced the results of my study, and ultimately the inferential potential of the findings.

### 3.5.1.2. Validity of quantitative data

McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 239) define validity in quantitative data collection as *the extent to which inferences made on the basis of numerical scores are appropriate, meaningful, and useful*. The authors distinguish between external and internal validity. The former refers to the extent to which the research findings can be generalised across different settings and people. Internal validity addresses the extent to which extraneous variables are controlled for, allowing the researcher to report confidently that a causal relationship exists between the independent and dependent variable(s). I outline the potential threats to the internal and external validity of my study and specify the strategies that were undertaken to enhance the validity of my research in Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 respectively.

**Table 3.3: Steps that were taken to enhance the internal validity of quantitative data**

| <b>Threat</b>      | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Strategy</b>   |
|--------------------|--|---|
| History            | Events in addition to the intervention programme that occur between the pre- and post-test                                     | The pre-tests were administered directly before the participants took part in two-month intervention programme and directly after it  |
| Maturation         | Physical, emotional or intellectual changes in the participants that occur with time that can influence the results of a study | Participants were all Grade 11 learners. Data collection took place over two months in the same year.   |
| Research mortality | Individuals voluntarily withdrawing as participants in the study   | All the learners in four Grade 11 classes (two classes participated in my intervention programme and the remaining two served as comparison groups) were given the opportunity to participate in my study to increase the sample size. Although given |

|                                   |  |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|                                   |  | the option, no learners withdrew from the study.   |
| Testing or pre-test sensitisation | Exposure to the pre-test influencing the outcomes of the post-test   | Time between the pre- and post-testing could have been extended if necessary                     |
| Instrumentation                   | Different test forms or using different tests can influence findings | The same test, namely the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), was used in my study |

(Adapted from Creswell, 2003)

**Table 3.4: Steps that were taken to enhance the external validity of quantitative data**

| <b>Threat</b>       | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Strategy</b>   |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Temporal validity   | Limiting the generalisation of findings across different time frames                                     | Multiple comparisons of findings from different sources (triangulation) took place at different times (see section 3.4)                           |
| Population validity | Generalisability of findings is limited when the participants do not adequately represent the population | Individuals from diverse backgrounds were participants to be more representative of Grade 11 learners from different schools                      |
| Ecological validity | Limiting the generalisation of findings across settings  | Two contrasting settings were used, namely two schools with different educational backgrounds, to generalise the findings across similar contexts |

(Adapted from Creswell, 2003)

### 3.5.2. Qualitative data assurance

#### 3.5.2.1. Trustworthiness

Validity (trustworthiness) of qualitative designs is *the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher* (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 407). Four criteria that enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings are discussed by Creswell (2003), Nieuwenhuis (2007) and Thomas (2010).

- **Credibility**

Reference is made here to the extent to which the research findings are believable and trustworthy.

- **Transferability**

This refers to the extent to which the research findings can be generalised.

- **Dependability**

Merriam (2009, as cited in Thomas, 2010) describes dependability as the extent to which the researcher can replicate the research findings with similar participants in a similar research context.

- **Confirmability**

Research findings are confirmable when other people corroborate or confirm them.

The following strategies adapted from McMillan and Schumacher (2001), Nieuwenhuis (2007) and Thomas (2010), are used to enhance the afore-mentioned criteria for trustworthiness of my study.

**Table 3.5: Steps taken to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative data**

| Criteria      | Strategy             | Description  |
|---------------|----------------------|--|
| Dependability | Provision of context | The primary method of enhancing the trustworthiness of the qualitative data in my study is to provide a context within which the data are interpreted. The literature review in Chapter 2 is a preliminary context for that purpose. This context is expanded on during the course of my study with an ongoing review of |



|   |                                       |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
|   |                                       | literature pertaining to the research topic. I draw on this literature and the theoretical framework of my study when the research findings are interpreted.  |
| Dependability                                   | Ongoing field work                    | Data was collected over a period of two months. Interim data analysis and deliberation with participants took place to ensure that they confirmed that the findings are an accurate reflection of reality.  |
| Transferability, credibility and confirmability | Verbatim accounts                     | McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 409) state that <i>verbatim accounts of conversations, transcripts, and direct quotes</i> from participants are <i>highly valued as data</i> . By audio recording all the focus group interviews and then transcribing them, verbatim accounts of what the participants said, were obtained. Detailed accounts of learner's experiences, as suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2001), are also used. The afore-mentioned strategies potentially enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative data further. |
| Transferability, credibility and confirmability | Low inference descriptors             | Detailed accounts of events and explanations were recorded  |
| Dependability and confirmability                | Multiple researchers                  | The use of <i>expert evaluation</i> is advocated to enhance the trustworthiness of research findings (Thomas, 2010: 324). Interpretations were made in consultation with my supervisor, Professor J.G. Maree who is an internationally acclaimed researcher.  |
| Confirmability                                  | Mechanically recorded data            | Audio recorders were utilised   |
| Dependability                                   | Triangulation (Multiple data sources) | Multiple-data instruments (section 3.3.2) were used. In my study the qualitative data is used to derive meaning (make sense) of the quantitative data. This was informed by constructivism in that the process of engaging with learners, through the quantitative and  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|   |  | qualitative data, potentially facilitated the construction of new knowledge in terms of understanding how career and self-construction helped them manage career transitions.  |
| Credibility, dependability and confirmability | Participant researcher and keeping notes of research decisions taken | The researcher and participants from the experimental groups kept journals to corroborate findings. Nieuwenhuis (2007) recommends the use of journals to document any decisions made in the study to help readers follow the researcher's reasoning process.   |
| Credibility, dependability and confirmability | Participant checking and verifying raw data                          | Informal consultation took place with participants to safeguard accuracy during data collection  |
| Credibility, dependability and confirmability | Participant verification; stakeholder checks                         | Nieuwenhuis (2007) recommends that participants verify facts recorded in transcripts to enhance the trustworthiness of studies. McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 408) name <i>participant review</i> , whereas Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 113) refers to <i>stakeholder checks</i> as other important strategies in that regard. These strategies were used when participants were asked to comment on the integration of information during the course of the research. |
| Dependability                                 | Negative cases or discrepant data                                    | Attention was paid to data that was negative or discrepant. These were recorded and carefully analysed.  |
| Credibility, dependability and confirmability | Controlling for bias   | Nieuwenhuis (2007) cautions the researcher against focusing on things they expect to see because of the close relationship formed with participants during the course of their work. Participant verification of interpretations was made and expert advice was sought from my supervisor to safeguard against potential bias in my study.   |
| Transferability                               | Avoid  | Nieuwenhuis (2007) argues that the goal of   |

|   |                           |   |
|---|---------------------------|---|
|   | generalisations           | qualitative research is to avoid generalising across a population. With this in mind, I focused on gaining an understanding from the participants' perspectives to enhance the trustworthiness of my study.           |
| Credibility                                   | Choose quotes carefully   | I selected participant quotes that fully supported the argument at hand. To this end, I paid careful attention to keeping quotes chosen in context and by being clear in my mind about the purpose of including them. |
| Credibility                                   | State limitations upfront | Limitations identified in my study are stated upfront to ensure that readers have a better understanding of the findings and fully grasp how I reached conclusions made   |
| Credibility, dependability and confirmability | External coder            | An experienced coder was asked to review the data to enhance the trustworthiness in coding data   |

(Adapted from McMillan and Schumacher, 2001; Trent, 2001; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Thomas, 2010)

### 3.5.2.2. Triangulation

Using a multi-method approach gives rise to *triangulation* (see Table 3.5). De Vos (2000) and Trent (2001) maintain that this process of collecting and analysing data from numerous sources is an effective way to address the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Triangulation is named as one of the most important ways to enhance the trustworthiness of research findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). In reality it may happen that new data contradict previously collected data (Trent, 2001; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of triangulation is not necessarily to collect data that corroborates, but rather the process whereby enough material is collected to make *some sense* of it all (Trent, 2001, p. 23).

Triangulation of the the data obtained from journals, interviews and the pre- and post-test results was carried out to identify common themes that ultimately enhanced the trustworthiness of my study. Participants were asked to verify interpretations of data and I sought expert advice from my supervisory in terms of

commenting further on these interpretations to address any issues of bias that could have arisen (see Table 3.5).

### **3.5.2.3. Crystallisation**

Instead of *triangulation*, Nieuwenhuis (2007) advocates using the word *crystallisation* as a strategy to enhance validity. Richardson (2000) uses a crystal, with infinitely many shapes or facets, to denote the multifaceted and often complex nature of phenomena studied in the social sciences. Qualitative strategies are used to gain a deeper understanding of these phenomena instead of searching for fixed, causal relationships. This is achieved through dialogue with other people as the researcher corroborates with them. Crystallisation takes place when researchers go beyond simply reading the data gathered and reflect on their experiences of the data analysis process. In so doing, researchers identify recurring themes in the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The reflection journals that were kept during the course of my study facilitated this process, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the data.

## **3.6. ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

I was not employed as a Life Orientation educator when I implemented the career construction programme in Penryn College and Mthombo High School respectively. I thus consider my research role at the outset as an outsider. However, the role as an *informed* outsider was adopted due to my prior training and experience as a Life Orientation educator previously, and as a practitioner in the field of learning support in my capacity as an educational psychologist. Working full time at Penryn College also means that I am more familiar with that context. As such, I assumed a stronger role as an informed outsider in that school.

It was necessary for me to shift my role as an outsider to becoming a learner in striving to understand how the participants experienced the career construction programme as a potential tool that helped them manage career transitions. Social constructivism underpins this shift in advocating that learning engages individuals actively as they construct knowledge (Hedberg 2003) and make sense of their social and physical environment (Collins 2003; Donald et al., 2005). In my capacity as a learner I was responsible for designing and implementing my career construction programme that enabled me to engage with the participants in two schools and across various time periods in an atmosphere that was conducive to learning. I was also

responsible for administering and scoring the tests used in gathering the quantitative data generated in my study. My role in interpreting the test results and their respective findings is apparent. I also conducted all the focus group interviews in a professional manner, and analysed all the relevant data after an experienced transcriber transcribed it. Permission to record and transcribe the interview data was obtained from the participants. It was imperative for me to respect the participants' need to have ample time to reflect on their experiences of my career intervention programme. I also gave the participants from Penryn College sufficient time to complete their journal entries. Collaboration was therefore a crucial aspect of my role as a researcher.

Working collaboratively also describes the role I assumed when engaging with the network of individuals who supported my study. Ongoing consultation with my supervisor guided my research endeavours. I also consulted with the appointed statisticians when analysing the quantitative data in my study. The afore-mentioned collaborative efforts enhanced my own learning and ultimately my understanding of the effects of the career construction programme.

My role also included conducting an extensive review of the literature pertaining to my research topic. I did this with the support of the University of Pretoria's information specialists in the Department of Library Services.

I needed to be transparent to all role players by making the purpose of my research clear to them for the outset. I obtained informed consent from the headmasters of Penryn College and Mthombo High School, the Mpumalanga Department of Education as well as the participants and their parents to proceed with my study. The voluntary nature of participating in my study was emphasised and participants were told that they were free to withdraw at any stage.

### **3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The following ethical guidelines were adhered to in safeguarding the wellbeing of the participants in my study at all times:

- The purpose of the study, the procedures that were followed and their rights in terms of their participation was made known to all participants.
- Informed consent from all role players to conduct the research was obtained at the outset.
- The voluntary nature of participation was emphasised through the study.

- Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that the data could not be linked to individual participants by name.
- Results were communicated to participants for verification purposes to avoid misinterpretations of the research findings.
- The ethical guidelines specified in the Ethic and Research Statement of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria and the Professional Board for Psychology were adhered to at all times.

### **3.8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The data in my study was gathered from a relatively small group of learners from specific educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Cohen et al., (2001, p. 184) identifies the inherent limitation in this by stating that the quantitative findings of my study might *not be generalizable except where other readers/researchers see their application*.

It is important to acknowledge that Mthombo High School is not fully representative of the majority of schools from disadvantaged backgrounds due to the financial and academic support it receives from Penreach. This limits the generalisability of the findings of my study further.

The halo effect is described as a cognitive bias in which the researcher's knowledge or perception of the participants, influences judgements made in terms of research findings (Cohen et al., 2001). This limitation is applicable to my study as I am more familiar with Penryn College and many of the learners there in my capacity as an educational psychologist at the school. In contrast, I had no prior exposure to the learners from Mthombo High School. In Table 3.5, I do however discuss how I strove to reduce the Halo Effect in my study.

Some of the learners from the respective classes allocated to my study might not have been willing to be participants or could have withdrawn from the project. This could have significantly reduced the size of the sample group. This occurrence did not, however, take place during the course of my intervention programme.

### **3.9. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In this chapter I discussed the research methodology used. The steps I took in striving to enhance the reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the data were

specified. I concluded by discussing the limitations of my study. In Chapter 4 I shall present the results of my study.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 3, the research design, process and data analysis strategies used in my study were discussed and justified. The purpose of my study is to explore the extent to which career and self-construction enhances a learner's ability to manage career transitions. To this end, Grade 11 participants from two schools took part in an intervention programme based on career and self-construction principles. Adopting a mixed-methods research design afforded me the opportunity to use a number of data collection strategies (see section 3.3.2). This was done by generating data in four distinct phases: 1) qualitative data from the pre-intervention focus group interviews, 2) quantitative data from responses in the pre-intervention CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), 3) qualitative data from the post-intervention focus group interviews, and 4) quantitative data from responses in the post-intervention CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Qualitative documents from the participant journal entries from the experimental groups are included in the data-collection process. The quantitative research results are presented below after the participant profile is discussed. The qualitative research results follow, presenting the findings from the focus group interviews. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the results from the reflective journals kept by the participants in the respective experimental groups.

### **4.2. PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

Convenience and purposive non-probability sampling was used to select the participants in my study. Two groups of Grade 11 learners (boys and girls) from Penryn College and Mthombo High School were chosen. Data was elicited from four groups, namely an experimental and comparison group respectively from the two schools. The experimental groups from each school participated in a career construction programme. The comparison groups participated in a career programme designed according to the prescribed Life Orientation curriculum (Department of Education, 2003).

### **4.3. RESULTS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

The CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) consisting of four scales, namely: concern, control, curiosity and confidence, was administered once



during pre- and once at post-intervention. Each of these scales has six items. Twenty-four items overall combine to yield a total score indicating career adaptability.

#### 4.3.1. Distribution of data and sample size

The tables in Annexure A show that the quantitative data in my study are not normally distributed. Further to this, the samples from the population that comprise the four groups in the study are small (less than 30; see Table 4.1). Therefore, non-parametric tests are used to analyse the data in my study.

**Table 4.1: Frequencies for each of the four groups by gender**

| Group                                    | Gender<br>M | Gender<br>F | Total     |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| Experimental group (Penryn College)      | 10          | 11          | 21        |
| Comparison group (Penryn College)        | 3           | 20          | 23        |
| Experimental group (Mthombo High School) | 11          | 10          | 21        |
| Comparison group (Mthombo High School)   | 7           | 15          | 22        |
| <b>All Groups</b>                        | <b>31</b>   | <b>56</b>   | <b>87</b> |

#### 4.3.2. Descriptive statistics

Information regarding means and standard deviations for pre- and post-intervention is provided in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics for pre- and post-intervention scores with regards to the results of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) for each school and each group (comparison and experimental).**

School: Mthombo High School

| Variable             | N         | Median    | Mean        | Std Dev      |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| PreCAAS Concern      | 41        | 22        | 22,2        | 3,70         |
| PreCAASControl       | 41        | 23        | 22,4        | 3,30         |
| PreCAASCuriosity     | 41        | 22        | 21,4        | 4,23         |
| PreCAASConfidence    | 41        | 24        | 23,4        | 3,93         |
| <b>PreCAASTotal</b>  | <b>41</b> | <b>94</b> | <b>89,7</b> | <b>12,04</b> |
| PostCAASConcern      | 41        | 24        | 23,2        | 4,09         |
| PostCAASControl      | 41        | 24        | 23,6        | 3,99         |
| PostCAASCuriosity    | 41        | 22        | 20,9        | 4,25         |
| PostCAASConfidence   | 41        | 24        | 23,7        | 3,54         |
| <b>PostCAASTotal</b> | <b>41</b> | <b>95</b> | <b>91,4</b> | <b>13,42</b> |

## Group: Comparison Mthombo High School

| Variable             | N         | Median      | Mean        | Std Dev      |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| PreCAASConcern       | 20        | 23          | 23,0        | 3,26         |
| PreCAASControl       | 20        | 22,5        | 22,5        | 3,62         |
| PreCAASCuriosity     | 20        | 21,5        | 20,6        | 4,48         |
| PreCAASConfidence    | 20        | 24,5        | 24,5        | 2,54         |
| <b>PreCAASTotal</b>  | <b>20</b> | <b>94,5</b> | <b>91,1</b> | <b>10,94</b> |
| PostCAASConcern      | 21        | 24          | 22,7        | 5,14         |
| PostCAASControl      | 21        | 23          | 23,0        | 4,11         |
| PostCAASCuriosity    | 21        | 22          | 20,3        | 5,25         |
| PostCAASConfidence   | 21        | 24          | 24,0        | 3,28         |
| <b>PostCAASTotal</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>92</b>   | <b>89,9</b> | <b>15,19</b> |

## Group: Experimental Mthombo High School

| Variable             | N         | Median    | Mean        | Std Dev      |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| PreCAASConcern       | 21        | 21        | 21,5        | 4,01         |
| PreCAASControl       | 21        | 24        | 22,3        | 3,06         |
| PreCAASCuriosity     | 21        | 22        | 22,2        | 3,92         |
| PreCAASConfidence    | 21        | 23        | 22,3        | 4,71         |
| <b>PreCAASTotal</b>  | <b>21</b> | <b>93</b> | <b>88,3</b> | <b>13,13</b> |
| PostCAASConcern      | 20        | 24        | 23,9        | 2,56         |
| PostCAASControl      | 20        | 24,5      | 24,2        | 3,86         |
| PostCAASCuriosity    | 20        | 22        | 21,5        | 2,87         |
| PostCAASConfidence   | 20        | 24        | 23,5        | 3,87         |
| <b>PostCAASTotal</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>96</b> | <b>93,0</b> | <b>11,44</b> |

## School: Penryn College

| Variable             | N         | Median      | Mean        | Std Dev      |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| PreCAASConcern       | 44        | 22          | 21,2        | 4,25         |
| PreCAASControl       | 44        | 23          | 22,5        | 3,17         |
| PreCAASCuriosity     | 44        | 19          | 19,8        | 4,52         |
| PreCAASConfidence    | 44        | 22          | 21,2        | 3,98         |
| <b>PreCAASTotal</b>  | <b>44</b> | <b>85,5</b> | <b>84,9</b> | <b>12,65</b> |
| PostCAASConcern      | 43        | 22          | 21,9        | 3,90         |
| PostCAASControl      | 43        | 23          | 22,8        | 3,21         |
| PostCAASCuriosity    | 43        | 20          | 20,0        | 4,35         |
| PostCAASConfidence   | 43        | 22          | 21,0        | 4,08         |
| <b>PostCAASTotal</b> | <b>42</b> | <b>87</b>   | <b>86,1</b> | <b>11,74</b> |

## Group: Comparison Penryn College

| Variable            | N         | Median    | Mean        | Std Dev      |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| PreCAASConcern      | 23        | 21        | 21,5        | 4,58         |
| PreCAASControl      | 23        | 23        | 22,8        | 2,49         |
| PreCAASCuriosity    | 23        | 19        | 18,6        | 4,26         |
| PreCAASConfidence   | 23        | 22        | 21,5        | 3,36         |
| <b>PreCAASTotal</b> | <b>23</b> | <b>84</b> | <b>84,6</b> | <b>11,79</b> |
| PostCAASConcern     | 23        | 22        | 22,2        | 4,26         |
| PostCAASControl     | 23        | 22        | 22,5        | 3,31         |

|                      |           |           |             |              |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| PostCAASCuriosity    | 23        | 17        | 18,5        | 4,07         |
| PostCAASConfidence   | 23        | 21        | 21,3        | 3,17         |
| <b>PostCAASTotal</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>86</b> | <b>85,0</b> | <b>12,09</b> |

Group: Experimental Penryn College

| Variable             | N         | Median    | Mean        | Std Dev      |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| PreCAASConcern       | 21        | 22        | 20,9        | 3,94         |
| PreCAASControl       | 21        | 22        | 22,3        | 3,84         |
| PreCAASCuriosity     | 21        | 22        | 21,2        | 4,48         |
| PreCAASConfidence    | 21        | 22        | 20,8        | 4,62         |
| <b>PreCAASTotal</b>  | <b>21</b> | <b>86</b> | <b>85,1</b> | <b>13,82</b> |
| PostCAASConcern      | 20        | 22        | 21,5        | 3,50         |
| PostCAASControl      | 20        | 24        | 23,2        | 3,13         |
| PostCAASCuriosity    | 20        | 21,5      | 21,6        | 4,16         |
| PostCAASConfidence   | 20        | 22,5      | 20,7        | 5,00         |
| <b>PostCAASTotal</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>89</b> | <b>87,4</b> | <b>11,53</b> |

### 4.3.3. Pre-intervention data analysis

Five statistical hypotheses were formulated to assess whether the pre-intervention, CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) scores of the two schools were significantly different from each other (between school comparisons). These analyses were done with the intention of determining whether or not there was initial bias between the afore-mentioned schools and groups. Mann-Whitney U tests, which are analogous to the independent two-sample t-test, were used to assess the hypotheses.

The five null hypotheses for between schools CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) comparisons, for example, were:

1. Null hypothesis 1:

$$H_{0_1}: \mu_{\text{Concern Pre Penryn}} = \mu_{\text{Concern Pre Mthombo}}$$

Alternative hypothesis 1:

$$H_{A_1}: \mu_{\text{Concern Pre Penryn}} \neq \mu_{\text{Concern Pre Mthombo}}$$

2. Null hypothesis 2:

$$H_{0_2}: \mu_{\text{Control Pre Penryn}} = \mu_{\text{Control Pre Mthombo}}$$

Alternative hypothesis 2:

$$H_{A_2}: \mu_{\text{Control Pre Penryn}} \neq \mu_{\text{Control Pre Mthombo}}$$

3. Null hypothesis 3:

$$H_{0_3}: \mu_{\text{Curiosity Pre Penryn}} = \mu_{\text{Curiosity Pre Mthombo}}$$

Alternative hypothesis 3:

$$H_{A_3}: \mu_{\text{Curiosity Pre Penryn}} \neq \mu_{\text{Curiosity Pre Mthombo}}$$

4. Null hypothesis 4:

$$H_{0_4}: \mu_{\text{Confidence Pre Penryn}} = \mu_{\text{Confidence Pre Mthombo}}$$

Alternative hypothesis 4:

$$H_{A_4}: \mu_{\text{Confidence Pre Penryn}} \neq \mu_{\text{Confidence Pre Mthombo}}$$

5. Null hypothesis 5:

$$H_{0_5}: \mu_{\text{Total CAAS Pre Penryn}} = \mu_{\text{Total CAAS Pre Mthombo}}$$

Alternative hypothesis 5:

$$H_{A_5}: \mu_{\text{Total CAAS Pre Penryn}} \neq \mu_{\text{Total CAAS Pre Mthombo}}$$

#### 4.3.3.1. Results of pre-intervention data analysis

The convincing versus the moderate (see red and green text respectively) results (as seen in Table 4.3) show there is convincing<sup>3</sup> evidence of differences in the Confidence scores and moderate<sup>4</sup> evidence of differences in the Curiosity scores between the learners in Penryn College (N=44) and Mthombo High School (N=41) respectively.

**Table 4.3: Mann-Whitney U Test results for the between school comparisons, pre-intervention**

| Variable          | Exact 2-sided p-value |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| PreCAASConcern    | 0.275092              |
| PreCAASControl    | 0.864545              |
| PreCAASCuriosity  | 0.079294              |
| PreCAASConfidence | 0.009109              |
| PreCAASTotal      | 0.060180              |

Table 4.4 shows that there is moderate<sup>5</sup> evidence of differences in the Curiosity scores between the experimental and comparison groups of Penryn College.

<sup>3</sup> 0.01 < p < 0.05 (Albright, Winstin, & Zappe, 2009, p. 501)

<sup>4</sup> 0.05 < p < 0.10 (Albright, Winstin & Zappe, 2009, p. 501)

<sup>5</sup> 0.05 < p < 0.10 (Albright, Winstin & Zappe, 2009, p. 501)

**Table 4.4: Mann-Whitney U Test results for the comparison (N=23) vs. experimental (N=21) groups within Penryn College)**

| Variable          | Exact 2-sided p-value |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| PreCAASConcern    | 0.641634              |
| PreCAASControl    | 0.834204              |
| PreCAASCuriosity  | 0.070132              |
| PreCAASConfidence | 0.798070              |
| PreCAASTotal      | 0.675352              |

No statistically significant differences were obtained between the experimental and comparison groups of Mthombo High School (see Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5: Mann-Whitney U Test results for the control (N=20) vs. experimental (N=21) groups within Mthombo High School**

| Variable          | Exact 2-sided p-value |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| PreCAASConcern    | 0.189916              |
| PreCAASControl    | 0.928068              |
| PreCAASCuriosity  | 0.358366              |
| PreCAASConfidence | 0.149142              |
| PreCAASTotal      | 0.578781              |

#### 4.3.3.2. Discussion of pre-intervention data analysis

At this stage one can only hypothesise about why differences were noted in certain CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) subtest scores and not in others. Perhaps learners from Penryn College are more confident about their future career prospects as they have had more socio-economic opportunities compared to learners from Mthombo High School. It could also be argued that fewer opportunities in this regard in the latter school explain why learners from that school are less curious about their future careers. Learners are assigned to specific classes based on their subject choices. This could explain why learners from the same school (Penryn College) but from different groups in the study are more curious about their future careers as their choice of learning areas opens up more opportunities for them in terms of prerequisites for entry into tertiary courses or job requirements.

#### 4.3.4. Analysis of the difference between post- and pre-intervention scores

Five statistical hypotheses were formulated to compare the post-intervention measurements for the four groups in my study. The corresponding null hypotheses for the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) subscale scores are:

1. Null hypothesis 1:

$$H_{0_1}: \mu_{\text{Concern Penryn Comparison group Post-Pre}} = \mu_{\text{Concern Penryn}}$$

$$\text{Experimental group Post-Pre} = \mu_{\text{Concern Mthombo Comparison group Post-Pre}} =$$

$$\mu_{\text{Concern Mthombo Experimental group Post-Pre}}$$

Alternative hypothesis 1:

$$H_{A_1}: \text{not all population means for CAASConcern Post-Pre are equal}$$

2. Null hypothesis 2:

$$H_{0_2}: \mu_{\text{Control Penryn Comparison group Post-Pre}} = \mu_{\text{Control Penryn}}$$

$$\text{Experimental group Post-Pre} = \mu_{\text{Control Mthombo Comparison group Post-Pre}} =$$

$$\mu_{\text{Control Mthombo Experimental group Post-Pre}}$$

Alternative hypothesis 2:

$$H_{A_2}: \text{not all population means for CAASControl Post-Pre are equal}$$

3. Null hypothesis 3:

$$H_{0_3}: \mu_{\text{Curiosity Penryn Comparison group Post-Pre}} = \mu_{\text{Curiosity Penryn}}$$

$$\text{Experimental group Post-Pre} = \mu_{\text{Curiosity Mthombo Comparison group Post-Pre}} =$$

$$\mu_{\text{Curiosity Mthombo Experimental group Post-Pre}}$$

Alternative hypothesis 3:

$$H_{A_3}: \text{not all population means for CAASCuriosity Post-Pre are equal}$$

4. Null hypothesis 4:

$$H_{0_4}: \mu_{\text{Confidence Penryn Comparison group Post-Pre}} = \mu_{\text{Confidence Penryn Experimental group Post-Pre}}$$

$$= \mu_{\text{Confidence Mthombo Comparison group Post-Pre}} =$$

$$\mu_{\text{Confidence Mthombo Experimental group Post-Pre}}$$

Alternative hypothesis 4:

$$H_{A_4}: \text{not all population means for CAASConfidence Post-Pre are equal}$$

## 5. Null hypothesis 5:

$$H_{0_5}: \mu_{\text{TotalCAAS Penryn Comparison group Post-Pre}} = \mu_{\text{TotalCAAS Penryn Experimental}}$$

$$\mu_{\text{TotalCAAS Mthombo Comparison group Post-Pre}} = \mu_{\text{TotalCAAS Mthombo Experimental}}$$

Alternative hypothesis 5:

$$H_{A_5}: \text{not all population means for CAAS Total Post-Pre are equal}$$

### 4.3.4.1. Results of analysis of difference between post- and pre intervention scores

From the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test (analogous to a one-way ANOVA), shown in Table 4.6, no statistically significant differences were found among the four groups (Penryn Experimental Group, N = 20; Penryn Comparison group, N = 23; Mthombo Experimental group, N = 20; Mthombo Comparison group, N = 19) with regards to the differences between the post- and pre-scores.

**Table 4.6: Results of the Kruskal-Wallis test**

| Dependent variable        | p-value |
|---------------------------|---------|
| DiffPrePostCAASConcern    | 0.1831  |
| DiffPrePostCAASControl    | 0.1353  |
| DiffPrePostCAASCuriosity  | 0.8122  |
| DiffPrePostCAASConfidence | 0.7133  |
| DiffPrePostCAASTotal      | 0.5481  |

The qualitative data generated in the data-collection process will now be presented.

## 4.4 RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Pre- and post- intervention focus-group interviews were conducted with four groups of participants, namely an experimental and comparison group from Penryn College and Mthombo High School respectively. Eight interviews in total took place. Six participants from each of the four groups were randomly selected from the original sample group to participate in the interviews. Reflective journals kept by the participants in the experimental groups were also included in the data-collection process.

Researchers agree that there are numerous ways in which qualitative research can be conducted or to analyse and report qualitative data: *Analysing qualitative data*

*is an eclectic activity – there is no one “right” way... data can be analysed in more than one way. Most qualitative researchers wish to avoid standardising the process, because a hallmark of qualitative research is the creative involvement of the researcher* (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, pp. 465-466). Punch (2009, p. 170) concurs by stating that the *richness and complexity (of qualitative research) mean that there are different ways of analysing social life, and therefore multiple perspectives and practices in the analysis of qualitative data.* The author explains how the different techniques that can be used in analysing qualitative data have the potential to highlight different aspects of it.

The process of data analysis used in my study involves making sense of the raw data through organising, preparing and coding the data by identifying themes in the respective data sets. This process is aimed at understanding how participants make meaning of the phenomena at hand. Predetermined and emerging codes are used in the data analysis process. The former were anticipated codes based on existing literature on career adaptability whereas the latter were codes that emerged as I examined the data. A three-digit coding system is employed in reporting participants’ responses in the transcribed interviews: The first digit refers to the data source (specific group of transcribed interview); the second to the page number; and the third to the line number/s. (2:6:4-5) is an example of a three-digit code. A four-digit coding system was not used, omitting participant numbers to represent individual names, as it was difficult to identify the participants through voice recognition in the recordings of the focus-group interviews. Table 4.7 shows a summary of the referencing system used in my study:

**Table 4.7: The three-digit coding system used to reference the focus-group interview data**

| Data source |  | Page No. <sup>6</sup> | Line No. |
|-------------|--|-----------------------|----------|
| 1           | Penryn College experimental group pre-intervention focus-group interview | 1-11                  | 1-50     |
| 2           | Penryn College comparison group pre-intervention focus-group interview   | 1-14                  | 1-50     |
| 3           | Mthombo High School experimental group pre-                              | 1-8                   | 1-50     |

<sup>6</sup> The eight data sources are different documents and the respective page numbers do not run consecutively.



|   |  |      |      |
|---|--|------|------|
|   | intervention focus-group interview   |      |      |
| 4 | Mthombo High School comparison group pre-intervention focus-group interview    | 1-5  | 1-50 |
| 5 | Penryn College experimental group post-intervention focus-group interview      | 1-14 | 1-50 |
| 6 | Penryn College comparison group post-intervention focus-group interview        | 1-8  | 1-50 |
| 7 | Mthombo High School experimental group post-intervention focus-group interview | 1-6  | 1-50 |
| 8 | Mthombo High School comparison group post-intervention focus-group interview   | 1-7  | 1-50 |

I use a four-digit coding system in reporting participant's responses in the reflective journals. The first digit refers to the data source (reflective journal entries for the respective schools); the second to the participant; the third to the page number; and the fourth to the line number. The following is an example of a four-digit code (9:8:4:4-5). Table 4.8 shows a summary of the referencing system:

**Table 4.8: The four-digit coding system used to reference the data from the participants' reflective journals**

| Data source |  | Participant No. | Page No. | Line No. |
|-------------|--|-----------------|----------|----------|
| 9           | Penryn College reflective journals (experimental group)      | 1-21            | 1-4      | 1-31     |
| 10          | Mthombo High School reflective journals (experimental group) | 1-21            | 1-4      | 1-31     |

After transcribing and coding the data that emerged inductively, I combined related codes into themes. Next, I wrote a short description for each theme and gave examples of participant responses to illustrate the respective meanings of the different themes. An expert coder corroborated the codes and themes after they were named and described for identification purposes. The process of categorising ended when all the coded data were grouped into recurring themes. Main themes were then divided into subthemes. Subthemes were also described and given examples of participant responses so that their respective meanings are clear. I then re-organised the coded

data into more refined groups according to the various subthemes until no further themes or subthemes were identified.

When working with the pre-established codes in the deductive data analysis process, the various themes are identified prior to categorising the data. Thereafter, the data is analysed by matching data to the themes. For example, *career adaptability* was identified from the literature review as theme related to my research topic. After identifying this main theme, I then searched the interview transcripts followed by the reflective journals, to find all the codes directly related to *career adaptability*.

In reporting my qualitative results I firstly present (in tabulated form), an integrated summary of the themes and subthemes for the respective groups of participants. The pre-intervention results are then discussed separately from the post-intervention results. Both sets of results are presented according to the main themes and related subthemes. Moreover, after discussions with my supervisor, I chose to put each section of the summarised themes and subthemes table (inductive and deductive results) at the start of each of the themes sections instead of presenting the findings from each type of data set and repeating the themes several times. The deductive results are presented after the inductive results. In presenting my results as discussed, the themes are the main heading only once, unless they reoccur for the post-intervention results. The way the theme is expressed in each part of the study is included. So, for example, the theme *strategies to manage career transitions* is a main heading, followed by an explanation of how the theme was revealed in the interviews, followed by an elucidation of how the theme or subtheme was revealed in the reflective journals.

I will now proceed to present the results of the qualitative data analysis process.

#### **4.4.1. Results of qualitative data analysis of pre-intervention focus-group interviews**

The main themes and related subthemes that emerged from the data analysis process for the focus-group interviews and journal entries are discussed for the experimental and comparison groups from each school respectively prior to the intervention programme. This will be preceded by Table 4.9, which provides an overview of the themes and related subthemes identified. In the table, reference is made to the various participant groupings using the following number system: (1.

Penryn College pre-intervention focus group interviews for the experimental group; 2. Penryn College pre-intervention focus group interviews for the comparison group; 3. Mthombo High School pre-intervention focus group interviews for the experimental group; and 4. Mthombo High School pre-intervention focus group interviews for the comparison group). Three main themes emerged from an inductive analysis of the transcribed interviews and a fourth main theme from the deductive analysis.

**Table 4.9: An integrated summary of the themes and subthemes identified in the inductive data analysis as well as the main theme and related subthemes that were confirmed deductively in the transcribed focus-group interviews and in the reflective journals prior to the implementation of the the intervention programme**

| <b>Three main themes and related themes from the inductive data analysis process</b> |                  |                 |                        |                |
|--|------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Theme 1: Strategies to manage career transitions</b>                              |                  |                 |                        |                |
|  | <b>Subthemes</b> |                 |                        |                |
| <b>Data source</b>   | Work ethic       | Marks at school | Attitude to schoolwork | Self-knowledge |
| 1.1. Penryn College experimental group focus-group interviews                        | *                | *               | *                      |                |
| 1.2. Penryn College comparison group focus-group interviews                          | *                | *               | *                      |                |
| 1.3. Mthombo High School experimental group focus-group interviews                   |                  |                 |                        | *              |
| 1.4. Mthombo High School comparison group focus-group interviews                     | *                |                 |                        | *              |
| 1.5 Penryn College experimental group journal entries                                |                  |                 |                        |                |
| 1.6 Mthombo High School experimental group journal entries                           |                  |                 |                        |                |

| <b>Theme 2: Career choice influences</b>                           |                  |                     |                 |                    |                       |              |
|--|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
|  | <b>Subthemes</b> |                     |                 |                    |                       |              |
| <b>Data source</b>   | Finances         | Influence of others | Subject choices | Meaningful careers | Performance at school | Job scarcity |
| 2.1. Penryn College experimental group focus-group interviews      | *                | *                   | *               |                    |                       |              |
| 2.2. Penryn College comparison group focus-group interviews        | *                | *                   | *               | *                  |                       |              |
| 2.3. Mthombo High School experimental group focus-group interviews | *                | *                   |                 | *                  | *                     | *            |
| 2.4. Mthombo High School experimental group focus-group interviews | *                | *                   |                 | *                  |                       | *            |
| 2.5. Penryn College experimental group journal                     |                  |                     |                 |                    |                       |              |

|  |  |         |                                     |            |  |  |
|--|--|---------|-------------------------------------|------------|--|--|
| entries  |  |         |                                     |            |  |  |
| 2.6. Mthombo High School experimental group journal entries                          |  |         |                                     |            |  |  |
| <b>Theme 3: Life Orientation lessons</b>   |  |         |                                     |            |  |  |
|  | <b>Subthemes</b>                       |         |                                     |            |  |  |
| <b>Data source</b>   | Experience of Life Orientation lessons |         | Changes to Life Orientation lessons |            |  |  |
| 3.1. Penryn College experimental group focus-group interviews                        | *                                      |         | *                                   |            |  |  |
| 3.2. Penryn College comparison group focus-group interviews                          | *                                      |         | *                                   |            |  |  |
| 3.3. Mthombo High School experimental group focus-group interviews                   | *                                      |         | *                                   |            |  |  |
| 3.4. Mthombo High School experimental group focus-group interviews                   | *                                      |         | *                                   |            |  |  |
| 3.5. Penryn College experimental group journal entries                               | *                                      |         | *                                   |            |  |  |
| 3.6. Mthombo High School experimental group journal entries                          | *                                      |         | *                                   |            |  |  |
| <b>One main theme and related subthemes from the deductive data analysis process</b> |  |         |                                     |            |  |  |
| <b>Theme 4: Career adaptability</b>  |  |         |                                     |            |  |  |
|  | <b>Subthemes</b>                       |         |                                     |            |  |  |
| <b>Data source</b>   | Concern                                | Control | Curiosity                           | Confidence |  |  |
| 4.1. Penryn College  | *                                      | *       | *                                   | *          |  |  |

|  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| experimental group focus-group interviews                          |   |   |   |   |
| 4.2. Penryn College comparison group focus-group interviews        | * | * | * | * |
| 4.3. Mthombo High School experimental group focus-group interviews | * | * | * | * |
| 4.4. Mthombo High School experimental group focus-group interviews | * | * |   | * |

#### 4.4.1.1. Theme 1: Strategies to manage career transitions

Strategies participants use to manage career transitions emerged as a main theme from an in-depth, inductive data analysis of the pre-intervention interview transcriptions. Four related subthemes are presented in Table 4.10 below.

**Table 4.10: Summary of theme 1 and related subthemes that emerged from an in-depth, inductive review of the transcriptions of the pre-intervention focus-group interview**

| Theme 1: Strategies to manage career transitions |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Subthemes  | Inclusion criteria   | Exclusion criteria   |
| 1.1. Work ethic                                  | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to participants' work ethic at school as a means to achieving their respective career goals   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not make reference to participants' work ethic at school as a means to achieving their respective career goals |
|  | <b>Examples of participants' responses<sup>7</sup></b>   |  |
|  | Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group: <i>"We have to decide that we want to work and get the marks" (1:4:46). "Hard working – cause [sic] if you aren't you can't achieve much in what you are doing" (1:6:40-41).</i> |  |

<sup>7</sup> Data sources are excluded if individuals from the respective groups of participants did not refer to a particular subtheme.

|                             |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
|                             | Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“I kind of think that it is all going to happen and like if I do my work it is going to come together eventually” (2:1:30-31). “I think if you, well this is my theory that if I work enough now at school level I can achieve whatever I want to achieve ...” (2:2:20-22).</i> |  |
|                             | Mthombo High School pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“I feel that I have this prayer of working hard only when studying so that I can get the potential scholarship or bursary to get me to university ...” (4:1:24-26).</i>  |  |
| 1.2. Marks at school        | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to marks attained at school as a means to achieving or not achieving participants’ career goals   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to marks attained at school                  |
|                             | <b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>   |  |
|                             | Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“I do not want to study in South Africa. So I want to have good enough marks to get into an international one [tertiary institution]” (1:2:9-11).</i>   |  |
|                             | Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“... and you need to decide, life for me personally, you are in Grade 11 now, you need to get your marks up” (2:3:1-4).</i>   |  |
| 1.3. Attitude to schoolwork | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to participants’ attitude towards their work  | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to participants’ attitude towards their work |
|                             | <b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>   |  |
|                             | Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“We have to decide that we want to work and get the marks” (1:4:46).</i>  |  |
|                             | Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“I think ultimately it is all about your attitude. If your attitude is bad, then your marks are going to be bad ...” (2:3:1-2). “... at the end of the day it is your attitude that determines your future” (2:3:26-27).</i>  |  |
| 1.4. Self-knowledge         | Any phrases, sentences or words that make reference to self-   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not make reference to self-                            |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | knowledge as a means to managing career transitions  | knowledge as a means to managing career transitions |
|  | <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>   |   |
|  | Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>"I think knowing myself better, knowing my values and everything that could help me and others"</i> (3:4:35-36). <i>"I think you must know your weak points and strong points"</i> (3:5:40).   |   |
|  | Mthombo High School pre-intervention comparison group: <i>"I think that it is very important for a person to know what they want in life and to set goals for one's future and to have values to live by as a young person because there are many influences out there but if you know what you want you will be able to be in the direction that you feel is right for you [sic]"</i> <sup>8</sup> (4:3:17-21). |   |

**i. Theme 1: Strategies to managing career transitions**

**a. Work ethic**

Participants from both *groups* from Penryn College as well as the comparison group from Mthombo High School acknowledge that a positive work ethic will enhance the prospect of them reaching their career goals. Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College stated: *"We have to decide that we want to work and get the marks: (1:4:46); "Hard working – cause [sic] if you aren't you can't achieve much in what you are doing"* (1:6:40-41).

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College stated: *"I kind of think that it is all going to happen and like if I do my work it is going to come together eventually"* (2:1:30-31); *"I think if you, well this is my theory, that if I work enough now at school level I can achieve whatever I want to achieve. Like, I want to actually go into aeronautical sciences, but then it [is] like, people will tell me my marks are what not and yes, your marks have to be this what not and what not and everything like they tell me, all the negative stuff but then I decide not to look at that and try work with my marks in order to achieve what I want to get [sic]"* (2:2:20-27). The importance of developing a positive work ethic early in one's school career was discussed by one participant: *"... like it's a lot of people [who] do not work in Grade*

<sup>8</sup> Participants' responses are reported verbatim and are not edited so they retain the original wording.



*10 but when once you get to Grade 11 you want to start working, but then you are still in that old habit of being in Grade 10 and then you struggle to incorporate this new system that you want to do but you don't have the will power to completely force yourself into it [sic]" (2:2:28-34).*

One participant from the comparison group from Mthombo High School was in agreement with participants from the former two groups in stating: *"I feel that I have this prayer of working hard only when studying so that I can get the potential scholarship or bursary to get me to university [sic] ..."* (4:1:24-26).

#### **b. Marks at school**

With regards to performance at school, two participants, one from the experimental group from Penryn College and the second from the comparison group from Penryn College, recognised the importance of achieving good marks at school as a precursor to reaching established career goals. The former participant stated: *"I do not want to study in South Africa. So I want to have good enough marks to get into an international [tertiary institution]" (1:2:9-11).* The latter participant concurred, saying: *"... and you need to decide, life for me personally, you are in Grade 11 now, you need to get your marks up"* (2:3:1-4).

#### **c. Attitude to schoolwork**

One participant from the experimental group from Penryn College identified a positive attitude towards schoolwork to achieve better marks at school: *"We have to decide that we want to work and get the marks"* (1:4:46).

The same sentiment was discussed by some of the participants from the comparison group from Penryn College: *"I think ultimately it is all about your attitude. If your attitude is bad, then your marks are going to be bad ..."* (2:3:1-2); *"Your attitude in any given situation is determined by yourself. It's not determined by an outa [sic] thing and lots of people will make a lot of excuses. Ja but this and this and this but at the end of the day it is your attitude that determines your future [sic]" (2:3:26-27); "Yes, habits is a long term thing, so you can't decide that you are going to change your habits today. You need to make a commitment and attitude commitment to changing your habits [sic]" (2:3:38-41).*

#### d. Self-knowledge

Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School named self-knowledge as a useful factor in helping them make career choices: *“I think knowing myself better, knowing my values and everything that could help me and others [sic]” (3:4:35-36); “I think you must know your weak points and strong points. These can decide that if you make this decision, you know you are very strong with it and you can stand it if you can’t meet this you know you are weak. That is why you can’t make it ... I can make an example, like you want to become a doctor, you know that when you see blood you get very scared. You can’t choose that job because you know you can’t stand it [sic]” (3:5 & 6:40-43, 7: 1-3).* One participant realised that he had no future in playing soccer as a career as he did not show progress in skills after playing the sport: *“I like to play soccer and I am a soccer player. I did play but there is no improvement so that thing can cause a problem to me [sic]” (3:6:7-8).*

A participant from the comparison group from Mthombo High School agreed that self-knowledge potentially guides individuals when establishing their future career aspirations: *“I think that it is very important for a person to know what they want in life and to set goals for one’s future and to have values to live by as a young person because there are many influences out there but if you know what you want you will be able to be in the direction that you feel is right for you [sic]” (4:3:17-21).*

#### 4.4.1.2. Theme 2: Career choice influences

Participants discussed various factors that influence their career choices. Six related subthemes emerged from an in-depth, inductive data analysis of the pre-intervention interview transcriptions. The subthemes are discussed in Table 4.11.

**Table 4.11: Summary of theme 2 and related subthemes that emerged from an in-depth, inductive review of the transcriptions of the pre-intervention focus-group interview**

| Theme 2: Career choice influences |  |   |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Subthemes                         | Inclusion criteria   | Exclusion criteria  |
| 2.1. Finances                     | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to finances that make it challenging for participants to manage | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to finances |

|                          |  |   |
|--------------------------|--|---|
|                          | career transitions   |   |
|                          | <b>Examples of participant responses</b>   |   |
|                          | Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group:<br><i>“Ma’am I think that my biggest problem is that my choice is kind of mainly money driven – so it might not necessarily be what I want to do but then so that kind of is my problem at the moment” (1:3:5-8).</i>  |   |
|                          | Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“So someone might want to be a gardener but how much income are you going to be earning being a gardener and then you might end up not making it in life ...”(2:2:8-11). “I think maybe getting out there and experiencing things maybe that you don’t have the money to get out and experience” (2:8:45-47).</i> |   |
|                          | Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“I want to be a veterinarian but my parents say they won’t money for my studies [sic]. That worries me too much” (3:1:43-44). “... they [parents] will tell me that it [University of Cape Town] is too far, they won’t afford and that stuff ...” [sic] (3:3:6).</i>                                      |   |
|                          | Mthombo High School pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“My family do not have enough money to send me to university” (4:1:10-11). “My concern is that my family doesn’t have money to further my studies, so I am worried about that because they don’t have money to pay for me to continue going to university when I am finished school” [sic] (4:1:37-40).</i>  |   |
| 2.2. Influence of others | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to other people influencing the way in which participants manage career transitions   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to other people influencing the way in which participants manage career transitions |

|                             |   |  |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
|                             | <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses:</b></p>  |  |
|                             | <p>Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group:<br/><i>“Because I know what I am interested in and I’ve been given a lot of advice from some teachers and some relatives about what they think is right because they know about my interests” (1:2:47-50).</i></p>   |  |
|                             | <p>Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group:<br/><i>“But those things, decisions that you make are heavily influenced by the people around you ...” (2:4:12-14).</i><br/><i>“... in reality your parents are going to want to kind of live their dreams through you” (2:4: 44-46).</i></p>  |  |
|                             | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“I think that my family will discourage me because they want me to become a medical doctor and becoming a writer is not what they want” (3:1:19-21).</i><br/><i>“In future I want to be a pilot but my family they don’t like me to be a pilot because they say it is too dangerous. They want me to be a lawyer” [sic] (3:2:16-18).</i> <i>“They [parents] will tell me that if for example I want to go to UCT [University of Cape Town] ... so maybe they will force me to go to UJ [University of Johannesburg] or something” (3:3:5-7).</i></p> |  |
|                             | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“I have a concern that I don’t think my parents will love my career because it is more dangerous” [sic] (4:1:45-46).</i></p>   |  |
| <p>2.3. Subject choices</p> | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the influence subject choices have on career choices</p>   | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to the influence subject choices have on career choices</p> |
|                             | <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p>   |  |
|                             | <p>Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“I</i></p>  |  |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p><i>take pure maths, I am ok. I encountered somebody who was interested in something in Grade 9 and ended up taking maths lit thinking that they will be able to pursue that career even if they do not have pure maths and now they can't because they need pure maths" (1:9:22-27).</i></p> |  |
|  | <p>Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group:<br/><i>"The subjects that you actually choose determine the options of the future" (2:5:28-29).</i></p>  |  |
| <p>2.4. Meaningful careers</p>   | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to career choices based on meaningful careers</p>   | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to career choices based on meaningful careers</p> |
| <p><b>Examples of participants' responses</b></p>  |   |  |
| <p>Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group:<br/><i>"For me personally I love working with logic but I do not see myself in an office the whole day not being able to see what's happening. Comparing that to your dreams and what you really want to do, you are not always sure which to choose ..." (2:1:46-50). "... but at the end of the day, you need to make your own decision because it is you that is going to live that life and you need to take responsibility for your own life ..." (2:4:28-31).</i></p> |   |  |
| <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>"... my dream is to become a writer and I believe that I will change a lot of lives with my writing and can change the community. I am good at writing poems. I can motivate them" (3:1:10-13). "Understanding what I want to do, why it is important and how it could help me and others" (3:5:35-36).</i></p>   |   |  |
| <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention comparison group: <i>"When I think I control my future I have chosen what I want in a career" [sic] (4:2:29-30). "... we have</i></p>  |   |  |

|                            |  |  |
|----------------------------|--|--|
|                            | <i>to be confidence and have to do what is right for you” [sic] (4:4:18-19).</i>   |  |
| 2.5. Performance at school | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to participants’ performance at school as a factor that influences their career choice  | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to participants’ performance at school as a factor that influences their career choice |
|                            | <b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>   |  |
|                            | Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“I wanted to be a civil engineer but last year I failed the subject Physical Science so I changed” (3:2:26-27).</i>  |  |
| 2.6. Job scarcity          | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the scarcity of jobs in the labour market as a factor that influences career choice  | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to the scarcity of jobs in the labour market as a factor that influences career choice |
|                            | <b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>   |  |
|                            | Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“I would like to be a social worker but I think that I will face obstacles because many people today want to be social workers and this work today is scarce” (3:1:27-29).</i> |  |
|                            | Mthombo High School pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“But I am not sure that it will be easy for me to get a job” (4:2:10).</i>   |  |

**ii. Theme 2: Career choice influences**

**a. Finances**

Participants from all four groups of participants identified financial considerations as a factor that influences career choices. Participants from both

groups from Penryn College discussed how their anticipated income in specific careers shaped their career choices. Experimental group participants from this school said: *“Ma’am I think that my biggest problem is that my choice is kind of mainly money driven – so it might not necessarily be what I want to do but then so that kind of is my problem at the moment”* (1:3:5-8); *“Like it’s a long term sort of thing about how much income will I be making from the decisions that I have taken. Like for example, the degree that I am going to try and pursue”* (1:2:34-38); *“... so I think while I am studying I will most probably start thinking I hope this brings me money”* (1:7:37-39); *“There is pressure, the making money part. For me you don’t want to choose something that won’t earn as much as you hope to earn. You don’t want to earn too little. Ok in my case I do not want to earn too little to give my children less than what I got. I want to give the same if not more”* (1:7:43-48). *“It makes it [career choice] harder because I put things away that I think I will enjoy doing and I start thinking of things that maybe I will not enjoy doing but will given [sic] me more money”* (1:8:1-3).

Comparison group members from the afore-mentioned school asserted that: *“It’s a problem of trying to balance what you want to do with your income, kind of thing”* (2:2:4-5); *“So someone might want to be a gardener but how much income are you going to be earning being a gardener and then you might end up not making it in life ...”*(2:2:8-11). *“I think maybe getting out there and experiencing things maybe that you don’t have the money to get out and experience”* (2:8:45-47).

In contrast, participants from both groups from Mthombo High School were less concerned about their future incomes. Instead they spoke about the financial constraints that restrict the career aspirations of individuals. Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School expressed their concerns in this regard by stating: *“I want to be a veterinarian but my parents say they won’t money for my studies [sic]. That worries me too much”* (3:1:43-44); *“... they [parents] will tell me that it [University of Cape Town] is too far, they won’t afford and that stuff ...”* [sic] (3:3:6).

Control group participants from Mthombo High School discussed the financial constraints individuals face in trying to attain career goals they will set for themselves: *“My family do not have enough money to send me to university”* (4:1:10-11). *“My concern is that my family doesn’t have money to further my studies, so I am worried about that because they don’t have money to pay for me to continue going to*

*university when I am finished school. That is what I am concerned about.” [sic] (4:1:37-40).*

**b. Influence of others**

The role significant people play in influencing career decisions was acknowledged by participants in all four groups. Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College discussed this proposition: *“I’ve been given a lot of advice from some teachers and some of my relatives about what they think is right because they know about my interests” (1:2:48-50); “... my parents don’t want me to go to certain institutions, like for example, I was interested in going to UP [University of Pretoria] or WITS [University of the Witwatersrand] because they where [sic] most of my family is, but they are saying I must go to Stellenbosch or somewhere where I won’t have a lot of people to be around” (1:4:13-18); “I chose a university in Italy because I want to study luxury marketing and brand manager. There is a university that specialises in that, through [sic] my sister who has inspired me” (1:5:35-37); “Pressure – everyone, every day the teachers say Grade 11 is the grade that will determine your future and then you, just like piling everything into your head. Maybe you have chosen what you want to study, but now the pressure is changing your mind ...” (1:7:25-29); “I still don’t know till today if I need maths, but I am just taking it because my parents expect me and just in case I changed my mind and I don’t enjoy maths. So it could be pointless” (1:9:34-38).*

An analysis of the data from the focus group interviews from the comparison group from Penryn College concurs with the assertions made by participants from the former group: *“But those things, decisions that you make are heavily influenced by the people around you. Like let’s say for example your mother, maybe when you want to grow up you want to be a soldier, but your mother says no, you have to become an engineer so that you can make our family proud and what not, you see? So now it gets you thinking like, if I become a soldier it will make me happy, but if I will try and become an engineer it will make my mother happy and what not [sic]. You see?” (2:4:12-21); “... in reality your parents are going to want to kind of live their dreams through you” (2:4: 44-46). “And you need to be willing to listen to other people. I mean, of course you do not want other people to determine your future, but it’s worth hearing what other people have to say because sometimes you might be so one-track*



*minded that you are not willing to hear what they say and when you do it could open up a door” (2: 7:29-34).*

Career goals are not established in isolation according to participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School. Participants discussed the influence significant-others have on the process of setting goals in this regard: *“I think that my family will discourage me because they want me to become a medical doctor and becoming a writer is not what they want” (3:1:19-21); “In future I want to be a pilot but my family they don’t like me to be a pilot because they say it is too dangerous. They want me to be a lawyer” [sic] (3:2:16-18); “They [parents] will tell me that if, for example, I want to go to UCT [University of Cape Town] ... so maybe they will force me to go to UJ [University of Johannesburg] or something” (3:3:5-7); “I also believe in myself, but I also need somebody’s help to me [to] choice my goals. Like this career, I chose it because of my friends and my tutors because I asked them what I want to do and they gave me those opportunities to discover my future and I found that I can be these because they showed me. If it wasn’t for them I would not have a future today because I did not know what to do next” [sic] (3:5:16-21); “My family are making it hard for me because in my family my big brother is an IT specialist, my sister is an IT specialist so me becoming a writer is something different and they think that I am sometimes not realistic so” [sic] (3:6:21-24).*

According to participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High School, parental approval of career choices was seen as a significant factor in making participants comfortable with their career choices: *“I have a concern that I don’t think my parents will love my career because it is more dangerous” [sic] (4:1:45-46).* A sense of belonging (inclusivity) develops when family members support career decisions made by individuals: *“Inclusivity is also one thing that you must consider because it is good to feel included in your family like you won’t feel that inclusivity when you make a decision that is like they are saying do not do this. It is like you are following their own way” [sic] (4:3:36-39).*

### **c. Subject choices**

The importance of making the correct subject choices in Grade 9 so that career options are available to learners, was highlighted by one participant from the experimental group from Penryn College: *“I take pure maths, I am ok. I encountered somebody who was interested in something in Grade 9 and ended up taking maths lit*

*thinking that they will be able to pursue that career even if they do not have pure maths and now they can't because they need pure maths" (1:9:22-27).*

A participant from the comparison group from Penryn College agreed that career transitions are easier to manage if individuals make the correct subject choices at the end of Grade 9: *"The subjects that you actually choose determine the options of the future. So if you are going to choose, I don't know, like, I am not trying to offend anyone – if you choose Maths Lit, da da da [sic], and suddenly you want to be an engineer, it is not going to work. You need to decide what you are going to choose in Grade 10 and you can't take the easy route ..."* (2:5:28-34).

None of the participants from either group from Mthombo High School named subject choices as a determining factor in supporting individuals with career transitions.

#### **d. Meaningful careers**

The importance of identifying and taking career aspirations [dreams] into account was named by participants from the comparison group from Penryn College as an challenge faced by individuals in choosing a career: *"For me personally I love working with logic but I do not see myself in an office the whole day not being able to see what's happening. Comparing that to your dreams and what you really want to do, you are not always sure which to choose ..."* (2:1:46-50); *"It's a problem of trying to wanting to balance what you want to do with your income, kind of thing"* (2:2:4-5). Decisions that are meaningful to participants and ultimately lead to happiness is an important consideration in the career choice process: *"... but at the end of the day, you need to make your own decision because it is you that is going to live that life and you need to take responsibility for your own life ..."* (2:4:28-31); *"... but it actually is, it is your life and your career"* (2:4:36-37); *"But even then it often comes down to what is more important to you, often is it more important to be happy yourself or is it more important to make those around you happy or to make other people proud of you"* (2:5:7-10).

Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School agreed that career choices based on what is meaningful to participants and to their community is an important consideration: *"... my dream is to become a writer and I believe that I will change a lot of lives with my writing and can change the community. I am good at writing poems. I can motivate them"* (3:1:10-13);

*“Understanding what I want to do, why it is important and how it could help me and others” (3:5:35-36); “... you must have the feel what it does and when you choose you are sure that you want to choose it ...”[sic] (3:6:42-43).*

Independent choices based on what is meaningful to participants were named by participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High School as a crucial consideration for career decisions they make: *“When I think I control my future I have chosen what I want in a career” [sic] (4:2:29-30). “... we have to be confidence and have to do what is right for you” [sic] (4:4:18-19).*

**e. Performance at school**

Performance at school was only identified by one participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High school as a factor that can influence career choices: *“I wanted to be a civil engineer but last year I failed the subject Physical Science so I changed” (3:2:26-27).*

**f. Job scarcity**

Participants from both groups from Mthombo High School spoke about the threat of unemployment as a factor that influences career choices. One participant from the experimental group from this school stated: *“I would like to be a social worker but I think that I will face obstacles because many people today want to be social workers and this work today is scarce” (3:1:27-29).*

Participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High School expressed their awareness of the restrictions placed on their respective career aspirations by the scarcity of jobs in the world of work: *“... I think that it may be hard to find employment at this time. At this moment because when we see the government is trying to make sure that we must do or make job opportunities for citizens of South Africa but at this moment you can see that most of the population of people who went to university are now at home staying watching children so that is my main concern” [sic] (4:1:26-31). “But I am not sure that it will be easy for me to get a job” (4:2:10).*

#### 4.4.1.3. Theme 3: Life Orientation lessons

The third main theme, Life Orientation lessons, was discussed by participants according to their respective experiences of the lessons and proposed changes they suggest to the lessons. The subthemes are discussed in Table 4.12.

**Table 4.12: Summary of theme 3 and related subthemes that emerged from an in-depth, inductive review of the transcriptions of the pre-intervention focus-group interview**

| <b>Theme 3: Life Orientation lessons</b>   |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Subthemes</b>   | <b>Inclusion criteria</b>   | <b>Exclusion criteria</b>  |
| 3.1. Experience of Life Orientation lessons  | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to participants respective experiences of Life Orientation lessons   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to participants respective experiences of Life Orientation lessons |
|  | <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>  |  |
|  | Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group:<br><i>"Honestly we haven't actually covered that much" (1:8:44). "We were not properly informed about a lot of things" (1:9:29). "We learn a lot of things like drugs and sex – how is that helping us? OK I understand we need to know you mustn't use this and this is what is going to happen to you and understand that you are learning about consequences, besides that it goes on for weeks and weeks ..." (1:9:42-46). "Also they say don't pine the past, but we are still going back into the apartheid era – we have done it so many times and in previous grades" [sic] (1:10:3-5). "We have wasted so much time – it [Life Orientation as a learning area] was a joke" (1:10:15-16).</i> |  |
| Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group:<br><i>"Personally, I don't think LO [Life Orientation] has helped me at all" (2:9:36). "I agree. Like I don't mean to be, I don't know what the word is, but I don't mean to</i> |   |  |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | <p><i>be rude or anything, but honestly, everything that I have been told in LO is basic common logic ...” (2:9:38-41).</i></p>   |   |
|   | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“It [Life Orientation] helped me to discover that I am not good at sport at all. I hate sport. So at times when we play outside and I will say, ach here we go again. So it helped me decide [sic]” (3:7:17-19). “It [Life Orientation] also helped us I can say to set realistic goals like when planning for the future we have learned that we have to set goals and they must be realistic [sic]” (3:7:28-30).</i></p>   |   |
|   | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“And I think it [Life Orientation] is helping a lot cause more especially because we are learning about our values ... [sic]” (4:4:16-17). “In terms of career choices, the Life Orientation subject has really helped us a lot because it has shown us and given us options of funding project that are going on like loans, scholarships, etc. It has given us options that if we finish school and in our family there is no financial support, we can approach those projects and they can help us to pursue our career that we want to follow” [sic] (4:4:28-33).</i></p> |   |
| <p>3.2. Changes to Life Orientation lessons</p> | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that make reference to suggested changes to Life Orientation lessons and the way in which learners are assessed in this learning area</p>  | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not make reference to suggested changes to Life Orientation lessons and the way in which learners are assessed in this learning area</p> |
|   | <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p> <p>Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group:</p>  |   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p><i>“... we could be looking at what we would like to study” (1:10:1-2). “I think in our exams, should be on how we apply ourselves and what we should know” (1:11:1-2). “Focus on careers from end of Grade 9 because we decide our subject choices” (1:11:9-10). “Projects – more researching about careers and universities” (1:11:13-14).</i></p>  |
|  | <p>Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group:<br/><i>“Okay, like everyone’s actually been saying, with the amount of work and repetitiveness, they [Life Orientation teachers] could have done what we have done in a year” (2:11:41-43). “... the changes that I would like to see is learning things that are more useful to us like how to apply for a bond on a house ...” (2:12:7-9). “It could be so much better because so many, I feel personally, that so many of us are lost, but how are we going to do this and if you think about it, if you think to your future, I mean can you imagine without your parents, all the things that you parents do ... and I think it would be useful to use an LO lesson to teach us that” (2:12:20-30). “... how I am afraid of growing up because I feel like I am not ready and I feel like, that LO should be the subject to help you, to feel like they should teach you the practical stuff of like, how to apply for a bond” (2:12:34-38). “They [Life Orientation teachers] should expose us to different [careers] fields” (2:13:4).</i></p> |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“No change” (3:7:1). “For me I think they can change the teacher to be a bit slow because at times I get lost and I don’t understand a thing for the whole lesson so I think it is useless for her to come in when I don’t gain anything” (3:8:17-19). “She [the Life</i></p>   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p><i>Orientation teacher] also marks with a memorandum. If you know your answer is right, she marks it wrong because of the memo” (3:8:29-30).</i></p>   |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention comparison group: Participants were asked if they would like to see any changes to Life Orientation as it is taught at school or is it fine the way it is. One participant replied, “yes” (4:5:1), he/she did not want to see any changes made.</p> |

### iii. Theme 3: Life Orientation lessons

#### a. Experience of Life Orientation lessons

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College discussed at length how they experience Life Orientation lessons. Responses suggest that they felt that career facilitation is limited and information in that area is lacking during Life Orientation lessons: *“Honestly we haven’t covered that much. I think that we are about to start that section [career facilitation]. But otherwise we have not” (1:8:44-46); “We were not properly informed about a lot of things” (1:9:29).* Topics covered in Life Orientation lessons are not useful and/or repetitive: *“We learn about things like drugs and sex. How is that helping us? Ok I understand we need to know you mustn’t use this and this is what is going to happen to you and understand that you are learning about consequences, besides that it goes on for weeks and weeks and you get projects on that instead of projects on researching for example five universities and courses instead of doing research on drugs and racism. We do apartheid in History ... Also they say don’t pine the past, but we are still going back into the apartheid era. We have done it so many times and in previous grades” (1:9-10: 42-50 & 3-5).* Participants described a prescribed activity from one of the Life Orientation lessons: *“Make a game that has to be stimulating to your mind, but you have to burn calories at the same time. We have wasted so much time. It was a joke. Maybe it helped with group work” (1:10:14-17); “Basically, since we started the syllabus with indigenous games and moving to other sectors which do not cover half of what we are going to need going into our future. It is unrelated. Plus the media and society in general already has anti-drug campaigns. We can get it anywhere. You don’t get career campaigns” (1:10:19-24); “‘Indigenous Games’ is not a skill. You learn the*

*same stuff from Grade 6. We are bombarded*” (1:10:28-29). In summing up the nature of Life Orientation lessons one participant stated: “... *it [Life Orientation as a learning area] is regarded as a joke*” (1:10:47).

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College agreed with the participants from the experimental group of their school. The former participants believe Life Orientation lessons have had little benefit to participants in terms of helping them with career decisions: “*Personally, I don’t think LO has helped me at all*” (2:9:36); “*I agree. Like I don’t mean to be, I don’t know what the word is, but I don’t mean to be rude or anything, but honestly, everything that I have been told in LO is basic common logic, like, yes a girl can get raped if they walk in the street – everyone knows that kind of thing. I don’t think it helps me with my decision in the future*” (2:9:38-43); “*Everyone’s got a good attitude in Grade 1. So it started somewhere where LO became the wasted time subject*” (2:10:27-29).

Learners from the experimental and comparison groups from Mthombo High School differ from the participants from both groups from Penryn College in their experiences of Life Orientation lessons. Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School believe that Life Orientation lessons have helped them make career choices: “*It [Life Orientation] has [helped me] because now you can choose what career you want to do ...* (3:6:41). Life Orientation lessons are informative because they make participants aware of different career options and various tertiary institutions: “*To advise us that on this field you can get these careers. On these fields you can get these careers and if you go to these universities you can say what institutions, what you can do*” [sic] (3:6:48-50). The career choice process is facilitated during Life Orientation lessons by suggesting what participants’ strengths and weaknesses are: “*It [Life Orientation] helped me to discover that I am not good at sport at all. I hate sport. So at times when we play outside and I will say, ach here we go again. So it helped me decide*” [sic] (3:7:17-19); “*I can say it has helped cause I have discovered that I can play [sport] with so, playing is a career. I can play netball if my parents cannot get me money for studying*” [sic] (3:7:30-33). Participants learn how to set realistic goals during Life Orientation lessons: “*It [Life Orientation] also helped us I can say to set realistic goals like when planning for the future we have learned that we have to set goals and they must be realistic* [sic]” (3:7:28-30). Ways of attaining goals are also dealt with during Life Orientation



lessons: *“It helped us because they teach and tell us that when you need to achieve your goal you need to be smart” [sic] (3:7:41-42).*

There was general consensus amongst participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High School on the usefulness of Life Orientations lessons. Reasons cited by them included: clarification of values, information regarding financial support for tertiary studies and helping individuals identify their abilities and weaknesses. One said: *“I think it [Life Orientation] has helped a lot cause – nowadays we are even independent, we know how to control ourselves. We do what we want or what we think is right for us. And I think it [Life Orientation] is helping a lot cause more especially because we are learning about our values ...” [sic] (4:4:14-17).* *“In terms of career choices, the Life Orientation subject has really helped us a lot because it has shown us and given us options of funding project that are going on like loans, scholarships, etc. It has given us options that if we finish school and in our family there is no financial support, we can approach those projects and they can help us to pursue our career that we want to follow” [sic] (4:4:28-33).* *“I heard that it paid a fundamental part in identifying, I am not a person who likes solving problems in Mathematics so it also helped me to focus more on things that languages, which will help to pursue my career as a lawyer” [sic] (4:4:39-42).*

#### **b. Changes to Life Orientation lessons**

Participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High School did not propose any changes to Life Orientation lessons. When asked about this, one participant replied, *“Yes” (4:5:1)*, he/she did not want to see any changes made.

With regards to possible changes to Life Orientation lessons, responses from the participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School varied. One participant did not propose any changes to these lessons: *“No change” (3:7:1)*. The need for adequate resources during Life Orientation lessons was named: *“I wish there could be change because when we go to play netball we do not have the sports field – we play where there is rough and stones and if we fall we could get injured and the equipment is not enough” [sic] (3:8:7-10)*. Changes in teaching approaches was discussed: *“For me I think they can change the teacher to be a bit slow because at times I get lost and I don’t understand a thing for the whole lesson so I think it is useless for her to come in when I don’t gain anything” (3:8:17-19)*. Strict adherence to memorandums when work is marked in Life Orientation is an area of concern:

*“She [the Life Orientation teacher] also marks with a memorandum. If you know your answer is right, she marks it wrong because of the memo” (3:8:29-30).*

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College proposed a number of changes to Life Orientation lessons. Starting career facilitation earlier on in their school career is one example: *“I almost feel we should start covering it [exploring career options] in Grade 10 so that by Grade 11 you have a better idea ... I feel that in Grade 10 you should start covering it so that in Grade 11 you know where you stand and can start researching. Cause now we don’t have time now [sic] to go research and read up about places [tertiary institutions]” (1:8-9:46-47&1-4)*”; *“I think it should be even earlier, for example in Grade 9 when you have to choose your subjects” (1:9:21-22)*; *“Focus on careers from end of Grade 9 because we decide our subject choices. If you know about careers your subject choice can lead you to what you want to study” (1:11:9-11)*. Changes to the way in which participants are assessed in Life Orientation and topics for projects were also named as a proposed changes: *“I think in our exams, should be on how we apply ourselves and what we should know” (1:11:1-2)*; *“Projects – more researching about careers and universities” (1:11:13-14)*. Further proposed changes to Life Orientation lessons included giving participants guidance in terms of administrative matters pertaining to university application forms and giving them more information on different careers: *“University applications guidance” (1:11:16)*; *“More information giving specific to careers” (1:11:18)*. The need for practical activities was identified: *“More exposure and excursions to the universities” (1:11:20)*. Participants also identified planning career activities more effectively as a proposed change to Life Orientation lessons: *“Organise activities to not take (place) during break” (1:11:22)*; *“Career expos – informing scholars properly about them, where and when” (1:11:24-25)*.

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College also proposed a number of changes to Life Orientation lessons. One such change was the proposition that the content of these lessons should be condensed to avoid topics from being repeated: *“Okay, like everyone’s actually been saying, with the amount of work and repetitiveness, they [Life Orientation teachers] could have done what we have done in a year” (2:11:41-43)*. Topics that are seen to be of more use to participants can be included into Life Orientation lessons: *“... the changes that I would like to see is learning things that are more useful to us like how to apply for a bond on a house ...” (2:12:7-9)*. Life Orientation lessons should give participants guidelines in terms of

their future careers and their futures in general: *“It could be so much better because so many, I feel personally, that so many of us are lost, but how are we going to do this and if you think about it, if you think to your future, I mean can you imagine without your parents, all the things that you parents do ... and I think it would be useful to use an LO lesson to teach us that”* (2:12:20-30); *“... how I am afraid of growing up because I feel like I am not ready and I feel like, that LO should be the subject to help you, to feel like they should teach you the practical stuff of like, how to apply for a bond”* (2:12:34-38); *“They [Life Orientation teachers] should expose us to different [career] fields”* (2:13:4).

#### 4.4.1.4. Theme 4: Career adaptability

The fourth main theme, Life Orientation lessons, was identified in a deductive analysis of participant responses in the focus-group interviews prior to the intervention programme. The subthemes are discussed in Table 4.13.

**Table 4.13: Summary of theme 4 and related subthemes that emerged from a deductive review of the transcriptions of the pre-intervention focus-group interview**

| <b>Theme 4: Career adaptability</b> |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Subthemes</b>                    | <b>Inclusion criteria</b>  | <b>Exclusion criteria</b>  |
| 4.1. Concern                        | Any phrases, sentences or words that suggest that the participants show interest as opposed to indifference about their future careers   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that the participants are interested in their future careers |
|                                     | <b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>   |  |
|                                     | Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group:<br>One participant had thought about his/her future in terms of salary: <i>“If I am going to earning [sic] a proper salary to maintain myself and possibly my family”</i> (1:1:29-30). <i>“... like the one [thing that is on my mind] that is coming now is like getting into a proper university ...”</i> (1:1:45-46). <i>“I do not want to study in South Africa so I want to have good enough marks to get into an international one [tertiary institution]”</i> (1:2:9- |  |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | <p>11).</p> <p>Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group:<br/> <i>“Concerns that I have about my future is that like, I will not make it, like I will fail and not succeed in life” (2:1:12-13). “Going into the wrong direction as in what’s more valuable, having a good job, getting a good pay, being reasonably successful in life and in the end not knowing at the moment whether you are actually going to be happy in that job, whether it is something that you can do for the next thirty years of your life [are some of the things this participant had thought about] ...” (2:1:40-45).</i></p> <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“I want to be a teacher ...” (3:1:42). “My future - I want to be a professional teacher so I will teacher them with good care” [sic] (3:2:1-2).</i></p> |   |
| 4.2. Control  | Any phrases, sentences or words that indicate that the participants believe that they have some influence over their lives  | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not indicate that the participants believe that they have some influence over their lives |
| <b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>  |   |   |
| <p>Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group:<br/> <i>“Well our choice because we want to do. It should be our decision” (1:3:32-33). “I feel like I am in control of it [career choice] because my parents say they told me that: ‘You choose what you want to study and you choose your university and you apply for as many as possible, it is your choice’. They haven’t indicated which university or where” (1:3:39-43). “Yes, I can choose my course” (1:3:47).</i></p> |   |   |
| <p>Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“I</i></p>  |   |   |

|                       |   |  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
|                       | <p><i>am in control of my school level education because let's say we are writing a test, if I do not study for that test it is clear that I am going to fail it, but then if I study it and I make sure I get all the extra help that I need, in order to get that A for that test, I will make it. And then at the end if I do that for all my tests I end up getting whatever results that I want to get and end up into whatever field of occupation I want to get into" [sic] (2:2:34-41).</i></p> |  |
|                       | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>"I control what I want to become after my matric because even if I can listen to my parents, they are not the one at the end of the day that are going to be in that job. So I have to decide for myself" [sic] (3:2:41-43).</i></p>   |  |
|                       | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention comparison group: <i>"I feel more that the ladies are in control of not getting pregnant at this stage. So that is one possible reason that you are in control of your future" (4:2:44-46).</i></p>   |  |
| <p>4.3. Curiosity</p> | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to any exploratory behaviour that potentially elicit information about the participants and/or their environments</p>   | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to any exploratory behaviour that potentially elicit information about the participants and/or their environments</p> |
|                       | <p><b>Examples of participants' responses</b></p> <p>Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group: <i>"I am thinking of attending open days at TUKS [University of Pretoria] to see if it as a career that I want to do" [sic] (1:5:23-24). "I have been researching on the Internet and e-mailing" (1:5:29-30). "I have searched for bursaries and universities in general and I have</i></p>  |  |

|                        |   |  |
|------------------------|---|--|
|                        | <p><i>found on the website where it gives you e-mails of lecturers who are in charge of the sectors and I have e-mailed the lecturers” (1:6:1-4).</i></p>   |  |
|                        | <p>Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group: <i>“Oh ja when we did that thingy in Grade 9 with you [referring to a subject choice assessment]. Ja. Like the subjects I chose, were the ones that were suggested there...Aaah partly because I was interested in them and also because they were suggested...” [sic] (2:5:42-50).</i><br/><i>“Over the holidays there’s engineering week at UP [University of Pretoria] and I want to go just to see the engineering field and what happens there because I don’t know what I want to do yet so it will help me exploring the different options” (2:6:4-7)</i></p> |  |
|                        | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“At home we have a backroom. There is a tenant who is renting, an electrician. On Saturday he takes me and we go work. That is where I experienced that I can do those things. Now in the community they can ask me to help. But I can say that I can be useful to the community” [sic] (3:4:12-16).</i> <i>“I think last of last month there were career exhibitions where we will go and get more help and discover what we can do and what we can learn” [sic] (3:7:8-10).</i></p>  |  |
| <p>4.4. Confidence</p> | <p>Any phrases, words or sentences that indicate the participants are not deterred from achieving their career goals</p>  | <p>Any phrases, words or sentences that indicate the participants are deterred from achieving their career goals</p> |
|                        | <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p> <p>Penryn College pre-intervention experimental group: <i>“You have to be strong” (1:6:9).</i> <i>“Yes, I mean you have to be strong in terms of what if you are rejected”</i></p>  |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>(1:6:26-27). “You have to be responsible in your choices” (1:6:19-20). “Maybe determined, to continue pursuing if you are rejected to apply somewhere else or to apply to many places, so if you are rejected you have other choices” (1:6:34-36).</p>  |
|  | <p>Penryn College pre-intervention comparison group:<br/> “...because sometimes it can be difficult but if you really committed and really want to change anything, then you need to commit to it” (2:3:48-50). “Aaah and it’s really important to be able to adapt to change that you don’t end up just, you don’t end up going down with whatever you are doing because you are not willing to and you are not willing to adapt” (2:8:8-11).</p> |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention experimental group: “I am a different in a way because I do not need anyone to motivate me. I can motivate myself even if you don’t believe in me” (3:5:1-2).</p>  |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School pre-intervention comparison group: “I feel more or less the characteristic that make a person to make good decisions, maybe your confidence because without confidence there are some things that you can’t, or aspects that you can’t have control over and you will make decisions that will lead to not stable future ...” [sic] (4:3:9-13).</p>   |

### iii. Theme 4: Career adaptability

Career adaptability was the fourth theme that was analysed deductively from the pre-intervention interview transcripts. The four stages characteristic of adaptive individuals, are now discussed from the perspective of the participants in my study.

#### a. Concern

Individuals from the experimental group from Penryn College expressed an interest in their futures when thinking about the prospect of having financially viable careers: “If I am going to earning [sic] a proper salary to maintain myself and

*possibly my family” (1:1:29-30); “It’s the same – it is basically the same as the other participant – like it’s a long term sort of thing about how much income will I be making from the decision that I have taken like for example, the degree that I am going to try and pursue” (1:2:34-38); “... I think while I am studying I will most probably start thinking I hope this brings me money” (1:7:38-39); “There is pressure, the money making part. For me you don’t want to choose something that won’t earn as much as you hope to earn. You don’t want to earn too little. Ok in my case I do not want to earn too little to give my children less than what I got. I want to give the same if not more” (1:7:42-48).*

A participant from the comparison group from Penryn College also expressed an interest in his/her future in the following way: *“Going into the wrong direction as in what’s more valuable, having a good job, getting a good pay, being reasonably successful in life and in the end not knowing at the moment whether you are actually going to be happy in that job, whether it is something that you can do for the next thirty years of your life ...” (2:1:40-45).*

One participant from the comparison group from Penryn College and one from the experimental group from Mthombo High School respectively expressed an interest in their respective futures by discussing their desire to succeed in life: *“Concerns that I have about my future is that like, I will not make it, like I will fail and not succeed in life” (2:1:12-13); “What concerns me about my future is that one day I would like to see myself as being a successful young lady ...” (3:1:9-10).*

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College had thought about various options regarding where they would like to further their studies after leaving school: *“... like the one that is coming to me now is like getting into a proper university...” (1:1:45-46); “I do not want to study in South Africa so I want to have good enough marks to get into an international one [tertiary institution]” (1:2:9-11);*

Aspirations to be a teacher to assist learners with difficulty were named by two participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School. In so doing the participants showed that they were interested in their futures: *“I want to be a teacher because here at school they are call to students who are not participating well to our subjects” [sic] (3:1:42-43); “My future – I want to be a professional teacher so I will teacher them with good care” [sic] (3:2:1-2).*



## b. Control

An analysis of the qualitative data indicates that some of the participants believe that they have some influence over their lives in terms of career choices they will make and/or tertiary institutions they will select for further studies. The following statements made by participants from the experimental group from Penryn College reflect this perception: *“Well our choice because we want to do. It [career choice] should be our decision” (1:3:32-33)*. *“I feel like I am in control of it [career choice] because my parents say they told me that: ‘You choose what you want to study and you choose your university and you apply for as many as possible, it is your choice.’ They haven’t indicated which university or where” (1:3:39-43)*; *“Yes, I can choose my course” (1:3:47)*; *“In terms of university I think I am on the same page as them [being able to select a university of choice]” [sic] (1:4:4-7)*. One participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High School concurred that he/she control career choices made: *“... even if I can listen to my parents, they are not the one at the end of the day that are going to be in that job. So I have to decide for myself” [sic] (3:2:41-43)*.

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College named academic performance as a factor that can be controlled in striving to meet established career goals: *“Obviously our marks and how well we do at school” (1:4:37)*. *“We have to decide that we want to work and get the marks” (1:4:46)*. Control over marks at school was also named by a participant from the comparison group from Penryn College: *“... let’s say we are writing a test, if I do not study for that test it is clear that I am going to fail it, but then if I study it and I make sure I get all the extra help that I need, in order to get that A for that test, I will make it. And then at the end if I do that for all my tests I end up getting whatever results that I want to get and end up into whatever field of occupation I want to get into” [sic] (2:2:34-41)*.

Life choices such as not falling pregnant were named as something participants have control over. A participant in the comparison group from Mthombo High School expressed this in saying the following: *“I feel more that the ladies are in control of not getting pregnant at this stage. So that is one possible reason that you are in control of your future” (4:2:44-46)*.

### c. Curiosity

Participants named various types of exploratory behaviour or activities that can elicit information about them and/or their environments: *“We are going to be do job shadowing – the whole grade has to do that” [sic]; “I went to the launch of my aunt’s advertising and events management company and I am interested in that field” (1:5:9-10); “Piano exams”(1:5:17); “I am thinking of attending open days at TUKS [University of Pretoria] to see if it as a career that I want to do [sic]” (1:5:23-24). “I have been researching on the Internet and e-mailing” (1:5:29-30). “I have searched for bursaries and universities in general and I have found on the website where it gives you e-mails of lecturers who are in charge of the sectors and I have e-mailed the lecturers” (1:6:1-4); Consultation with the resident school psychologist is something participants from Penryn College could do in striving to understand themselves and their environments: “Sometimes it is difficult – we are privileged because we have Mrs Cook [resident school psychologist] who can help us with different fields but then sometimes you don’t have those people and so making the decision is hard” (1:8:19-22).*

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College discussed exploratory behaviour to get information about themselves and their environments. Comments include: *“Oh ja when we did that thingy in Grade 9 with you [referring to a subject choice assessment]. Ja. Like the subjects I chose, were the ones that were suggested there ... Aaah partly because I was interested in them and also because they were suggested [sic]...” (2:5:42-50); “Over the holidays there’s engineering week at UP [University of Pretoria] and I want to go just to see the engineering field and what happens there because I don’t know what I want to do yet so it will help me exploring the different options” (2:6:4-7); “Ja, getting a skill so that I can go into that for a while” (2:6:36); “... and during that time I also want to try competitions in dancing in that area. So at the moment I take classes” (2:6:40-42).*

The following exploratory behaviour or activities that elicited information about participants and/or their environments were discussed by individuals from the experimental group from Mthombo High School: *“For me I joined a group here at school [rather] than we work at home. Then there was a time when we were putting windows for my grandmother and I saw that working outside is not my thing, so I don’t like it” (3:3:27-29); “Here at school I am doing a where there was this thing*

*that we were planting in the garden and I saw something that could help for when I am studying for my career” [sic] (3:3:35-37); “Last year also helped home-based care where there were grannies who don’t have their people to help them so we went there as a group and helped and I realised that most of all people need help and most of the youth doesn’t want to help those grannies cause they old enough and don’t take care of themselves, some of them can’t eat. Because I got this heart and I wanted to help them I went and helped them every Friday and Saturday if I got time. I helped them, we do the planting, clean the houses, wash the clothes and then cook for them and then we went and I realised that if I can become something like a social worker work with the community something that can happen in our community and we can help people” [sic] (3:3-4:42-50 & 1-2); “At home we have a backroom. There is a tenant who is renting, an electrician. On Saturday he takes me and we go work. That is where I experienced that I can do those things. Now in the community they can ask me to help. But I can say that I can be useful to the community” [sic] (3:4:12-16); “Last year my community opened a project and the projects name is Asi-khulume and we were cleaning our environment” [sic] (3:4:32-33); “I think last of last month there were career exhibitions where we will go and get more help and discover what we can do and what we can learn” [sic] (3:7:8-10).*

#### **d. Confidence**

The following statements suggest that a participant from the experimental group from Penryn College was not deterred from achieving his/her respective career goals: *“You have to be strong” (1:6:9); “Yes, I mean you have to be strong in terms of what if you are rejected [from university]” (1:6:26-27); “You have to be responsible in your choices” (1:6:19-20); “Maybe determined, to continue pursuing if you are rejected to apply somewhere else or to apply to many places, so if you are rejected you have other choices” (1:6:34-36); Hard working – cause if you aren’t you can’t achieve much in what you are doing” (1:6:40-41); “I think you should not give up – it is not always where you get what you want. Sometimes you are going to have to stay longer in the run and hopefully it will be worth it rather than give up early in the race ... the race of life” (1:6-7:45-48 & 1).*

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College also indicated that they are capable of achieving their respective career goals: *“... because sometimes it can be difficult but if you really committed and really want to change*

*anything, then you need to commit to it” (2:3:48-50). The following responses were made when participants were asked what personal characteristics are important in assisting them when making decisions about their future: “Perseverance” (2:7:4); “Confidence, self-belief which is basically confidence” (2:7:8); “Adaptability, like...to like, being able to like fit in like, ... outside of your comfort zone” (2:7:38-46); “Aaah and it’s really important to be able to adapt to change that you don’t end up just, you don’t end up going down with whatever you are doing because you are not willing to and you are not willing to adapt” (2:8:8-11).*

A participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High School discussed how he/she is not deterred by other people from making career choices due to the fact that he/she is able to self-motivate, independently: *“I am different in a way because I do not need anyone to motivate me. I can motivate myself even if you don’t believe in me” (3:5:1-2).*

One participant from the comparison group from Mthombo High School identified personal characteristic that will help him/her achieve own career goals in spite of obstacles that might have to be faced: *“I feel more or less the characteristic that make a person to make good decisions, maybe your confidence because without confidence there are some things that you can’t, or aspects that you can’t have control over and you will make decisions that will lead to not stable future ...” [sic] (4:3:9-13). “I wanted to say persistence is also [important] because if you persist you will succeed” [sic] (4:3:24-25). “... I think with persistence you have to persevere in life because this is the most important thing in life and also you have to trust in yourself” [sic] (4:3:29-31).*

#### **4.4.2. Results of qualitative data analysis of post-intervention focus-group interviews**

Table 4.14 provides an overview of the themes and related subthemes identified after the implementation of the career intervention programme. In Table 4.14, reference is made to the various participant groupings using a number system that follows on from the number system used in the presentation of the pre-intervention results (see 4.4.1), namely: 5. Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for the experimental group; 6. Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for the comparison group; 7. Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group; 8. Mthombo High School

post-intervention focus group interviews for comparison group; 9. Penryn College reflective journals for experimental group; and 10. Mthombo High School reflective journals for experimental group. The main themes and related subthemes that emerged from the data analysis process for the focus-group interviews are then discussed for the experimental and comparison groups from each school respectively. This discussion also includes the main themes and related subthemes identified in the reflective journals of the participants from the experimental groups from the two schools. Five main themes emerged from an inductive analysis of the transcribed interviews and reflective journals. A sixth main theme and related subthemes were confirmed in a deductive data analysis of the transcribed interviews and reflective journals.

**Table 4.14: An integrated summary of the themes and subthemes identified in the deductive data analysis as well as the main theme and related subthemes that were confirmed inductively in the transcribed focus-group interviews and in the reflective journals after the implementation of the the intervention programme**

| <b>Five main themes and related subthemes from the inductive data analysis process</b> |                  |                         |                                   |                     |                    |                     |                                      |                                 |                          |                           |   |
|--|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Theme 1: Benefits of career intervention programme.</b>                             |                  |                         |                                   |                     |                    |                     |                                      |                                 |                          |                           |   |
|  | <b>Subthemes</b> |                         |                                   |                     |                    |                     |                                      |                                 |                          |                           |   |
| <b>Data source</b>   | Self-knowledge   | Making career decisions | Clarified what participants value | Improved work ethic | Career information | Clarified interests | Highlighted positive factors in life | Opportunity to express emotions | Opportunity to be honest | No judgements experienced | Participants seen as experts of their lives |
| 1.1.<br>Penryn College focus group interviews for experimental group                   | *                | *                       | *                                 | *                   |                    | *                   |                                      |                                 |                          |                           |   |
| 1.2.<br>Penryn College   |                  |                         |                                   |                     |                    |                     |                                      |                                 |                          |                           |   |

|  |   |   |  |  |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| focus group interviews for comparison group                            |   |   |  |  |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.3. Mthombo High School focus group interviews for experimental group | * | * |  |  | * | * |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.4. Mthombo High School   |   |   |  |  |   |   |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| focus<br>group<br>interviews<br>for<br>compari-<br>son group                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1.5<br>Penryn<br>College<br>journal<br>entries for<br>experi-<br>mental<br>group | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 1.6<br>Mthombo<br>High<br>School<br>journal<br>entries for                       | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |   |   |   | * |



|   |   |  |                               |                         |                              |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| experi-<br>mental<br>group  |   |  |                               |                         |                              |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Theme 2: Negative experiences of career intervention programme</b>         |   |  |                               |                         |                              |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | <b>Subthemes</b>  |  |                               |                         |                              |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Data source</b>  | Difficulty completing<br>some of my<br>intervention tasks | Frustration and/or<br>confusion develops | Difficulty<br>looking at past | Irrelevance of timeline | No definite career decisions |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.1. Penryn<br>College focus<br>group interviews<br>for experimental<br>group |   | *  | *                             | *                       |                              |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.2. Penryn<br>College focus<br>group interviews<br>for comparison<br>group   |   |  |                               |                         |                              |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2.3. Mthombo<br>High School   |   |  |                               |                         |                              |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |   |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| focus group interviews for experimental group                        |   |   |   |  |   |
| 2.4. Mthombo High School focus group interviews for comparison group |   |   |   |  |   |
| 2.5. Penryn College journal entries for experimental group           | * | * | * |  | * |
| 2.6. Mthombo High School journal entries for experimental group      |   |   |   |  |   |

| <b>Theme 3: Changes to career intervention programme</b>                              |                  |                         |
|---|------------------|-------------------------|
|   | <b>Subthemes</b> |                         |
| <b>Data source</b>  | <b>Timing</b>    | <b>More discussions</b> |
| 3.1. Penryn<br>College focus<br>group interviews<br>for experimental<br>group         | *                |                         |
| 3.2. Penryn<br>College focus<br>group interviews<br>for comparison<br>group           |                  |                         |
| 3.3. Mthombo<br>High School<br>focus group<br>interviews for<br>experimental<br>group |                  |                         |
| 3.4. Mthombo  |                  |                         |

|   |                     |                          |              |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| High School focus group interviews for comparison group         |                     |                          |              |
| 3.5. Penryn College journal entries for experimental group      |                     |                          | *            |
| 3.6. Mthombo High School journal entries for experimental group |                     |                          |              |
| <b>Theme 4: Career choice influences</b>                        |                     |                          |              |
|   | <b>Subthemes</b>    |                          |              |
| <b>Data source</b>  | Influence of others | Guidance from researcher | Test results |
| 4.1. Penryn College focus                                       | *                   | *                        |              |

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| group interviews<br>for experimental<br>group   |   |  |  |
| 4.2. Penryn<br>College focus<br>group interviews<br>for comparison<br>group           |   |  |  |
| 4.3. Mthombo<br>High School<br>focus group<br>interviews for<br>experimental<br>group | * |  |  |
| 4.4. Mthombo<br>High School<br>focus group<br>interviews for<br>comparison<br>group   |   |  |  |

|   |  |   |                                     |
|---|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| 4.5. Penryn<br>College journal<br>entries for<br>experimental<br>group        | *                                      | * | *                                   |
| 4.6. Mthombo<br>High School<br>journal entries for<br>experimental<br>group   |  | * |                                     |
| <b>Theme 5: Life Orientation lessons</b>                                      |  |   |                                     |
|   | <b>Subthemes</b>                       |   |                                     |
| <b>Data source</b>  | Experience of Life Orientation lessons |   | Changes to Life Orientation lessons |
| 5.1. Penryn<br>College focus<br>group interviews<br>for experimental<br>group |  |   |                                     |
| 5.2. Penryn<br>College focus  | *                                      |   | *                                   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| group interviews<br>for comparison<br>group   |   |   |
| 5.3. Mthombo<br>High School<br>experimental<br>group focus-<br>group interviews     |   |   |
| 5.4. Mthombo<br>High School<br>focus group<br>interviews for<br>comparison<br>group | * | * |
| 5.5. Penryn<br>College journal<br>entries for<br>experimental<br>group              |   |   |
| 5.6. Mthombo  |   |   |

|  |                  |         |           |            |
|--|------------------|---------|-----------|------------|
| High School<br>journal entries for<br>experimental<br>group                                      |                  |         |           |            |
| <b>One main theme and related subthemes confirmed deductively from the data analysis process</b> |                  |         |           |            |
| <b>Theme 6: Career adaptability</b>  |                  |         |           |            |
|  | <b>Subthemes</b> |         |           |            |
| <b>Data source</b>   | Concern          | Control | Curiosity | Confidence |
| 6.1. Penryn<br>College focus<br>group interviews<br>for experimental<br>group                    |                  | *       | *         |            |
| 6.2. Penryn<br>College focus<br>group interviews<br>for comparison<br>group                      |                  |         | *         |            |
| 6.3. Mthombo<br>High School  | *                |         | *         | *          |



|   |   |  |   |   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| experimental<br>group focus-<br>group interviews                                    |   |  |   |   |
| 6.4. Mthombo<br>High School<br>focus group<br>interviews for<br>comparison<br>group |   |  | * |   |
| 6.5. Penryn<br>College journal<br>entries for<br>experimental<br>group              | * |  |   |   |
| 6.6. Mthombo<br>High School<br>journal entries for<br>experimental<br>group         | * |  |   | * |

#### 4.4.2.1. Theme 1: Benefits of career intervention programme

Participants discussed the benefits of the career intervention programme. This main theme emerged from an in-depth, inductive data analysis of the post-intervention interview transcriptions and the journal entries from the experimental groups of the two schools. Eleven related subthemes are presented in Table 4.15 below.

**Table 4.15: Summary of theme 1 and related subthemes that emerged from an in-depth, inductive review of the transcriptions of the post-intervention focus-group interviews and the journal entries**

| <b>Theme 1: Benefits of career intervention programme</b> |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Subthemes</b>  | <b>Inclusion criteria</b>  | <b>Exclusion criteria</b>   |
| 1.1. Self-knowledge                                       | Any phrases, sentences or words that suggest that participants' self-knowledge improved through their participation in the career intervention programme   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that participation in the career intervention programme improved participants' self-knowledge |
|   | <b>Examples of participants' responses<sup>9</sup></b>   |   |
|   | Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>"On my part the timeline showed me that I haven't lived life as much as I have wanted to. I have held myself back in a lot of things, lot of situations where I could have just said, let me do it for the fun, to just experiment, to do crazy things, not crazy like, but to be more adventurous which is something I like doing [sic]<sup>10</sup>" (5:3:14-18)<sup>11</sup>. "I plan, you know what I mean, and I just don't go into things. So just for me, it just for me second guessing of what I really want to do and if I would really be happy doing law in 10 years' time [sic]. That kind of thing made me think that maybe it is time that you</i> |   |

<sup>9</sup> Data sources are excluded if individuals from the respective groups of participants did not refer to a particular subtheme.

<sup>10</sup> Participants' responses are reported verbatim and are not edited to retain the original wording.

<sup>11</sup> As stated in section 4.4, a four-digit coding system was not used, omitting participant numbers to represent individual names, as it was difficult to identify the participants though voice recognition in the recordings of the focus-group interviews.

|                              |  |   |
|------------------------------|--|---|
|                              | <p><i>do what you love and do what is close to you but at the same time, it is going to be a rash type of thing because my parents know about the whole law-thing so I just go to them and say I am not doing law anymore because I have rediscovered myself” (5:9:2-9).</i></p> <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“All the exercises really helped me discover who I really am and who I want to be. Some made me open up and some didn’t but I did enjoy all of them [sic]” (9:1:1:25-28). Over all these activities that we did really helped me in realising who I really am and what I want to do with my life” (9:1:2:16-18). “It [doing the collage] was a fun experience that makes you think about what kind of person you really are. It was fun [doing the collage] and you get to discover yourself everyday by asking one specific question: “Who am I really” [sic]. It’s a worthwhile experience” (9:5:1:14-17 &amp; 21-22 &amp; 24-26).</i></p> <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“For me the time line helped me a lot because I have realised that some of the bad things that happened in my life are the things that keep me going even today” (7:1:34-36).</i></p> <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention journal entries for the experimental group: <i>“It [doing the collage] made me to realise that in life you sometimes have to play around [engaging in the career intervention programme’s activities] just to discover yourself [sic]” (10:14:1:16-17). “Today I just enjoy my self [sic] because I just have a good day when I was doing the collage it was great and funny because today it was all about me and that help me a lot because now I know about myself [sic] ...” (10:15:1:14-17). “I’m very excited because now I’m finally getting to know who am I [sic]” (10:16:1:9-10).</i></p> |   |
| 1.2. Making career decisions | Any phrases, sentences or words that suggest that the career intervention programme helped   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that the career intervention programme helped |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | participants make career choices  | participants make career choices  |
|  | <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>  |   |
|  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>"I felt that it [collage] didn't change my opinion of what I should do, it just sort of backed up everything that I had been thinking ..."</i> (5:2:8-9). <i>"I think the collage thing it actually, from what I wanted to be, it kind of like the whole experience took me to different aspects of what I really want to be [sic]"</i> (5:5:24-26).</p>  |   |
|  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>"This second testing also helped me in identifying what I actually wanted to do ..."</i> (9:1:2:7-9). <i>"The test made me realise what I truly want to do"</i> (9:9:1:7-8).</p>   |   |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>"The collage was cool to me because now I really know what I want to do. Cause when I was pasting those pictures, that thing getting into my mind, oh why paste those pictures [sic]? Cause I want to become this"</i> (7:1:27-30). <i>"It [the career intervention programme] also helped me a lot because now I know the careers that I want. Even though I did not even have a choice of the career, but now I know that if I want to be a social worker I can do this thing because I am also good at it [sic]"</i> (7:1:40-43).</p> |   |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>"I enjoy myself [making the collage] [sic]. I make my future plan today [sic]. My day with Mrs Cook was very nice"</i> (10:1:1:17-19). <i>"... and now [after participating in the career intervention programme] I think I know my career ..."</i> (10:5:1:21). <i>"Truly speaking I wasn't aware of what I want in future but now am clear what I will do in life [sic]"</i> (10:9:1:5-7).</p>  |   |
| 1.3. Clarified what participants value | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to the things that participants value  | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to the things that participants value |

| <b>Examples of participants' responses</b> |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“Personally I think the timeline was confirmation to me that a lot of my good memories and my bad memories were concentrated around family. So family played a big part in all, most of my memories, both good and bad. It just confirmed to me again what I thought before, the thing that to me the most important value is to make sure that my family is always ok ... [sic]” (5:3:1-4). “... but I think the questions [asked in one of the career intervention activities] helped because you said it was going to be a private activity like no-one would see it and allowed people to say I really do value money out of most things meanwhile like I also would try not to be – if people asked me the question, I would say definitely I value my family first meanwhile knowing that only myself and ma’am are going to see this, so let me be honest, because right now we are looking for a job, like a career to be going into, so I have to be honest with myself ... [sic]” (5:3:36-45).</i></p> |   |
|  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“The lessons we’ve spent making a collage have showed [sic] me exactly what I value most ...” (9:4:1:14-16). “Through out [sic] the lesson where we did time lines I learned that most of memorized [sic] are family [sic] orientated which made sense to me as why my main priority is to succeed and be able to provide the best for my own family” (9:4:2:2-8).</i></p>  |   |
|  | <p>Mthombo High school post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“Day 2 [completing the timeline] was very good it got me back wher I had good time and bad time, and helped me to discover my values [sic]” (10:9:1:8-9).</i></p>  |   |
| 1.4. Improved work ethic                   | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to an improved work ethic following participation in  | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to an improved work ethic following participation |

|  |                                   |                                      |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|  | the career intervention programme | in the career intervention programme |
| <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>   |                                   |                                      |
| <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“These exercises [in the career intervention programme] have really helped in motivating me personally to work much harder because I remember after the second lesson that we were doing, the collages, and before I walked out of the class, Mrs Cook asked, cause she had a look at it [one of the activities the participant had completed] and said, from it she could see what I like and what are my motives and she identified me and it is what my passion is and what are my motives and she identified me and it is what I liked initially and she asked me a question saying – is my Maths strong [sic]? Every time I am at home or at extra maths, I think about that question and it keeps me going and it keeps me working hard and those lessons taught me that I was not working hard enough” (5:9:33-42).</i></p> |                                   |                                      |
| <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“Through out [sic] all these lessons I have been able to notice that everybody wants the same thing which is success. There is no one I’ve yet to meet who doesn’t want success this made me realize that it’s going to take more than just talking and dreaming about it, because everybody can do that, I have to do whatever it takes to get what I want, I learned the meaning of hard work and prioritizing [sic]” (9:4:1:20-30).</i></p>  |                                   |                                      |
| <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“... being taught my her [researcher]” made the participant realise “how hard I must work to reach my dastanation [destination] in future [sic]” (10:4:1:11-14). “And it [participating in the career intervention programme] gave me more courage of starting to work hard at school [sic]” (10:16:1:14-15).</i></p>  |                                   |                                      |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1.5. Career information   | Any phrases, sentences or words that indicate that participants have acquired information about different careers from participating in the career intervention programme | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that participants acquired information about different careers from participating in the career intervention programme |
| <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>  |   |  |
| Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>"I enjoyed exploring different careers" (9:10:1:3 &amp; 5).</i>   |   |  |
| Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>"For me it helped me a lot because I discovered that there are lots of different careers that I can do ..."</i> (7:1:18-19).  |   |  |
| Mthombo High School post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>"Now I know about diffent career's [sic] ...."</i> (10:5:9-10). <i>"I experienced more and more careers that I didn't know of [sic] ..."</i> (10:6:12-13).   |   |  |
| 1.6. Clarified interests  | Any phrases, sentences or words suggesting that participants' interests were clarified through their participation in the career interest programme                       | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that participants' interests were clarified through their participation in the career intervention programme           |
| <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>  |   |  |
| Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>"From my part I think it [career intervention programme] has been useful in the sense that I was kind of here and there about what I wanted to do and I had my eyes set on law because it is something that I felt I can ... but I have always had other passions, and just like, especially with the collage exercise, just when I picked things like instinct in things that I love. So there was a lot of just like [sic] things that I picked out [while doing the collage] and so</i> |   |  |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|   | <p><i>it just means that it made me think about – do I see myself doing law in 10 years’ time?” (5:1:10-17). “... it [the collage] was just a matter of things that are close to my heart, and things that appeal to me, because I have always been very into fashion and you know pop culture, things like that so, I don’t know, it [the collage] just made me think, ok maybe it is not a bad thing to just go into the fashion route, business route type of thing, not that I am going to sit there and design clothes and cut material, but the business aspect and it is something I have a passion about and it just made me think [sic]” (5:1:32-38).</i></p> |   |
|   | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“The lessons we’ve spent making a collage have showed [sic] me ... and what I’m most probably going to be interested in doing” (9:4:1:14-18). “... but it [the career intervention programme] helped me discover my interest, things that I didn’t even know I acutally [sic] enjoy so much” (9:7:2:4-7).</i></p>   |   |
|   | <p>Mthombo High school Focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“It [the career intervention programme] has helped me and showed me my interest in my career [sic] ...” (7:5:42).</i></p>   |   |
|   | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“It is good because the collage also demonstrate ... what do I love ... [sic]” (10:4:1:18-20). “It [the career intervention programme] was good because I have learn about career interest what I like and what I don’t like [sic] ...” (10:15:1:4-5). “I now know what I like and what I don’t like” (10:16:1:12-13).</i></p>   |   |
| <p>1.7. Highlighted positive factors in life</p>  | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words suggesting that the career intervention programme highlighted positive factors in participants’ lives</p>   | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that the career intervention programme highlighted positive factors in participants’ lives</p> |
| <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p> |  |   |



|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“The timeline was good and reminded me of all the good things of my life instead of all the bad things I’m going through right now [sic]” (9:2:1:21-24).</i></p>   |   |
|   | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“I used to believe [prior to participating in the career intervention programme] that life is hard but now [after participating in the career intervention programme] I realise that life is easy you only make to be hard [sic]” (10:4:1:22-24).</i></p>   |   |
| <p>1.8. Express emotions</p>                      | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words suggesting that the career intervention programme gave participants the opportunity to express their emotions</p>  | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that the career intervention programme gave participants the opportunity to express their emotions</p>     |
| <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p> |   |   |
|   | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“Creating my collage was fun because I express my feelings and I got to [sic] deep with mine but only few people can understand [sic]” (9:3:1:17-19).</i> <i>“I have learn [sic] to become a bite [sic] able to open up and let people see what I think of my self [sic] and life what it has put me through [sic]” (9:3:1:28-30).</i></p> |   |
| <p>1.9. Opportunity to be honest</p>              | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words suggesting that the career intervention programme gave participants the opportunity to be honest about themselves</p>  | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that the career intervention programme gave participants the opportunity to be honest about themselves</p> |
| <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p> |   |   |
|   | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“At first I tried to write or choose the right things that would correspond with what I think I am or who I should be and the career that I wanted to do. Then I realised that this would not help either me</i></p>   |   |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|   | <p><i>or Mrs Cook because I would not have been honest [sic]. from there I went back erased all the lies and started from the beginning with honesty [sic]” (9:11:1:3-11). “It [one of the activities] was quite a simple process because all I needed to do was just be honest with myself then I knew that things would just flow” (9:11:2:5-8). “This exercise also (one of the career intervention programme activities) help me put aside what other people want me to be because I had to be honest with myself [sic] ...” (9:14:1:17-20).</i></p> |   |
| 1.10. No judgements experienced   | Any phrases, sentences or words suggesting that participants felt their responses during the career intervention programme would not be judged   | Any phrases, sentences or words that suggest that participants felt their responses during the career intervention programme would be judged        |
| <b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>  |  |   |
| <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“I loved it [participating in the career intervention programme] because, for the first time in a long time I could open up and feel unjudged [sic]” (9:11:1:15-17).</i></p> |  |   |
| 1.11. Participants seen as experts of their lives   | Any phrases, sentences or words suggesting that the career intervention programme assumes that participants are the experts of their lives   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that the career intervention programme assumes that participants are the experts of their lives |
| <b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>  |  |   |
| <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“I also love filling in questionnaires [sic] and doing tests that require my opinion and where I CAN’T BE WRONG!” (9:11:1:18-20).</i></p>                                    |  |   |
| <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“The collage was great because I did what I wanted to do, I became my own boss [sic] “ (10:14:1:14-16).</i></p>   |  |   |

**i. Theme 1: Benefits of career intervention programme**

**a. Self-knowledge**

Unlike typical learning activities, one participant from the experimental group from Penryn College named the timeline in the career intervention programme as a unique activity that gave him/her the opportunity to focus on his/her personal life: *“I enjoyed identifying my personality (likes, dislikes, beliefs), doing something different to normal school, taking time to focus on my personal life [reflection in time line] [sic]”* (9:10:1:6-10). Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School also discussed how the career intervention programme gave them the chance to focus on themselves and ultimately gave them the opportunity to uncover who they were: *“Today I just enjoy my self because I just have a good day when I was doing the collage it was great and funny because today it was all about me and that help me a lot because now I know about myself [sic] ...”* (10:15:1:14-17). *“I’m very excited because now I’m finally getting to know who am I [sic]”* (10:16:1:9-10). *“I was very happy to do my collage cause it is about me and my career what I want to be in my future [sic]”* (10:17:1:13-15).

Time taken to focus on personal lives allowed participants to become more familiar with themselves: *“I found the sessions overwhelming at times especially when I had to answer questions about myself and what my favourite things and achievements are. I found this overwhelming because like I stated before I feel as if I am not familiar with myself especially when it comes to my likes and dislikes and goals and achievements that I have faced in my life. Thank you Mrs Cook for these sessions they were a real eye-opener for myself and I really enjoyed finding out my strengths and weaknesses and actually getting familiar with myself and what I would like to achieve an aspire to do in the future [sic]. For the second round of testing I came in a bit more confident and relaxed. I no longer had the anxiety of the first testing session in the community hall where I was quite nervous and confused about who I was. I was more aware of myself and I was more familiar with myself. I was more precise and clear when answering the given questions unlike the first testing where I was unsure and had mixed feelings. I was more forwarding in my answering and more confident in my final answering. I felt more in touch with myself and given surroundings. I had a more clear and open head to the*

*testing and I felt really confident when answering the tests. I was more sure of myself and was less confused than the first testing [sic]” (9:15:2 & 3:7-32 & 2-19).*

The career intervention programme made one participant from the experimental group from Penryn College aware of the things he/she is passionate about, and in so doing made the participant question his/her original career choice: *“From my part I think it [the career intervention programme] has been useful in the sense that I was kind of here and there about what I wanted to do and I had my eyes set on law because it is something that I felt I can ... but I have always had other passions, and just like, especially with the collage exercise, just when I picked things like instinct in things that I love [sic]. So there was a lot of just like fashion things that I picked out [while doing the collage] and so it just means that it made me think about – do I see myself doing law in 10 years’ time?” (5:1:10-17).*

Another participant from the experimental group from Penryn College discussed how participating in the career intervention programme made him/her aware of his/her disposition. The participant concluded that he/she ultimately needs to be more adventurous: *“On my part the timeline showed me that I haven’t lived life as much as I have wanted to. I have held myself back in a lot of things, lot of situations where I could have just said, let me do it for the fun, to just experiment, to do crazy things, not crazy like, but to be more adventurous which is something I like doing” (5:3:14-18).* Another participant from the same group also expressed the same sentiments regarding a desire to live a more adventurous life: *“... maybe ... I haven’t lived spontaneously enough. That’s in the past though, so what I hope to do is to live life to the fullest from now on and to the optimum level when I’m older, because I love doing new adventurous things so, fingers crossed” (9:11:2 & 3: 30-32 & 2-5).* The need to engage in more memorable experiences emerged after a third participant from the experimental group from Penryn College participated in the career intervention programme: *“Timeline ... shows I do not pay much attention to what I do and maybe I just haven’t done enough to make my childhood memorable” (9:12:1:15-17).*

The importance of making your own career choices after establishing your passions was a realisation of another participant from the experimental group from Penryn College: *“I plan, you know what I mean, and I just don’t go into things. So just*

*for me, it just for me second guessing of what I really want to do and if I would really be happy doing law in 10 years' time [sic]. That kind of thing made me think that maybe it is time that you do what you love and do what is close to you but at the same time, it is going to be a rash type of thing because my parents know about the whole law-thing so I just go to them and say I am not doing law anymore because I have rediscovered myself"* (5:9:2-9). In so doing the participant took ownership of his/her career choice.

Self-discovery was named as an outcome of the career intervention programme by numerous other participants from the experimental group from Penryn College: *"All the exercises really helped me discover who I really am and who I want to be some made me open up and some didn't but I did enjoy all of them [sic]"* (9:1:1:25-28). *Over all these activities that we did really helped me in realising who I really am and what I want to do with my life"* (9:1:2:16-18). *"It [doing the collage] was a fun experience that makes you think about what kind of person you really are. It was fun [doing the collage] and you get to discover yourself everyday by asking one specific question: "Who am I really" [sic]. It's a worthwhile experience"* (9:5:1:14-17 & 21-22 & 24-26). *"It [completing the one activity in the career intervention programme] was a little weird, because didn't exactly know what to do or feel in terms of finding who you really are [sic]. It was thought provoking and helped a little [increasing knowledge about the self]. "Some of the questions made me think a little bit more about the life I wanted for myself and my family. The last session gave me a better perspective of what may come. The session where we were meant to create a collage was eye-opening [sic] because of some of the things that we as women read in these narrow-minded magazines. It showed me the kind of things that I as a person would love to read and/or write. These sessions were eye-opening [sic] and beneficial to my self-discovery. I discovered why I am the way I am. I have realised how well I've managed to deal with life's challenges. Mrs Cook helped us find ourselves and we are eternally grateful for that"* (9:6:1 & 2:5-7 & 18-19 & 24-28 & 2-7). *"The poster [collage] was great and relaxing. I got to know more about myself"* (9:8:1:15-16). *"During the time with Mrs Cook was a great experience [sic]. Learnt a little more about myself ..."* (9:9:3:4-6). *"I loved that process [making a collage] because it wasn't about talking about yourself but how you see yourself. I focused more on things I love and where I see myself 10, 20, 30 years down the line [sic]. I loved it! It was just something I*

would enjoy doing again, because you find out things you didn't really realise" (9:11:2:12-18). "This session [making a collage] was really a huge eye-opener because I've always told myself what I should do, what I should be like but now whilst I was taking out pictures my true thoughts ... were shown because I would supconsciously [sic] pick pictures that appealed to me. This just revealed the true me, for me!" (9:11:1:24-31). "Making the colage has been helpful because it has made me realise who I am [sic] ..." (9:16:1:12-13). "It (the initial tests written) was a quite intimidating thing to do but now I se that it is helping me discover myself" (9:19:1:7-9). "[Participating in the career intervention programme] ... made me learn more about myself ... taugh [sic] me a lot about myself" (9:20:1:7-8 & 20).

Two participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School reiterated that the career intervention programme led to self-discovery: "It [doing the collage] made me to realise that in life you sometimes have to play around [engaging in the career intervention programme's activities] just to discover yourself [sic]" (10:14:1:16-17). "It was a good day for me because it was my first time doing collage and it make me clear and know who am I. Now I know what I need to succes in future. And what I need is what I want [sic]" (10:21:1:9-13).

Two participants from the experimental group from Penryn College named identifying individual strengths and weaknesses as benefit of the career intervention programme: "I think it [the career intervention programme] helped me identify my pros and cons and I really enjoyed it though [sic]" (9:1:1:17-18). "To me it fell into my therapy section where I get to know what am cable [capable] of doing with my life and what people think of me [sic]. I learned a lot so far" (9:3:1:12-14). Identifying his/her strengths was also named by one participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High School as a benefit of the career intervention programme: "When I was dowing my collage I have realised and know about my self what am good at, what is best for me [sic] ..." (10:5:1:18-21).

The impact of negative life experiences was acknowledged by a participant from the experimental group from Penryn College: "Timeline – Difficult to remember key points in my life because they seem irrelevant to my future, though it was nice to apply these to myself as a person and my personality. then [sic] to discover that it is relevant

*because it affects me as a person” (9:10:1:11-17). One participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High School realised that negative life experiences serve a purpose in life: “For me the time line helped me a lot because I have realised that some of the bad things that happened in my life are the things that keep me going even today” (7:1:34-36).*

Finally the career intervention programme seemingly helped participants from the experimental group from Penryn College uncover what they want in life. One participant from this group also said that the programme made it clear what his/her friends want in life: *“Realised I am Easily [sic] inspired which means if something is interesting enough I will want to do it” (9:12:1:23-24). “I would say the sessions were eye-opening in terms of finding out what you want and what your friends want in life” (9:15:1 & 2: 30-32 & 2).*

**b. Making a career choice**

One participant from the experimental group from Penryn College felt that his/her participation in the intervention programme supported the career choice he/she was planning to make: *“I felt that it [collage] didn’t change my opinion of what I should do, it just sort of backed up everything that I had been thinking ...” (5:2:8-9). Another participant from the same group felt that his/her participation in the intervention programme changed his/her mind in terms of his/her initial career choice: “I think the collage thing it actually, from what I wanted to be, it kind of like the whole experience took me to different aspects of what I really want to be” (5:5:24-26).*

A participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High School stated that one of the career intervention programme tasks helped him/her made a career choice: *“The collage was cool to me because now I really know what I want to do. Cause when I was pasting those pictures, that thing getting into my mind, oh why paste those pictures [sic]? Cause I want to become this” (7:1:27-30).*

The career intervention programme reportedly helped participants from the experimental group from Penryn College decide on their future careers: *“This second testing also helped me in identifying what I actually wanted to do ...” (9:1:2:7-9). “The test made me realise what I truly want to do” (9:9:1:7-8). “Learnt ...what exactly I want*

*to do even though I have an idea of my future career already” (9:9:3:5-8). “It [participating in the career intervention programme] has made me realise that my career will be close to, if not, the fashion industry [sic] ... I need to be around fashion and media – I want to be, I need to be a Mogul, because I truly feel that it’s something that has been in me and something Africa and the rest of the world [sic]. I want and need to be someone Africa, U.S.A, U.K, Asia and both of the Poles look to and truly say,” Yep, he is the guy that revolutionised pop-culture” [sic]” (9:11:4:7-20). “The activity this time around made me realize that I want a profession, but a profession [sic] in the entertainment industry. I feel I am very artistic and creative both in my words and behaviour therefore [sic] I would enjoy dealing with the entertainment industry such as hip hop music, urban wear clothing and the business side of the entertainment industry” (9:14:1:7-17).*

Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High school discussed how, like the former learners from Penryn College, the career intervention programme helped them make career decisions: *“It [the career intervention programme] also helped me a lot because now I know the careers that I want. Even though I did not even have a choice of the career, but now I know that if I want to be a social worker I can do this thing because I am also good at it [sic]” (7:1:40-43). “I enjoy myself [making the collage] [sic]. I make my future plan today [sic]. My day with Mrs Cook was very nice” (10:1:1:17-19). “... the collage also demonstrate my dream and career what ... kind of person am I going to be in future [sic]” (10:4:1:18-21). “... and now [after participating in the career intervention programme] I think I know my career ...” (10:5:1:21). “Truly speaking I wasn’t aware of what I want in future but now am clear what I will do in life [sic]” (10:9:1:5-7). “When we started on Monday I was scared but now theres a lot of carrees in my mind. The Callage helped a lot cause I had many carres wich I wanted to do but now I can be spacific on wich I desire most and can lead me to a better person at the end of the day [sic]” (10:9:1:11-15). “... that [career intervention programme] help me alot because now I know what is a best career I should go for [sic]” (10:15:1:6-7). “I now know what careers I must follow ...” (10:16:1:4-5). “Collage it show me the to my career of life [sic]” (10:20:1:17-18). “I learn a lot about choosing career [sic]” (10:21:1:6-7).*



Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College spoke about taking ownership of their career choices and made a career decisions after participating in the career intervention programme: *“When I read those magazines I found pictures that will help me and once that I was doing it I found the picture of someone volunteering, a person who is HIV positive and I thought I can also do that cause I know that those diseases, we can also get them and those people who had it wants our help and we want to help people, do their make-up, going clubbing, they don’t care about old people and those who are sick and some of them did not care about diseases, they caught them from their parents and they need their help” [sic] (7:2:6-15). “For me it helped to be concerned about my future because at first I thought that the second choice was law, but since I did those activities that you gave us, I realised that law is not my thing. Now I am focusing on what I want and not on what people want me to do” (7:2:43-46).*

**c. Clarified values**

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College identified their respective values from participating in the intervention programme: *“Personally I think the timeline was confirmation to me that a lot of my good memories and my bad memories were concentrated around family. So family played a big part in all, most of my memories, both good and bad. It just confirmed to me again what I thought before, the thing that to me the most important value is to make sure that my family is always ok ...” (5:3:1-4). “... but I think the questions [participants were asked questions in the one activity in the intervention programme] helped because you said it was going to be a private activity like no-one would see it and allowed people to say I really do value money out of most things meanwhile like I also would try not to be – if people asked me the question, I would say definitely I value my family first meanwhile knowing that only myself and ma’am are going to see this, so let me be honest, because right now we are looking for a job, like a career to be going into, so I have to be honest with myself ...” (5:3:36-45). “The lessons we’ve spent making a collage have showed [sic] me exactly what I value most ...” (9:4:1:14-16). “Through out [sic] the lesson where we did time lines I learned that most of memorized [sic] are family [sic] orientated which made sense to me as why my main priority is to succeed and be able to provide the best for my own*

family” (9:4:2:2-8). “The timeline did however show how much my family is there for me, (good and bad times), the love in my family is very strong even in difficult situations [sic] but in the end I’d always look to my family for advise, problems et [sic], more than what I would do to my friends” (9:7:2:15-22).

One participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High School also spoke about his/her experience of identifying his/her values after participating in the career intervention programme: “Day 2 (completing the timeline) was very good it got me back wher I had good time and bad time, and helped me to discover my values [sic]” (10:9:1:8-9).

#### **d. Improved work ethic**

One participant from the experimental group from Penryn College felt that his/her participation in the career intervention programme motivated him/her to work harder at school: “These exercises [in the career intervention programme] have really helped in motivating me personally to work much harder because I remember after the second lesson that we were doing, the collages, and before I walked out of the class, Mrs Cook asked, cause she had a look at it and said, from it she could see what I like and what are my motives and she identified me and it is what my passion is and what are my motives and she identified me and it is what I liked initially and she asked me a question saying – is my Maths strong? Every time I am at home or at extra Maths, I think about that question and it keeps me going and it keeps me working hard and those lessons taught me that I was not working hard enough” (5:9:33-42).

Two other participants from the experimental group from Penryn College discussed how their participation in the career intervention programme made them aware of the importance of hard work in striving to achieve their aspirations in life: “Through out [sic] all these lessons I have been able to notice that everybody wants the same thing which is success. There is no one I’ve yet to meet who doesn’t want success this made me realize that it’s going to take more than just talking and dreaming about it, because everybody can do that, I have to do whatever it takes to get what I want, I learned the meaning of hard work and prioritizing [sic]” (9:4:1:20-30). “I also enjoyed seeing what

*path I would have to take to get there and how much hard work is needed to live my dreams” (9:15:1:26-29).*

The same sentiments regarding the importance of hard work was named as an outcome of the career intervention programme by a participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High School: “... *being taught my her [researcher]” made the participant realise “how hard I must work to reach my dastanation (destination) in future [sic]” (10:4:1:11-14). “And it [participating in the career intervention programme] gave me more courage of starting to work hard at school [sic]” (10:16:1:14-15).*

#### **e. Career information**

The following responses made by participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School show how they valued receiving information on different careers during the intervention programme: “*For me it helped me a lot because I discovered that there are lots of different careers that I can do ...” (7:1:18-19). “ ... you have given me some information that has made me proud about my career. Sometimes when I was telling my parents about my career they would laugh. They would say taking care of animals – no – sometimes they were laughing, but you have showed me that is important thing” [sic] (7:3:43-47).*

Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School also learnt about different careers by participating in the career intervention programme: “*Now I know about diffent career’s [sic] ...” (10:5:9-10). “I experienced more and more careers that I didn’t know of [sic] ...” (10:6:12-13). “It was so fantastic because now I know different kinds of career that may make my future to be bright [sic]” (10:8:9-11). “I feel happy to know about som career that I don’t know [sic] ...” (10:11:1:12-13). “It was exciting and it helped me to realise that there are a lots of carees out there [sic]” (10:14:1:8-9). “It [participating in the career intervention programme] was good because I came across new careers that I never thought of” (10:16:1:8-9).*

A participant from the experimental group from Penryn College was given the opportunity to gain information on different careers through an exploratory process in the career intervention programme: “*I enjoyed exploring different careers” (9:10:1:3 & 5).*

**f. Clarified interests**

A number of participants from the experimental group from Penryn College found the intervention programme beneficially in that it clarified their career interests: *“From my part I think it [career intervention programme] has been useful in the sense that I was kind of here and there about what I wanted to do and I had my eyes set on law because it is something that I felt I can ... but I have always had other passions, and just like, especially with the collage exercise, just when I picked things like instinct in things that I love. So there was a lot of just like fashion things that I picked out [while doing the collage] and so it just means that it made me think about – do I see myself doing law in 10 years time [sic]?”* (5:1:10-17). *“... it [the collage] was just a matter of things that are close to my heart, and things that appeal to me, because I have always been very into fashion and you know pop culture, things like that so, I don’t know, it [the collage] just made me think, ok maybe it is not a bad thing to just go into the fashion route, business route type of thing, not that I am going to sit there and design clothes and cut material, but the business aspect and it is something I have a passion about and it just made me think [sic]”* (5:1:32-38). *“... but now I have rediscovered that oh, when I was six, I wanted to do medicine and that thought is still in my head ...”* (5:9:23-25). *“But at then end of the day you put things together (in making the collages) and you can see what you really want to do – nothing related to hers wanting you to be a doctor. But that is really where your interests come out ...”* (5:11:12-15). One participant discussed how his/her interests were clarified on the timeline and realised that interests change over time: *“I think on my side, was just the timeline [when asked if interests were shaped through participation in the career intervention programme]. I did not want to write down the bad things [on the timeline]. The good side of things, I was noticing so many different things at certain points and noticed that I identified what I wanted to be at certain times”* (5:13:33-36). *“With my friend, she has interests which have developed – when she did her collage you could see that what she enjoyed was depicted very clearly in her collage”* (5:14:4-6). *“It has helped me and showed me my interest in my career ...”* (7:5:42). *“The lessons we’ve spent making a collage have showed [sic] me ... and what I’m most probably going to be interested in doing”* (9:4:1:14-18). *“A few of my interests changed. I found that more things interested me this time [during the first testing stage of the*

career intervention programme] than last time [during the final phase of formal testing in the career intervention programme]” (9:5:2:4-6). “I thought the first lesson was very exciting as it also got other scholars [sic], friends to describe what their interest [sic] are ...” (9:7:1:14-16). “... but it [the career intervention programme] helped me discover my interest, things that I didn’t even know I acutally [sic] enjoy so much” (9:7:2:4-7). “[The collage] make [sic] realise that I’m more interested in cares and luxury [sic] and success. Im [sic] more into business [sic] ...live like my dad, a simple life style [sic] but yet successful” (9:8:1:19-22). In completing one of the activities a participant stated that his/her “interests were shown ...” (9:11:1:28). “... I never knew I was into fashion so much and I’m really thinking about it because I love it and seriously passionate about it so I’ll juts have to see what happens” (9:11:2:19-22). “This entire process [participating in the career intervention programme] has truely eye-opening [sic]. It has made me realise things that have always been there but I didn’t notice. For example my serious love, passion and addection for fashion [sic]” (9:11:4:3-6). “Doing the testing activity once again showed that my true passion for making rap music is still there but my other options all changed” (9:14:1:4-7). “The lessons have been helpful, it has made me think of what I really like [sic]. Usually Im so busy doing other things that I don’t even realize that I don’t like doing it, and these lessons have helped me discovered what I really like [sic]” (9:1:7-10).

Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School also named identifying interests as a benefit of the career intervention programme: “It [the career intervention programme] has helped me and showed me my interest in my career [sic] ...” (7:5:42). “It is good because the collage also demonstrate ... what do I love ... [sic]” (10:4:1:18-20). “I just got excited because it made me realise my goals and while I was busy with the questionnaire I realised my goals and I started to knew my likes and dislikes [sic] “ (10:6:1:4-6). “It [the career intervention programme] was good because I have learn about career interest what I like and what I don’t like [sic] ...” (10:15:1:4-5). “I now know what I like and what I don’t like” (10:16:1:12-13).

**g. Highlighted positive factors in life**

One of the career intervention activities (the timeline) made a participant from the experimental group from Penryn College aware of positive aspects of his/her life that seemed to be clouded by negative life experiences: *“The timeline was good and reminded me of all the good things of my life instead of all the bad things I’m going through right now [sic]”* (9:2:1:21-24).

After participating in the career intervention programme, a participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High School was made aware of positive aspects in his/her life and began to attribute many hardships he/she faced to himself: *“I used to believe [prior to participating in the career intervention programme] that life is hard but now [after participating in the career intervention programme] I realise that life is easy you only make to be hard [sic]”* (10:4:1:22-24).

**h. Opportunity to express emotions**

The career intervention programme seemingly gave a participant from the experimental group from Penryn College the opportunity to express his/her emotions: *“Creating my collage was fun because I express my feelings and I got to [sic] deep with mine but only few people can understand [sic]”* (9:3:1:17-19).

Being more expressive during the career intervention programme enabled another participant from the same group to show his/her peers who he/she really is and reveal to them details of his/her life: *“I have learn [sic] to become a bite [sic] able to open up and let people see what I think of my self [sic] and life what it has put me through [sic]”* (9:3:1:28-30).

**i. Opportunity to be honest**

The career intervention programme seemed to allow participants from the experimental group of Penryn College to be honest with themselves when completing the different tasks: *“At first I tried to write or choose the right things that would correspond with what I think I am or who I should be and the career that I wanted to do. Then I realised that this would not help either me or Mrs Cook because I would not have been honest [sic]. From there I went back erased all the lies and started from the beginning with honesty [sic]”* (9:11:1:3-11). *“It [one of the activities] was quite a simple process*

*because all I needed to do was just be honest with myself then I knew that things would just flow” (9:11:2:5-8). “This exercise [one of the career intervention programme activities] also help me put aside what other people want me to be because I had to be honest with myself [sic] ...” (9:14:1:17-20).*

**j. No judgements experienced**

One participant from the experimental group from Penryn College said that honesty was facilitated during his/her participation in the career intervention programme because no judgements were made when participants responded in the various tasks: *“I loved it [participating in the career intervention programme] because, for the first time in a long time I could open up and feel unjudged [sic]” (9:11:1:15-17).*

**k. Participants seen as experts of their lives**

The career intervention programme seemingly acknowledged participants as the experts of their lives. This sentiment was expressed by a participant from the experimental group from Penryn College and one from the experimental group from Mthombo High School respectively: *“I also love filling in questionnaires [sic] and doing tests that require my opinion and where I CAN’T BE WRONG!” (9:11:1:18-20); “The collage was great because I did what I wanted to do, I became my own boss [sic]” (10:14:1:14-16).*

**4.4.2.2. Theme 2: Negative experiences of career intervention programme**

Participants discussed any experiences of the career intervention programme that were negative. This main theme emerged from an in-depth, inductive data analysis of the post-intervention interview transcriptions and the journal entries from the experimental groups of the two schools. Five related subthemes are presented in Table 4.16 below.

**Table 4.16: Summary of theme 2 and related subthemes that emerged from an in-depth, inductive review of the transcriptions of the post-intervention focus-group interview and the journal entries**

| <b>Theme 2: Negative experiences of career intervention programme</b> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Subthemes</b>  | <b>Inclusion criteria</b>  | <b>Exclusion criteria</b>  |
| 2.1. Difficulty completing some of my intervention tasks              | Any phrases, sentences or words that suggest that participants found it difficult to complete some of the intervention tasks   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that participants found it difficult to complete some of the intervention tasks                                  |
|   | <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>   |  |
|   | Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“In the first lesson that we had I didn't know what to expect and the exercise we did on ourselves was pretty hard to do because I don't like bosting [sic] about my and my life [sic]” (9:1:1:13-17). “I thought of it [the initial tests written by participants] as a test, I was scared [sic]” (9:8:1:4-5). “It was hard for me to do the timeline cause [sic] I find it hard to share my personal experiences” (9:9:3:14-17).</i> |  |
| 2.2. Frustration and/or confusion developed                           | Any phrases, sentences or words that suggest that participants got frustrated and/or confused while taking part in the intervention programme  | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to the development of frustration and/or confusion in participants while taking part in the intervention programme |
|   | <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>   |  |
|   | Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: When speaking about the questions asked in the intervention programme in the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) one  |  |



|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p>participant said, <i>“The questions [those asked in the CIP (Maree, 2010c) frustrated me”</i>. He/she added, <i>“I could not answer them. A lot of them were not questions that I had thought of before, so I could not answer them. I sat there, like ... skip” [sic] (5:4:11, 14-15).</i></p>  |  |
|  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“I was confused and irritated because I didn’t expect what we were gonna [sic] be doing” (9:2:1:3-5).</i> <i>“It was confusing at first. The crowd was a little bit rowdy” (9:6:1:4-5).</i> <i>“Questions – almost frustrating [sic] because I was unsure of what to say most of the time” (9:18:1:3-4).</i></p>   |  |
| <p>2.3. Difficulty looking at past</p> | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that indicate that participants found it difficult to look at the past</p>   | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not indicate that participants found it difficult to look at the past</p> |
|  | <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p>   |  |
|  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“I don’t like the timeline because I don’t like thinking back to what hurt me – if that makes sense. I like looking forward to what I can achieve now and in the future. Otherwise I feel like I – maybe I am holding myself back – I am standing in one place – saying I want to move forward and the timeline made me look back and made me think about a lot of things I did not want to think about” (5:6:34-39).</i> <i>“To me the timeline was ok, but like, my experiences when I was one, was kind of hard to think about ... because no one wants to think back of losing a parent” (5:8:23-24, 34).</i></p> |  |
|  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for</p>   |  |

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|  | <p>experimental group: <i>“It [doing the timeline] was quite an interesting exercise however I don’t like looking back at the past sad, angry and bad memories which is why I try my best to avoid it [sic]. The timeline made me feel upset as I hate looking back at the past, the present and the future is something that worries me everyday, not just career choices etc, but social life, friends and family [sic]” (9:7:1 &amp; 2:21-25 &amp; 7-13). “It took me hard to remember because I don’t real feel that my past should be remembered/important to me [sic]” (9:8:1:24-25).</i></p> |  |
| <p>2.4. Questioned relevance of timeline</p>   | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that suggest that participants found the timeline irrelevant to their career development</p>   | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to the timeline as an irrelevant activity to their career development</p> |
| <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p> <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“The timeline did not fit for me – it was like the one that did not fit in ... Because the others were definitely linked to careers and yourself. With the timeline, I mean it is me, but it is not me as in what I am going to do in a few years [sic] time. This is me now. I just felt it was the odd one out if I had to pick the odd one out” (5:8:9, 18-21).</i></p> |   |  |
| <p>2.5. No definite career (for job analysis) decisions</p>  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“I don’t feel like the lessons have helped me with my future and what I as an individual want ...”(9:7:2:2-4). “I noticed that I do not know what I want. Nothing has changed. I still do not know which career is right for me” (9:12:1:19-21). “... I’m really confused [on completing the career intervention</i></p>   |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p><i>programme] on what I want to do because theres [sic] just so many things I can do ...” (9:20:2:5-7).</i></p> |
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**ii. Theme 2: Negative experiences of career intervention programme**

**a. Difficulty completing some of my intervention tasks**

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College discussed the difficulties they had completing some of the tasks in the career intervention programme: *“In the first lesson that we had I didn’t know what to expect and the exercise we did on ourselves was pretty hard to do because I don’t like bosting [boasting] about my and my life [sic]” (9:1:1:13-17).* *“The timeline was very difficult to start with as I was only remembering this years [sic] memories and some of last year” (9:7:1:19-21).* *“I thought of it [the initial tests written by participants] as a test, I was scared [sic]” (9:8:1:4-5).* *“It was hard for me to do the timeline cause [sic] I find it hard to share my personal experiences” (9:9:3:14-17).* *“What was difficult: Putting a title to my life if it were to be published in a book, identifying a suitable quote for my life, finding images suited for my personality as I have a hard time seperating [sic] my interests to my surroundings and what I am subjected to as opposed to what I like to do” (9:10:1:12 & 17-24).* *“This [timeline] was the hardest task for me especially because I really thought I have a good memory [sic]. It was a bit sad to think that I did not have a whole lot of good memories, that I could think of ...” (9:11:2:26-30).* *“Timeline was difficult to write out cause I can’t remember [sic] ...” (9:12:1:15).* *“The timeline is the thing I hate doing because it makes me realise that I only remember the bad things” (9:13:2:5-7).* *“I didn’t know how to answer all the questions, my life story in particular” (9:17:1:10).* *“Callage [sic] – didn’t enjoy, find cutting and pasting and scrap booking type things annoying and way too busy” (9:18:1:9-11).* *“The collage I found was challenging because I didn’t find anything in the magazines that I thought described me” (9:19:1:26-28).*

**b. Frustration and/or confusion developed**

One participant from the experimental group from Penryn College had established career plans for his/her future prior to participating in the career intervention programme. The participant was confused after participating in the career intervention programme as he/she reconsidered the initial career choices made: *“For me, it [collage] confused me a bit because I had plans set out for my future and then we started doing the whole thing [doing the collage] and I started to rethink everything that I have already chosen. I don’t know if that is what other people see me doing or what I see myself doing. At the moment I am confused”* (5:1:40-44). *“It kind of like scared me and also messed up like a lot of things I had planned [sic]”* (5:9:1-2).

Other participants from the experimental group from Penryn College discussed the confusion and/or frustration that they experienced in response to some of the career intervention activities: *“The questions [those asked in the CIP (Maree, 2010c)] frustrated me”*. He/she added, *“I could not answer them. A lot of them were not questions that I had thought of before, so I could not answer them. I sat there, like ... skip” [sic]* (5:4:11, 14-15). *“I was confused and irritated because I didn’t expect what we were gonna [sic] be doing”* (9:2:1:3-5). *“What I experienced when we were being tested was doubt. I was sure of what I really wanted to do. I was indecisive and it made me think about whether I want to be a surgeon or psychologist. I was and am really baffled”* (9:5:1:4-8). *“It was confusing at first. The crowd was a little bit rowdy”* (9:6:1:4-5). *“The test that we now have done twice [sic], has made me realize that I have now opened myself to a wider range of career choices. This has actually made me more confused about my career choice”* (9:16:2:3-5). *“Questions – almost frustrating [sic] because I was unsure of what to say most of the time”* (9:18:1:3-4).

**c. Difficulty looking at past**

It was challenging for some participants from the experimental group from Penryn College to participate in some parts of the career intervention programme because they found it challenging to remember the past: *“I don’t like the timeline because I don’t like thinking back to what hurt me – if that makes sense. I like looking forward to what I can achieve now and in the future. Otherwise I feel like I – maybe I am holding myself*

*back – I am standing in one place – saying I want to move forward and the timeline made me look back and made me think about a lot of things I did not want to think about” (5:6:34-39). “But ma’am what does it help to try and build from the past as something that is not going to be in your future?” (5:6:47-48). “To me the timeline was ok, but like, my experiences when I was one, was kind of hard to think about ... because no one wants to think back of losing a parent” (5:8:23-24, 34). “It [doing the timeline] was quite an interesting exercise however I don’t like looking back at the past sad, angry and bad memories which is why I try my best to avoid it [sic]. The timeline made me feel upset as I hate looking back at the past, the present and the future is something that worries me everyday, not just career choices etc, but social life, friends and family [sic]” (9:7:1 & 2:21-25 & 7-13). “It took me hard to remember because I don’t real feel that my past should be remembered/important to me [sic]” (9:8:1:24-25). “What was difficult: Remembering memories from my past, identifying how they made me feel and who was linked to them” (9:10:12 & 14-16). “I found that it [completing the timeline] was hard trying to remember the things that impacted my life ... The exercise made me feel a little depressed because all the bad memories I tried to forget I remembered and that made me remember the emotional strain that I was going through” (9:19:1:12-13 & 20-23).*

**d. Questioned relevance of timeline**

A participant from the experimental group from Penryn College did not find one of the activities in the career intervention programme relevant to his/her career development: *“The timeline did not fit for me – it was like the one that did not fit in ... Because the others were definitely linked to careers and yourself. With the timeline, I mean it is me, but it is not me as in what I am going to do in a few years [sic] time. This is me now. I just felt it was the odd one out if I had to pick the odd one out” (5:8:9, 18-21).*

**e. No definite career (for job analysis) decisions**

Participation in the career intervention programme did not help some of the participants from the experimental group from Penryn College make career decisions for their futures: *“I don’t feel like the lessons have helped me with my future and what I as an individual want ...” (9:7:2:2-4). “The first lesson in class did not change my state of*

*mind I was still confused because I havn't figured much out [sic]. The last lesson allowed me to figure out what kind of look I have to life but it frustrated me not knowing exactly what I will do after next year" (9:12:1:8-13). "I noticed that I do not know what I want. Nothing has changed. I still do not know which career is right for me" (9:12:1:19-21). "The only issue is that I still don't know what my career should be" (9:16:1:13-14). "... I'm really confused [after completing the career intervention programme] on what I want to do because theres [sic] just so many things I can do ..." (9:20:2:5-7).*

#### 4.4.2.3. Theme 3: Changes to career intervention programme

Participants proposed changes to the career intervention programme. This main theme emerged from an in-depth, inductive data analysis of the post-intervention interview transcriptions and the journal entries from the experimental groups of the two schools. The theme and related subthemes are presented in Table 4.17 below.

**Table 4.17: Summary of theme 3 and related subthemes that emerged from an in-depth, inductive review of the transcriptions of the post-intervention focus-group interview and the journal entries**

| <b>Theme 3: Changes to career intervention programme</b> |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Subthemes</b>   | <b>Inclusion criteria</b>   | <b>Exclusion criteria</b>  |
| 3.1. Timing  | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to proposed changes to the timing of the career intervention programme   | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to proposed changes to the timing of the career intervention programme |
|  | <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>  |  |
|  | Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>"It [the experience of career intervention programme] makes you think that the amount of time that one has in order to make the right [career] decision, because you literally, you cannot start now. You have to have been thinking about this" (5:9:9-11). The participants then replied, "Yes" when</i> |  |

|                              |   |   |
|------------------------------|---|---|
|                              | <p><i>asked if the career intervention programme should have been implemented sooner than Grade 11. “... maybe around Grade 10-ish we already have an idea of what we want to do [sic]” (5:9:20-21). “I think there is no right time to do this test [career intervention programme] because at the beginning of Grade 10 you are a bit immature to decide what is going to happen to you in the future and Grade 11 is a little too late because you cannot change subjects and go into Grade 12 with new subjects, so there is not set time to do [sic]” (5:9:46-50).</i></p> |   |
| <p>3.2. More discussions</p> | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words proposing that the career intervention programme should allow for more discussions</p>   | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not propose that the career intervention programme should allow for more discussions</p> |
|                              | <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p>   |   |
|                              | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“What I didn’t enjoy: Environment could be more open/discussion taking place to help fit a profile of yourself in your own mind” (9:10:1:26 &amp; 28-30).</i></p>  |   |

**iii. Theme 3: Changes to career intervention programme**

**a. Timing**

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College felt that the intervention programme should be implemented in schools sooner than Grade 11: *“It [the experience of career intervention programme] makes you think that the amount of time that one has in order to make the right [career] decision, because you literally, you cannot start now. You have to have been thinking about this” (5:9:9-11). The*

participants then replied, “Yes” when asked if the career intervention programme should have been implemented sooner than Grade 11. “... maybe around Grade 10-ish we already have an idea of what we want to do [sic]” (5:9:20-21). “I think there is no right time to do this test [career intervention programme] because at the beginning of Grade 10 you are a bit immature to decide what is going to happen to you in the future and Grade 11 is a little too late because you cannot change subjects and go into Grade 12 with new subjects, so there is not set time to do [sic]” (5:9:46-50).

#### b. More discussions

The need for more group discussions during the career intervention programme was expressed as a need by one of the participants from the experimental group from Penryn College: “What I didn’t enjoy: Environment could be more open/discussion taking place to help fit a profile of yourself in your own mind” (9:10:1:26 & 28-30).

#### 4.4.2.4. Theme 4: Career choice influences

Participants discussed the various factors that influenced their career choices. This main theme emerged from an in-depth, inductive data analysis of the post-intervention interview transcriptions and the journal entries from the experimental groups from the two schools. Four related subthemes are presented in Table 4.18 below.

**Table 4.18: Summary of theme 4 and related subthemes that emerged from an in-depth, inductive review of the transcriptions of the post-intervention focus-group interview and the journal entries**

| Theme 4: Career choice influences |   |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Subthemes                         | Inclusion criteria  | Exclusion criteria   |
| 4.1. Influence of others          | Any phrases, sentences or words suggesting that other people had a negative influence on participants’ career choices | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that other people had a negative influence on participants’ career choices |
|                                   | <b>Examples of participants’ responses</b>  |  |
|                                   | Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews   |  |



|  |  |
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|  | <p>for experimental group: <i>“It [the participant analysed outfits people wore in the magazines he/she read when doing the collage] has made me aware that it [an interest in the world of fashion] has been here, but because everyone has always said you need a professional career” (5:13:2-4).</i></p>   |
|  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“For the second testing I wasn’t as scared as the first one because I wasn’t narrow minded about the career I want to do [sic]. In this testing my choices did change but not majority [sic]. ... my parents are the ones who keep forcing me into one particular career choice which is why my first test might be a narrow minded choice” (9:1:2:3-5 &amp; 9-12).</i></p> |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“For me I have realised that in order to achieve my dreams I have to sometimes play deaf and not listen to what my parents say and focus on what I want” (7:3:18-20).</i></p>   |
|  | <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p>  |
|  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“... but I think the activity that we did is what is in control of me in the opposite way, because I feel now it is going to be whatever result comes back, we are going to relate our career around that because we were honest with ourselves ... Therefore I think that the activity does now have control over us” (5:10:34-40).</i></p>                         |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“I enjoyed today’s session a lot and I think I will be help [sic] in choosing a career ...”</i></p>  |

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|-------------------------------|---|---|
|                               | <i>(10:12:1:11-13).</i>   |   |
| 4.2. Guidance from researcher | Any phrases, sentences or words suggesting that participants believed that the researcher would help them make suitable career choices  | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that the participants believed that the researcher would help them make suitable career choices |
|                               | <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>  |   |
|                               | <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: One participant said that he/she would like to know what the researcher thought about his/her completed collage by stating, <i>“So I would like to know what you [researcher] can pull out from that [sic]. So it is not so much from my part, but from your part if it makes any sense” [sic] (5:2:9-12). “One would like to see the results, because I would like to see what you can pull out ...” (5:2:19-20). “Yes, I will take your suggestion seriously, simply because you are doing your job” (5:11:43-44).</i></p> |   |
|                               | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“It [participation in the career intervention programme] made me realise how little I know about my – self [sic] and what I want. I paged through all the magazines but still I was unable to find what I like and want in life. I realised that I need a certain person [referring to the researcher] to show me what I actually want and need” (9:2:1:12-19). “... Mrs Cook can give me an accurate measure of the career path I should walk into” (9:14:1:20-23).</i></p>   |   |
|                               | Mthombo High School post-intervention journal entries   |   |

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|  | <p>for experimental group: <i>“I feel so good to have Mrs Cook and angel today [sic]. Because they care for us. And when you don’t know what you want in future or you don’t have a choice with you career and want be in life [sic]” (10:1:1:6-10). “... you [researcher] are doing your best to make our future best [sic]” (10:4:1:6-7). “... you [researcher] made me realise my career and I wish it could be a success thank you [sic] ...” (10:6:1:7-8).</i></p> |   |
| 4.3. Test results  | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words indicating that participants expected the results of the tests administered in the intervention programme to help them make career decisions</p>   | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not indicate that participants did not expect the results of the tests administered in the intervention programme to help them make career decisions</p> |
| <b>Examples of participant responses</b>   |   |   |
| <p>Penryn College pre-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“During the testing I was pretty scared because these test results are guidance to what career I should be looking into. One question that I kept asking myself was what if I don’t like this career which made me stress abit [sic] throughout the testing” (9:1:1:4-9). “I felt nervous cause [sic] I did not know what to expect from the final results and I did not want to have to change my subjects, goals and dreams. I really was also looking forward to the testing to find out my strengths and weaknesses and to find my suitable job as long as it interested me and it was still in the filed [field] or sector I was looking forward to learning more</i></p> |   |   |

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|  | <p><i>about myself, lately I have not really been able to say who I am, I was not familiar with myself and I was hoping this testing would change all that [sic]” (9:15:1:4-19).</i></p> |
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**iv. Theme 4: Career choice influences**

**a. Influence of others**

The negative influence other people have on individuals’ career choices was named by some of the participants from the experimental group from Penryn College: “... but I am just saying most of the time the group that are around, that is like, going to be, I want to be a doctor, and they would respond that yes you should, meanwhile, knowing inside you are going to be a rapper” (5:4:4-7). One of the activities made a participant consider a career in the world of fashion, something he/she had never have thought about prior to participating in the career intervention programme: “It [the participant analysed pictures of outfits people wore in magazines when doing the collage] has made me aware that it [an interest in the world of fashion] has been here, but because everyone has always said you need a professional career” (5:13:2-4). “For the second testing I wasn’t as scared as the first one because I wasn’t narrow minded about the career I want to do [sic]. In this testing my choices did change but not majority [sic]. ... my parents are the ones who keep forcing me into one particular career choice which is why my first test might be a narrow minded choice” (9:1:2:3-5 & 9-12).

A statement made by one participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High School suggests that his/her parents disregard his/her wants in trying to assert their opinions regarding the participant’s dreams and aspirations: “For me I have realised that in order to achieve my dreams I have to sometimes play deaf and not listen to what my parents say and focus on what I want” (7:3:18-20).

**b. Guidance from researcher**

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College expected to be guided by the researcher in terms of making career choices: “So I would like to know what you [researcher] can pull out from that when referring to my completed collage

*[sic]. So it is not so much from my part, but from your part if it makes any sense” [sic] (5:2:9-12). “One would like to see the results, because I would like to see what you can pull out ...” (5:2:19-20). “... and then we are going to move [modify established career choice] because ma’am says I should be an engineer or around that” (5:10:38-39). “I am now interested in seeing what your recommendations are” (5:11:38). Participants spoke about their expectation of being given clear guidelines from the researcher as an expert in terms of career suggestions: “Yes, but in your case [as researcher] people will look at it [recommendations that are made] differently because it is your profession to do so” (5:10:33-34). “Yes, I will take your suggestion seriously, simply because you are doing your job” (5:11:43-44). “I think what has been said, makes a lot of sense, because if you [researcher] come back with the results ... it is something that I will think about ...” (5:11:46-47, 49-50). “It [participation in the career intervention programme] made me realise how little I know about my – self [sic] and what I want. I paged through all the magazines but still I was unable to find what I like and want in life. I realised that I need a certain person to show me what I actually want and need” (9:2:1:12-19). “... Mrs Cook can give me an accurate measure of the career path I should walk into” (9:14:1:20-23).*

Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High school also believed that the researcher would help them make career choices: *“I feel so good to have Mrs Cook and angel today [sic]. Because they care for us. And when you don’t know what you want in future or you don’t have a choice with you career and want be in life [sic]” (10:1:1:6-10). “... you [researcher] are doing your best to make our future best [sic]” (10:4:1:6-7). “... you [researcher] made me realise my career and I wish it could be a success thank you [sic] ...” (10:6:1:7-8). “... they were advising us about our future career [sic]” (10:7:1:7-8). “So I feel very good with Mrs Cook because she teach us very well and she tries by all means to give us more information about our future and also our dreams [sic]” (10:8:1:15-19). “She [the researcher] help [sic] us a lot in choosing careers” (10:13:1:11-12).*

### c. Test results

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College anticipated that the results of the tests administered in the career intervention programme would help them make career decisions: *“During the testing I was pretty scared because these test results are guidance to what career I should be looking into. One question that I kept asking myself was what if I don’t like this career which made me stress abit [sic] throughout the testing” (9:1:1:4-9). “I felt nervous cause [sic] I did not know what to expect from the final results and I did not want to have to change my subjects, goals and dreams. I really was also looking forward to the testing to find out my strengths and weaknesses and to find my suitable job as long as it interested me and it was still in the filed [field] or sector I was looking forward to learning more about myself, lately I have not really been able to say who I am, I was not familiar with myself and I was hoping this testing would change all that [sic]” (9:15:1:4-19).*

#### 4.4.2.5. Theme 5: Life Orientation lessons

Life Orientation lessons was the fifth theme that was analysed inductively from the post-intervention interview transcripts. This main theme emerged from an in-depth, inductive data analysis of the post-intervention interview transcriptions and the journal entries from the comparison groups of the two schools. Four related subthemes are presented in Table 4.19 below.

**Table 4.19: Summary of theme 5 and related subthemes that emerged from an in-depth, inductive review of the transcriptions of the post-intervention focus-group interview and the journal entries**

| <b>Theme 5: Life Orientation lessons</b>    |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Subthemes</b>                            | <b>Inclusion criteria</b>   | <b>Exclusion criteria</b>  |
| 5.1. Experience of Life Orientation lessons | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to participants respective experiences of Life Orientation lessons | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to participants respective experiences of Life Orientation lessons |
|   | <b>Examples of participants’ responses<sup>12</sup></b>   |  |

<sup>12</sup> Data sources are excluded if individuals from the respective groups of participants did not refer to a particular subtheme.

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for comparison group: <i>“Ok I would like to say from the life skills at school generally there is a lot of things, that I understand with the syllabus, they are trying to work into things we are actually going to need in life like goal setting and certain aspects like health and things, but lots of it is pretty un – some of its unnecessary and there’s lots of things which aren’t not covered within our life skills lessons [sic] ...”</i> (6:1:12-18). <i>“...[what] they repeat the whole time is human rights. Constantly, constantly. I think for three years we have been doing human rights”</i> (6:1:39-44). <i>“Like physical, mental and psychological, whatever health. We have done that also for three years in a row and it is on one sheet of paper and that we spend three or four weeks on and then we do little dances outside and make up games and stuff – and I understand it is fun, but really as a subject at school, it is basically a free period”</i> (6:1 &amp; 2: 46-50 &amp; 1). <i>“When asked if the Life Orientation lessons have helped participants make career decisions responses included: “Not much”</i> (6:2:15), <i>“Not at all, not useful at all”</i>(6:2:17), <i>“... so something like careers is not something that is not something [sic] that is focused on enough, enough to help us to be able to make decisions or make choices. We touch on it but we don’t – it does not help us”</i> (6:2:21-25),</p> |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for comparison group: <i>“Our [Life Orientation] teachers did not supply us with quiet [sic] the information that we did need about the universities, where to apply, how to apply, where to study actually [sic]”</i> (8:2:1-3). <i>“It [Life Orientation] wasn’t like much use to us – they [Life Orientation teachers] don’t give us much information about careers. They only talk about those careers like social workers and they don’t talk about the uum unusual careers [sic]”</i> (8:2:7-10). <i>“It [Life Orientation] has taught me to persist – that perseverance is the key to success”</i> (8:3:10). <i>“It [Life Orientation] taught me to focus</i></p>  |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | <p><i>because if you focus in life you can achieve anything ... And also to be committed ... It taught me to be confident ... Integrity” (8:3:23-24 &amp; 28, 32,36). “Aaah for me, it has only taught me about physical emotions, spiritual. And no future, just how you supposed to be ... And my goals in terms of goals – to set goals and to have vision and mission [sic]” (8:3 &amp; 4:53-56 &amp; 5 &amp; 6).</i></p> |   |
| <p>1.2. Changes to Life Orientation lessons</p>  | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that make reference to suggested changes to Life Orientation lessons and the way in which learners are assessed in this learning area</p>  | <p>Any phrases, sentences or words that do not make reference to suggested changes to Life Orientation lessons and the way in which learners are assessed in this learning area</p> |
| <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p>  |   |   |
| <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for comparison group: <i>“Ok – useful – is some sense the drugs, that only once – once you do it once – it’s done – you don’t need to repeat it – and it gets repeated. Something more useful that could be done be, maybe leadership [sic]. Coaching on leadership ... Because that is something we all need to learn, especially if we are trying to get into exec [the school’s student council]” (6:1:24-28 &amp; 32-33). “I think in Grade 9 when we did the subject choices, they give [sic] us a lot of pamphlets on the universities. And at that stage I did not understand a lot of stuff and then this year we never got anything again and I think now would be more beneficial than in Grade 9 [sic]” (6:3:6-10). “Yes – the pamphlets about universities were given out in Grade 9 but then this year they don’t give anything to us, but I took one home myself and I looked at it and I was able to understand but still you look at it but now the LO department doesn’t tell you anything about it, they don’t open you, they don’t give you a pamphlet about each university and say this is what you, what you need for that. They just tell you that you can do this and this and this – they don’t specify where it can</i></p> |   |   |



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|  | <p><i>take place, which university is best for what so [sic] ...” (6:3:18-27). “... we need to focus more on careers and our futures then human rights, health and exercises. Especially because it is something we’ve done before. You can do that in the Grade 8 and 9 years, but then when it starts to get serious, we need to start learning something serious” (6:8:22-29).</i></p>   |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for comparison group: <i>“For me if they can maybe change mmm our [Life Orientation] teacher for another one – maybe I can learn what is important. But for me this teacher is not, not give the strength to see LO as an important of subjects [sic]” (8:6:40-43). “Mmm I would bring in some new, something that the student doesn’t know ... Like maybe teach them about – about CA, engineering and etc. so we would be interested in those things [sic]” (8:6 &amp; 7:51-52 &amp; 1-2). “And change the way she [Life Orientation teacher] teaches us, ja ... Umm, she must always come in class and always motivate ... Mmm, come to me and say ... my son you need to do this [name a career choice] so that your future will be right [sic]” (8:7:6, 11 &amp; 16-17).</i></p> |

**v. Life Orientation lessons**

**a. Experience of Life Orientation lessons**

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College discussed their respective experiences of the Life Orientation lessons: *“Ok I would like to say from the life skills at school generally there is a lot of things, that I understand with the syllabus, they are trying to work into things we are actually going to need in life like goal setting and certain aspects like health and things, but lots of it is pretty un – some of its unnecessary and there’s lots of things which aren’t not covered within our life skills lessons [sic] ...” (6:1:12-18). “... they repeat the whole time is human rights. Constantly, constantly. I think for three years we have been doing human rights” (6:1:39-44). “Like physical, mental and psychological, whatever health. We have done that also for three years in a row and it is on one sheet of paper and that we spend three or four weeks on*

*and then we do little dances outside and make up games and stuff – and I understand it is fun, but really as a subject at school, it is basically a free period” (6:1 & 2: 46-50 & 1). “Yes, it’s as if the syllabus is being repeated for the past three/four years that we have been doing it. We keep doing health, we keep doing the human rights and it doesn’t change, like it doesn’t go into more depth, it is just the same thing” (6:2:6-10).*

When asked if the Life Orientation lessons have helped participants make career decisions responses included: *“Not much” (6:2:15), “Not at all, not useful at all”(6:2:17), “... so something like careers is not something that is not something [sic] that is focused on enough, enough to help us to be able to make decisions or make choices. We touch on it but we don’t – it does not help us” (6:2:21-25), “Exactly, It doesn’t’ help u. I think that in all the years that we have been doing life skills. We have done one career projects” (6:2:27-30), “That’s the thing – we do one thing. We basically focus for a week or something on it (careers) and it is two lessons basically – we focus on this. You say a week – it’s not exactly a week, it’s two lessons. You focus on careers and then it’s over and then you go on with your life. We have never actually sat down and focused, ok what are the different career opportunity [sic] available to us – like I mean when all the generations it was ok – they could be teachers, they could be doctors – but I mean now there are so many broader spectrums, there such a broad spectrums that not even our parents are aware of that. We are in turn, are made aware of that. We are going to find out later in life and by then it is too late [sic]” (6:2:34-46).*

In response to the questions asking participants how much their Life Orientation lessons taught them about themselves, replies included: *“ Not very much – nothing” (6:3:32), “It’s always the same thing – write down your goals for the next three years and using the smart principle [a concept taught in the lessons] ...” (6:3:34-35), “What do you enjoy doing – it’s like ok, I can do this but it’s not making, you are not delving deeper into who you are – it’s very platonic – it’s the same, it’s always what are your short-term goals, your long-term goals? What are your strengths or weaknesses? It’s to get good marks – long term to get a good job. Grade 9 again – same thing, Grade 10 again – same thing [sic]” (6:3:37-43). “... LO hasn’t helped us. We have helped ourselves basically” (6:6:6-7). “... in LO I wasn’t given that opportunity [given career information]. I really, not one LO lesson has actually opened my, broadened my views on*

*what I want to be able to do” (6:6:15-17). “... the lack of [career] information that they [Life Orientation teachers] give you” (6:6:33-34). “[Job shadowing is] required – we have to do three days minimum of job shadowing during this holiday, so I think that could, that some form of motivation they they [Life Orientation teachers] are trying to actually give us. So it’s not that it’s as if there is lack of support, there is something ... But I don’t think that is enough ... Because I am thinking of, I have three possible things that I want to do, but then one day is not enough to spend at one job [sic]” (6:6 & 7:46-50 & 3-9). “... they [Life Orientation teachers] have not taught us about any careers that could possibly interest us. I don’t know, because our teacher has not once focused on any specific career” (6:7:20-22). “Yes she doesn’t explain the variety of things to get you interested in [sic] ... Yes, you choose what you know and what you’ve seen” (6:7:32-33 & 38). “So you want to do it [choose a specific career], but nothing has been taught to you or told to you about anything about it, so then you are confused about whether you could get into it [selected for the course/degree] you just relying on getting in and then you don’t really know anything about it [sic]” (6:7&8: 51-52 & 1-3).*

Participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High school voiced their dissatisfaction with their Life Orientation lessons in terms of providing them with career information and/or helping them embark on the path to achieving their career aspirations: *“Our [Life Orientation] teachers did not supply us with quiet the information that we did need about the universities, where to apply, how to apply, where to study actually [sic]” (8:2:1-3). “It [Life Orientation] wasn’t like much use to us – they [Life Orientation teachers] don’t give us much information about careers. They only talk about those careers like social workers and they don’t talk about the uum unusual careers [sic]” (8:2:7-10). “Mmmm for me aaah I think it [Life Orientation] didn’t give me quality information cause aaah – it is a subject that I don’t take it seriously ... ‘cause if you can apply to some universities or colleges, you would not find that you will need it as much [as an entrance requirement] they will need Maths [sic]” (8:2:21-23 & 29-31). “In terms of these careers, they did not give us much of the requirements that we are required for the subject [the subjects in the senior phase of schooling required for specific tertiary admissions] that we are choosing, so I didn’t think that gave us the correct information [sic]” (8:2:51-53). UUmh they [Life Orientation teachers] sometimes ask and get inside*

*the class, she talks about things that we were doing maybe last week and then I don't gain from that [sic]" (8:4:21-23). "Things that don't apply to me – it doesn't help me that much because, same applies to me, cause it doesn't help me that much, the topic about careers, it does not supply that much information and aah ... for the future it's only Life Orientation, our teacher always teach us about us how to behave and to have physical fitness and all that not about much about our future careers [sic]" (8:4:27-32). "... the Life Orientation lessons, for me doesn't help [sic]" (8:5:44-45). "... our [Life Orientation] teacher always teachers about the general careers we already know [sic]. She doesn't introduce new careers to us" (8:6:5-7). "Teachers always bring in same routine that we should focus on this and that – not others (other careers) but social work [sic] ..." (8:6:15-16). "... our [Life Orientation] teachers are always talk about the general carers, so it doesn't develop any interests because whenever she talks, starts talking about the careers we feel like, oh what's the use of getting LO educated for a social worker while there are many social workers who are unemployed [sic]" (8:6:27-31).*

In contrast, other participants spoke about their positive experiences of the Life Orientation lessons: *"It [Life Orientation] has taught me to persist – that perseverance is the key to success" (8:3:10). "It [Life Orientation] taught me to focus because if you focus in life you can achieve anything ... And also to be committed ... It taught me to be confident ... Integrity" (8:3:23-24 & 28, 32,36). "Aaah for me, it has only taught me about physical emotions, spiritual. And no future, just how you supposed to be ... And my goals in terms of goals – to set goals and to have vision and mission [sic]" (8:3 & 4:53-56 & 5 & 6).*

#### **b. Changes to Life Orientation lessons**

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College proposed numerous changes to the Life Orientation lessons. *"Ok – useful – is some sense the drugs, that only once – once you do it once – it's done – you don't need to repeat it – and it gets repeated. Something more useful that could be done be, maybe leadership [sic]. Coaching on leadership ... Because that is something we all need to learn, especially if we are trying to get into exec [the school's student council]" (6:1:24-28 & 32-33). "I think in Grade 9*

*when we did the subject choices, they give [sic] us a lot of pamphlets on the universities. And at that stage I did not understand a lot of stuff and then this year we never got anything again and I think now would be more beneficial than in Grade 9 [sic]” (6:3:6-10). “Yes – the pamphlets about universities were given out in Grade 9 but then this year they don’t give anything to us, but I took one home myself and I looked at it and I was able to understand but still you look at it but now the LO department doesn’t tell you anything about it, they don’t open you, they don’t give you a pamphlet about each university and say this is what you, what you need for that. They just tell you that you can do this and this and this – they don’t specify where it can take place, which university is best for what so [sic] ...” (6:3:18-27). “I know that with the pamphlets and recently they [Life Orientation teachers] have had all those universities come and talk to the matrics, but I almost think it is too late for the matrics because they already need to have applied – some of them have already been accepted. It should be more for us so that we can get interested and get hooked on [specific careers] [sic] (6:4:13-18). “In Grade 10 it could be. Yes” (6:4:20). “No – it’s only the left over from the matrics [referring to the pamphlets that have not been taken by Grade 12 learners]. When the matrics have finished taking [the pamphlets], then we can go and pick whatever is being left. But it is not explained. It’s of our own accord [sic]” (6:4:24-28). “... when it comes to apply to university like I am a first child to I have no older siblings, so I don’t know where to start, where to start, what to do, anything and I think that should be taught [sic]” (6:8:8-11). “... they [Life Orientation teachers] should get examples of the forms [application forms for tertiary institutions] and then have you fill it out and then ... practise to fill them in [sic]” (6:8:19-20). “... we need to focus more on careers and our futures then human rights, health and exercises. Especially because it is something we’ve done before. You can do that in the Grade 8 and 9 years, but then when it starts to get serious, we need to start learning something serious” (6:8:22-29).*

Learners from the comparison group from Mthombo High school also proposed changes to the Life Orientation lessons: *“Aaah when we learn is that we will know the careers that are usual that we know and I thought, I thought maybe we would learn some of, learn of careers that are not usual in South Africa [sic]” (8:2:45-47). “For me if they can maybe change mmm our [Life Orientation] teacher for another one – maybe I can*

*learn what is important. But for me this teacher is not, not give the strength to see LO as an important of subjects [sic]” (8:6:40-43). “Mmm I would bring in some new, something that the student doesn’t know ... Like maybe teach them about – about CA, engineering and etc. so we would be interested in those things [sic]” (8:6 & 7:51-52 & 1-2). “And change the way she [Life Orientation teache]) teaches us, ja ... Umm, she must always come in class and always motivate ... Mmm, come to me and say ... my son you need to do this [name a career choice] so that your future will be right [sic]” (8:7:6, 11 & 16-17). “Yes, she [Life Orientation teacher] shall bring something new and even go into more details on a certain career if she finds that there is a learner or a student is that more interested in that career [sic]” (8:7:22-24). “I would like to add more on the motivating side. Most of 80% of us – the Grade 11 learners some of us are very poor and facing some family problems. So whenever you come at school, some other children teases us, teases those children. But the Life Orientation teacher, she doesn’t motivate us. As learners we need to be motivated, not to focus on the family background but focus on our education – but she doesn’t do that [sic]” (8:7:32-38).*

#### **4.4.2.6. Theme 6: Career adaptability**

Career adaptability was the sixth theme that was confirmed deductively in the post-intervention interview transcripts for the four groups of participants from the two schools and in the reflective journals for the experimental groups from the two groups. The four stages characteristic of adaptive individuals, are now discussed from the perspective of the participants in my study. Four related subthemes are presented in Table 4.20 below.

**Table 4.20: Summary of theme 6 and related subthemes that were confirmed from an in-depth review of the transcriptions of the post-intervention focus-group interviews and the journal entries.**

| <b>Theme 6: Career Adaptability</b> |  |   |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Subthemes</b>                    | <b>Inclusion criteria</b>  | <b>Exclusion criteria</b>   |
| 6.1. Concern                        | Any phrases, sentences or words that suggest that the participants show interest as opposed to | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not suggest that the participants are interested in their |

|              |  |   |
|--------------|--|---|
|              | indifference about their future careers  | future careers  |
|              | <b>Examples of participants' responses<sup>13</sup></b>  |   |
|              | <p>Penryn College post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“The overall reflection of all the lessons was very productive and really made me think about what I really want to do with my life and career” (9:1:1:22-25). “I have never thought about the questions [in the CIP (Maree, 2010c)] I was asked about my life. The exercise required me to think about my life and what I want. It made me feel better at the end of the day” (9:2:1:7-10). “My experience [sic] ... made me think about my future and what I wanted to do ... made me think about my life” (9:20:1:4-5 &amp; 15).</i></p> |   |
|              | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“It helped me a lot cause now I am being very very serious about my career and I didn’t realise it was that important, but now I know it is very important” (7:1:14-16). “Things that we have done in class has helped me – my career, I did not take it seriously, but now I am starting to be more serious because I learnt that there is nothing I can do if I did not follow my career and my life focuses on my career” [sic] (7:3:1-4).</i></p>   |   |
|              | <p>Mthombo High school post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“I was feeling good I did a collage with Mrs Cook and its made me realise that my career is more important [sic] ...” (10:2:1:10-12). “I was feeling very happy and I loved doing the collage it was very lovely and doing the collage made me feel like it is really and I realise how important it is to have a mental picture of my future [sic]” (10:3:1:14-19).</i></p>   |   |
| 6.2. Control | Any phrases, sentences or words that indicate that the participants  | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not indicate that the |

<sup>13</sup> Data sources are excluded if individuals from the respective groups of participants did not refer to a particular subtheme.

|                   |   |   |
|-------------------|---|---|
|                   | believe that they have some influence over their lives  | participants believe that they have some influence over their lives   |
|                   | <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>  |   |
|                   | <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: “... <i>there are so many things I have wanted to do. But then in a sense, I have always had five major breakdowns of what I want to do and how I am going to achieve them. So this [participation in career intervention programme] in a sense added on and also subtracted some, but put the idea in a bubble and I know I can achieve them and I am going to achieve them ...</i>” (5:10:13-21). “... <i>no matter who says what – when I see you I see this or that. I know what I am and I know what I want to be. So it [career intervention programme] ... has given me the attitude to say no, it is about what I want.</i>” (5:10:28-32).</p> |   |
| 6.3.<br>Curiosity | Any phrases, sentences or words that refer to any exploratory behaviour that potentially elicit information about the participants and/or their environments  | Any phrases, sentences or words that do not refer to any exploratory behaviour that potentially elicit information about the participants and/or their environments |
|                   | <b>Examples of participants' responses</b>  |   |
|                   | <p>Penryn College post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: “... <i>one of the things I have always wanted to do was to take a photography course and become a photographer. When I made my mind map – collage I saw that I liked a lot of pictures, most of the things were around art and then after the lesson I decided I was going to start taking the photography leap activity [an extra mural activity offered at Penryn College]</i> (5:12:26-30).</p>  |   |
|                   | <p>Penryn College focus group interviews for comparison group: “<i>We have always had more or less an idea of what we have done or what we want to do one day. But we have gone to our own ends, and we</i></p>   |   |



|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p><i>have gone to universities and we have spoken to lecturers and stuff” (6:5 &amp; 6: 48-50 &amp; 1-2). “You’ve gone to lecturers, you’ve gone to, like for example, I went to TUKS [University of Pretoria] engineering week now recently and that’s where I understood exactly what I want to do” (6:6:12-14). “Job shadowing” (6:6:31) is one activity a participant engaged in. “... you are kind of motivated to go and find more information because you are confused on the subject [choosing a career]” (6:6:34-36). “... through your parents, family, friends ... TV for instance and then just looking out at, looking someone doing something, saying it looks interesting [sic] ...” (6:7:44-49).</i></p>  |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“In my part-time – as I say there is a man in the back room at home who I help on Saturday and Sunday. I help with alarms and set gate” [sic] (7:4:1-2). “Yes, since you came, at first I said I wanted to be a lawyer, but then I was indecisive. I asked my sister to arrange an interview with some of her friends who are lawyers and stuff and they told me what lawyers was about this and that and for me it was boring. So I am now going to try and engage with other people who are more like me” [sic] (7:4:7-11). “My friends laughed at me when I helped at old age homes, saying things that I don’t like because they said that I am a fool. How come a girl that goes to school who wakes up in the morning go and help old people. They have to die. They have to live their lives and now they have nothing to live for. So because you came and taught us everything, now I want to do it and I won’t listen to them because it is my future and I want to follow my heart. My heart says I must help those people and I really want to help them even though they laugh at me” (7:5:15-23).</i></p> |
|  | <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for comparison group: <i>“Me and my friend – we sit and then talk about the future, talk about the careers, tell one another this [career choice] is</i></p>   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | <p><i>good for you ... Last week I went to Penreach cam [campus] – that where I learnt more about the future, cause they talked about values that. That where I started to think about my future [sic] ... ” (8:5:39-44).</i></p> |   |
| <p>6.4.<br/>Confidence</p>  | <p>Any phrases, words or sentences that indicate the participants are not deterred from achieving their career goals</p>  | <p>Any phrases, words or sentences that do not indicate the participants are not deterred from achieving their career goals</p> |
| <p><b>Examples of participants’ responses</b></p>   |   |   |
| <p>Mthombo High School post-intervention focus group interviews for experimental group: <i>“I did not know what to do because my parents they don’t have money, but now it [participation in the career intervention programme] is telling me that I can even though my parents do not have the money” (7:4:44-46). “Well for me, since I want to be a journalist or maybe a writer, so like, it maybe sometimes that my parents will not have enough money to send me to school, so doing those activities made me realise I am good at baking cooking so I can open my own catering company and still get the money” (7:5-6:48-50 &amp; 1-2).</i></p> |   |   |
| <p>Mthombo High school post-intervention journal entries for experimental group: <i>“... I learnt that the always a way to use to get to my goal or to reach my career [sic]” (10:2:1:12-14). “The callage has made me realise that being what you whant to be can be hard but learning and knowing your strength and weaknes [can be helpful]”[sic](10:9:1:15-17). “Writing the time line helped me to write down and reflect on all the bad things that has happened to me, made me to realise that I am strong and I can be whatever I want to be [sic]” (10:14:1:9-12).</i></p>   |   |   |

**vi. Theme 6: Career adaptability**

**a. Concern**

Some of the participants from the experimental group from Penryn College expressed an interest in their future careers as opposed to indifference after participating in the intervention programme: *“The overall reflection of all the lessons was very productive and really made me think about what I really want to do with my life and career”* (9:1:1:22-25). *“I have never thought about the questions [in the CIP (Maree, 2010c)] I was asked about my life. The exercise required me to think about my life and what I want. It made me feel better at the end of the day”* (9:2:1:7-10). *“The testing session experience [sic] was eye opening, because it got me thinking about what I really want to do and what it’s going to take to get there ... The first lesson we had after the testing made me feel excited about the period of transition into choosing what we want to do for a living”* (9:4:1:2-5 & 9-12). *“I thought when I was entering the testing that this was going to be just another test for us as a grade however when I actually started to scan through the test my mind was then running about my future and career [sic], almost as if I went blank cause I am never sure about my career of the future”* (9:7:1:3-10). *“It was just another test that is meant to shape my future although it got me thinking more about what my interests are and what I would enjoy doing as a career [sic]”* (9:12:1:4-6). *“My experience [sic] ... made me think about my future and what I wanted to do ... made me think about my life”* (9:20:1:4-5 & 15).

Some participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School concurred with the participants from the experimental group from Penryn College who expressed an interest in their future careers after participating in the intervention programme: *“It helped me a lot cause now I am being very very serious about my career and I didn’t realise it was that important, but now I know it is very important”* (7:1:14-16). *“Things that we have done in class has helped me – my career, I did not take it seriously, but now I am starting to be more serious because I learnt that there is nothing I can do if I did not follow my career and my life focuses on my career” [sic]* (7:3:1-4). *“It [participation in the career intervention programme] helped me a lot because now I am motivated”* (7:5:15). *“I am motivated a lot and I even wish that time could go faster and*

*finish and reach my career” (7:5:27-28). “I was feeling good I did a collage with Mrs Cook and its made me realise that my career is more important [sic] ...” (10:2:1:10-12). “I was feeling very happy and I loved doing the collage it was very lovely and doing the collage made me feel like it is really and I realise how important it is to have a mental picture of my future [sic]” (10:3:1:14-19).*

**b. Control**

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College spoke about how the career intervention programme helped them achieve a sense of control over their future careers: “... *there are so many things I have wanted to do. But then in a sense, I have always had five major breakdowns of what I want to do and how I am going to achieve them. So this [participation in career intervention programme] in a sense added on and also subtracted some, but put the idea in a bubble and I know I can achieve them and I am going to achieve them ...*” (5:10:13-21). “... *now no matter who says what – when I see you I see this or that. I know what I am and I know what I want to be. So it [career intervention programme] has given me ... the attitude to say no, it is about what I want*” (5:10:28-32).

**c. Curiosity**

One participant from the experimental group from Penryn College spoke about being motivated to engage in a career exploration activity after participating in the intervention programme: “... *one of the things I have always wanted to do was to take a photography course and become a photographer. When I made my mind map – collage I saw that I liked a lot of pictures, most of the things were around art and then after the lesson I decided I was going to start taking the photography leap activity [an extra mural activity offered at Penryn College]* (5:12:26-30).

Learners from the experimental group from Mthombo High School also discussed exploratory behaviours they engaged in: “*In my part-time – as I say there is a man in the back room at home who I help on Saturday and Sunday. I help with alarms and set gate*” [sic] (7:4:1-2). “*Yes, since you came, at first I said I wanted to be a lawyer, but then I was indecisive. I asked my sister to arrange an interview with some of her friends who are lawyers and stuff and they told me what lawyers was about this and that and for me it*

*was boring. So I am now going to try and engage with other people who are more like me” [sic] (7:4:7-11). “My friends laughed at me when I helped at old age homes, saying things that I don’t like because they said that I am a fool. How come a girl that goes to school who wakes up in the morning go and help old people. They have to die. They have to live their lives and now they have nothing to live for. So because you came and taught us everything, now I want to do it and I won’t listen to them because it is my future and I want to follow my heart. My heart says I must help those people and I really want to help them even though they laugh at me” (7:5:15-23).*

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College spoke about the things that ultimately led them to engage in exploratory behaviour to elicit information about their surroundings. None of them said that their participation in Life Orientation lessons was instrumental in this regard: *“We have always had more or less an idea of what we have done or what we want to do one day. But we have gone to our own ends, and we have gone to universities and we have spoken to lecturers and stuff” (6:5 & 6:48-50 & 1-2). “You’ve gone to lecturers, you’ve gone to, like for example, I went to TUKS [University of Pretoria] engineering week now recently and that’s where I understood exactly what I want to do” (6:6:12-14). “Job shadowing” (6:6:31) is one activity a participant engaged in. “... you are kind of motivated to go and find more information because you are confused on the subject (choosing a career)” (6:6:34-36). “... through your parents, family, friends ... TV for instance and then just looking out at, looking someone doing something, saying it looks interesting [sic] ...” (6:7:44-49).*

A participant from the comparison group from Mthombo High School also spoke about the things that resulted in him/her engaging in exploratory behaviour to find out more about his/her environment. Like the former participants from the comparison group from Penryn College, Life Orientations lessons did not seem to be useful in this regard: *“Me and my friend – we sit and then talk about the future, talk about the careers, tell one another this [career choice] is good for you ... Last week I went to Penreach cam [campus] – that where I learnt more about the future, cause they talked about values that. That where I started to think about my future [sic] ...” (8:5:39-44).*

#### d. Confidence

Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School said that they were determined to achieve their respective career goals irrespective of obstacles they faced: *“I did not know what to do because my parents they don’t have money, but now it [participation in the career intervention programme] is telling me that I can even though my parents do not have the money” (7:4:44-46). “Well for me, since I want to be a journalist or maybe a writer, so like, it maybe sometimes that my parents will not have enough money to send me to school, so doing those activities made me realise I am good at baking cooking so I can open my own catering company and still get the money” (7:5-6:48-50 & 1-2). “... I learnt that the always a way to use to get to my goal or to reach my career [sic]” (10:2:1:12-14). “The callage has made me realise that being what you want to be can be hard but learning and knowing your strength and weaknes [can be helpful]” [sic] (10:9:1:15-17). “Writing the time line helped me to write down and reflect on all the bad things that has happened to me, made me to realise that I am strong and I can be whatever I want to be [sic]” (10:14:1:9-12).*

#### 4.4.3. Comparison of pre-intervention and post-intervention results

The pre-intervention and post-intervention results are discussed separately in sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 respectively. The main theme; career adaptability; and the four related subthemes: concern, control, curiosity and confidence; were deductively confirmed before and after the implementation of the career intervention programme. I will now comparatively summarise the themes that emerged inductively in both stages of the data analysis process. The remaining themes will be linked where possible to highlight areas of growth, if any, in the participants, after the experimental groups took part in the career intervention programme and the comparison groups which participated in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons. Table 4.21 depicts the themes that emerged in the respective stages of the inductive data analysis process.

**Table 4.21: Main themes that emerged inductively in the transcribed focus-group interviews and in the reflective journals before and after the implementation of the intervention programme**

| Main themes identified in the in-depth inductive data analysis process |                           |                   |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
|  | Career intervention stage |                   |
| Theme  | Pre-intervention          | Post-intervention |
| 1. Life Orientation lessons  | *                         | *                 |
| 2. Career choice influences  | *                         | *                 |
| 3. Strategies to manage career transitions                             | *                         |                   |
| 4. Benefits of career intervention programme                           |                           | *                 |
| 5. Negative experiences of career intervention programme               |                           | *                 |
| 6. Changes to career intervention programme                            |                           | *                 |

Learners from the experimental and comparison groups from Penryn College spoke about their experiences of Life Orientation lessons in a negative light **prior to the experimental group having taken part in the career intervention programme** and the comparison groups participated in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, learners from the experimental and comparison groups from Mthombo High School discussed some of their positive experiences of their Life Orientation lessons.

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College felt that the Life Orientation lessons they participated in were not beneficial after time was spent focussing on their career development during these lessons and **after the implementation of the career development programme** was presented to the participants in the experimental group. Participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High School had mixed feelings when discussing their experiences of their Life Orientation lessons.

<sup>14</sup> Examples of participants' responses will not be given in the comparative summary of themes as they were given when the themes were discussed separately in section 4.4.1 and 4.4.2.

Participants in both groups from Penryn College proposed various changes to Life Orientation lessons **prior to the experimental groups participating in the career intervention programme**. Most of the proposed changes centred on the learners' career development. Contrary to this, participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High School did not propose any changes to their Life Orientation lessons. Participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School made suggestions for changes to their Life Orientation lessons but none of the proposed changes focused on their career development.

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College and from Mthombo High school named numerous changes they envisaged for their Life Orientation lessons **after the experimental group took part in the career intervention programme** and they participated in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons offered by their school. Proposed changes include ideas pertaining to their career development.

In discussing the theme Life Orientation, it is apparent that the participants in both groups from the two schools did not see their Life Orientation teachers as being influential in terms of their career development **prior to the implementation of the career intervention programme**. The participants from the comparison groups from both schools reiterated this **after the career intervention programme was implemented** and they took part in the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons.

Participants in both groups from the two schools acknowledged the role other people (predominantly parents and peers) have on their respective career choices **prior to the implementation of the career intervention programme**. The role other people play (excluding Life Orientation teachers) when individuals make career choices was also identified by participants from the experimental groups from both schools **after they participated in the career intervention programme**. Furthermore, participants from the experimental groups from both schools also expected the researcher to be the facilitator of the career intervention programme. They did not expect their Life Orientation teachers to guide them in terms of their future career choices.

The career intervention activities per se as well as the results of the tests administered during the intervention programme were seen to be influential in helping



participants from the experimental groups from both schools make career decisions **after they participated in the career intervention programme.**

Having acknowledged the role other people play, the expected influence of the various activities of the career intervention programme, the anticipated role the researcher plays as well as the perceived influence of the tests results on their career development, the career intervention programme was seen to give participants from both groups in the two schools the opportunity to be the expert in their lives.

As discussed in section 4.4.1.1, the main theme, strategies to manage career transitions emerged **in the pre-intervention data analysis stage** with four related subthemes, namely, work ethic, marks at school, attitude to schoolwork and self-knowledge.

**Prior to the implementation of the career intervention programme,** participants from both groups from Penryn College discussed how a positive work ethic was seen as a means to achieving their respective career goals. One participant from the comparison group from Mthombo High School agreed that a positive work ethic potentially enhances his/her chances of achieving his/her career aspirations. Participants from the experimental groups from both schools felt that their work ethic improved **after they participated in the career intervention programme.**

Participants from both groups from Mthombo High School named self-knowledge as a means to managing career transitions **before the career intervention programme was implemented.** Participants from the experimental groups from both schools benefitted from participating in the career intervention programme in that it seemingly improved their level of self-knowledge.

Additional themes that emerged in the data analysis process suggest that the participants from the experimental groups from both school benefitted in other ways from participating in the career intervention programme. The subtheme, making career decisions, implies that participants from the experimental group from both schools were closer to making career decisions **after they took part in the career intervention programme.**

Participation in the career intervention programme benefitted participants from the experimental group from both school further by giving them useful career

information. Some of these individuals were also given the opportunity to clarify their values in life by participating in the career intervention programme. The career intervention programme also gave participants from the experimental groups the chance to clarify their fields of interest.

Further opportunities to demonstrate growth and development were afforded the participants from the experimental groups from both schools by participating in the career development programme. Participants from these groups were able to identify positive factors in their lives during some of the activities in which they were engaged. Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College also said that the career intervention programme allowed them to express their emotions openly and gave them the opportunity to be honest with themselves. Furthermore, no judgements were experienced when they responded during the career intervention programme.

The participants from the experimental group from Penryn College were more critical of aspects of the career intervention programme than the participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School. Participants from the latter group did not discuss any negative experiences they had during the intervention programme. The afore-mentioned participants from Penryn College spoke about the difficulty they had completing some of the activities in the intervention programme. Secondly, the career intervention programme reportedly opened up other potential avenues for participants' future careers. This frustrated and/or confused a few of these participants. It was also challenging for some of the participants from the experimental group from Penryn College to think about painful memories from their past during one of the tasks (timeline) in the intervention programme. One of the participants from this group questioned the relevance of this activity, as he/she could not see how it related to his/her career development. Some of the participants from the experimental group from Penryn College seemed disappointed that they were not closer to making definite career choices after taking part in the intervention programme.

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College proposed two changes to the career intervention programme. Learners from the experimental group from Mthombo High School did not make any suggestions in this regard. The one suggestion made by the former group related to the timing of the intervention

programme. The participants who named this as a possible change, all said that the programme should be implemented before Grade 11. One participant from the experimental group from Penryn College made the final suggestion for change to the intervention programme. He/she proposed that more group discussions should take place during the implementation of the intervention programme.

#### **4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The results of the research study are presented in this chapter commencing with the quantitative findings. Thereafter, the qualitative results for the pre-intervention stage of my project are presented followed by the post-intervention results. The qualitative findings are presented according to the various themes that emerged in the inductive data analysis process as well as the themes that were confirmed in the deductive data analysis process. Thereafter the themes that were deductively confirmed in both stages of the data analysis process are named. Themes that emerged inductively during both stages are then summarised comparatively. Finally, the remaining themes that emerged inductively are linked as far as possible. In Chapter 5, the quantitative and qualitative results are teased out critically and in detail by relating them to the theoretical framework of my study and the literature I reviewed.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS**

### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

The findings of my study are presented in the preceding chapter. In Chapter 5 I compare my research findings to other relevant research identified in Chapter 2 and subsequent literature I reviewed using a literature control. The themes identified in Chapter 4 are explored and discussed with reference to both the quantitative and qualitative data. This is followed by the triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative results in striving to answer the main research question namely, *to what extent can career and self-construction interventions enhance learners' ability to manage career transitions?* To this end all the data generated are analysed in the context of the literature I reviewed to determine which of my findings concur or refute previous findings. Findings that have never been reported are also discussed. Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of trends that emerged in the literature control process.

### **5.2. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS**

As discussed in Chapter 2, Tolentino et al. (2014) state that individuals who are willing to adapt and are able to adapt are more likely to make successful transitions and adaptations in changing environments. Savickas (2010c) urges career counsellors to improve clients' career adaptability in terms of the extent of concern they have for their work; the amount of control they perceive to have over their careers; whether or not they are curious about job prospects and opportunities; and the level of confidence they have in making meaningful career choices. With this statement in mind, the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) is used to generate quantitative data in my study as it assesses the above four constructs and yields a total score for career adaptability.

The quantitative data was generated in two distinct stages: Firstly, quantitative data from responses in the pre-intervention CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), and quantitative data from responses in the post-intervention CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). The pre-intervention results were analysed to determine whether or not there was initial bias between the two schools and the four groups in my study. Finally, the post- and pre-intervention scores were analysed to determine if there were any significant differences between the two groups of scores for

all four groups on all four scales of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and for the total score.

### **5.2.1. Pre-intervention results**

The pre-intervention data analysis indicates that there are differences in certain CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) subtest scores between the two schools in my study (Penryn College and Mthombo High School). Factors that could account for variances in career adaptability are considered in identifying possible reasons for the differences between the afore-mentioned subtest scores. Savickas (2002a) maintains that attitudes, beliefs and competencies are core issues of career adaptability. Aspinwall et al. (2001) identify optimism as a key attitude that facilitates flexibility in individuals who are proactive and more responsive in changing environments. Bearing this statement in mind, it could be argued that learners from Penryn College, who have more opportunities than learners from Mthombo High School, are likely to be more optimistic about their futures. It may be perhaps argued that greater optimism potentially enhances learners' career adaptability; hence the initial differences in some of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) subtest and total score.

Furthermore, the results of my study show that there are differences in certain CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) subtest scores between the experimental and control groups from Penryn College. No differences are seen between the two groups from Mthombo High School. Learners from the former school are assigned to specific classes according to their respective choices of learning areas. The experimental and control groups in my study were selected according to pre-established classes at the school. Universities have prerequisites for entry into tertiary courses and/or there are job requirements based on learning areas selected. It could be argued that optimism levels and ultimately level of career adaptability is dependent on learning areas selected at school in that it opens up more opportunities for certain learners. Having different opportunities can perhaps explain why there are differences between some of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) subtest scores for learners from the two groups from Penryn College.

### 5.2.2. Analysis of differences between post- and pre-intervention scores

The purpose of the final stage of the quantitative data analysis process was to determine if there were any significant differences between the pre- and post-scores of all four groups from the two schools on the four constructs and for the total CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) score. The analysis of the quantitative data generated in this exercise would potentially shed light on whether or not the career intervention programme enhanced the participants' career adaptability, as a strategy to help participants manage career transitions they face, more than the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons.

In a related longitudinal study with adolescents from rural areas (even though career adaptability was not assessed in the study), Lapan et al. (2003) find that enhanced career development in high school helps learners deal with the career transitions they face. In that study, Grade 8 to Grade 12, were exposed to four intervention strategies, namely, classes were organised around specified career goals; learners were made aware of the relevance of course content to the world of work; work-based experiences were made available to learners; and learners participated in connective learning activities. The findings of the study show that linking career goals to the course of studies enhance participants' perceptions that their education is helping them achieve their career aspirations and motivates them to further their studies. In a further study with ninth grade Finnish learners, Pietarinen et al. (2010) show that pedagogical practices adopted by schools affect the ways in which learners manage the variety of transitions they face.

These studies confirm the statement by Savickas (1999, p. 334), that there are numerous studies that focus on the experiences of youth in making transitions from school to work. He furthermore asserts that educators and career counsellors can be instrumental in helping learners make informed choices, and ultimately managing career transitions, through *teaching, coaching, and rehearsing*. Although it is acknowledged that school-based intervention strategies have the potential to support learners' career development, on closer examination, studies in this context are not seen to provide adequate support to learners (Lapan et al., 2003). Cotton (2008), Poole and Zahan (1993) call for the development of employability skills at school that can be utilised in future

jobs. However, Cranmer (2006) has found that skills that are generally taught at school do not correspond with the demands of the labour market.

The quantitative findings of my research do not confirm that the career intervention programme implemented during my study significantly improved participants' career adaptability compared to the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons as there are no significant differences between the post- and pre-scores for all four groups from both school on all four subscales and for the total scores in the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). It is therefore not possible at this stage of the discussion of the research results to surmise that the career intervention carried out in my study, or the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons for that matter, have the potential to enhance or have little or no impact on individuals' ability to manage career transitions. My research findings do not therefore support the afore-mentioned results of studies conducted by Lapan et al. (2003), Cranmer (2006), as well as Pietarinen et al. (2010). The qualitative data will now be discussed to shed light on the extent to which the career intervention programme, and/or the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons, helps learners manage career-related transitions.

### **5.3. QUALITATIVE RESULTS**

The main themes and subthemes that emerged in the qualitative data from the focus group interviews and the reflective journals (refer to the summary of the themes identified is discussed in Chapter 4, Table 4.9 and 4.14) will now be explored. Multiple comparisons of the findings across the different data sources and across the two data collection phases - namely before and after the implementation of the career intervention programme - are an integral part of this discussion to highlight the shifts in the participants' experiences and/or thinking (if any) that took place after participants in the experimental groups took part in the career intervention programme. It is necessary to state at the outset of this discussion that limited research has been conducted on support offered to learners in terms of their career development through school-based intervention programmes based on career and self-construction, particularly in the South African context (refer to Chapter 2, section 2.7). I therefore compare my findings to any research I found in this regard and research on general (career development) support offered in schools worldwide. Literature pertaining to career counselling practices based

on career and self-construction principles are also discussed as the support offered to clients in this regard is compared to the support offered to the participants in my study after they participated in the intervention programmed based on the same principles.

### **5.3.1. Discussion of results**

The literature control will be guided by the themes and sub-themes described in Chapter 4.

#### **5.3.1.1. Theme 1: Benefits of career intervention programme**

Participants from the experimental groups from Penryn College and Mthombo High School discussed the benefits of the career intervention programme. Eleven subthemes: self-knowledge; making career decisions; clarifying what participants value; improved work ethic; career information; clarified interests; highlighting positive factors in life; opportunity to express emotions; opportunity to be honest; no judgements experienced; and participants seen as expert of their lives; emerged in the findings.

##### **i. Self-knowledge**

Prior to the implementation of the career intervention programme, two participants from the experimental group and one participant from the control group from Mthombo High School respectively, stated that gaining knowledge about themselves (self-knowledge) would help them manage the career-related transitions they will inevitably face. None of the participants from Penryn High School named self-knowledge as a strategy to manage career-related transitions prior to the implementation of the career intervention programme. The two statements made in this regard by the participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School made specific reference to making career choices based on self-knowledge: *“I think you must know your weak points and strong points. These can decide that if you make this decision, you know you are very strong with it and you can stand it if you can't meet this you know you are weak. That is why you can't make it ... I can make an example, like you want to become a doctor, you know that when you see blood you get very scared. You can't choose that job because*



*you know you can't stand it<sup>15</sup> [sic]*" (3:5 & 6:40-43 7 1-3) and *"I like to play soccer and I am a soccer player. I did play but there is no improvement so that thing can cause a problem to me [sic]"* (3:6:7-8). The premise made by the afore-mentioned participants that self-knowledge helps them manage career transitions resonates with features of Parsons' (1909, 1989) model that emphasises the need for the acquisition of knowledge related to the self and the world of work so that individuals have a greater capacity to achieve the necessary fit between their skills and future careers (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). The exploration stage of Super's (1963a) theory is also exemplified by these statements in that the assertions made by these participants support the notion that individuals between 14 and 24 gather information about themselves and the world of work when making suitable career choices. Choices made in life are guided by self-knowledge according to one participant from the control group from Mthombo High School: *"I think that it is very important for a person to know what they want in life and to set goals for one's future and to have values to live by as a young person because there are many influences out there but if you know what you want you will be able to be in the direction that you feel is right for you [sic]"* (4:3:17-21). The participant's statement reflects one of the steps in the vocational guidance process named by Parsons (1909): individual patterns of traits and job profiles should be determined so that they can be compared or matched to identify what individuals can do or have the potential to do (Herr, 1986).

After participating in the career intervention programme, participants from the experimental group from both school also stated that the career intervention programme was informative in that it helped them acquire knowledge about themselves to ultimately help them match careers to specified individual characteristics: *"From my part I think it [the career intervention programme] has been useful in the sense that I was kind of here and there about what I wanted to do and I had my eyes set on law because it is something that I felt I can ... but I have always had other passions, and just like, especially with the collage exercise, just when I picked things like instinct in things that I love [sic]. So there was a lot of just like fashion things that I picked out [while doing the collage] and so it just means that it made me think about – do I see myself doing law in 10 years' time?"*

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<sup>15</sup> I will use bold script to emphasize statements or parts of statements made by the participants in my study.

(5:1:10-17); “*I was very happy to do my collage cause **it is about me and my career what I want to be in my future** [sic]” (10:17:1:13-15); “*I plan, you know what I mean, and I just don’t go into things. So just for me, it just for **me second guessing of what I really want to do and if I would really be happy doing law in 10 years time** [sic]. That kind of thing made me think that maybe it is time that you do what you love and do what is close to you but at the same time, it is going to be a rash type of thing because my parents know about the whole law-thing so I just go to them and say **I am not doing law anymore because I have rediscovered myself**” (5:9:2-9).**

Confirming assertions made by Brott (2001), the narration made possible during the career intervention programme revealed self-knowledge. It is apparent from the above discussion, and similarly in assertions made by Swanson and Fouad (1999) as well as Chen (2007), that self-knowledge was ultimately useful in helping these participants clarify future goals and make suitable career choices. This relates to the term *crystallisation*, namely the developmental task associated with early and middle adolescence (14 to 18 years old) and is described as a cognitive process in which a vocational goal or choice is ultimately made (Cochran, 1997; Usinger & Smith, 2010).

The majority of the responses relating to self-knowledge made by individuals who participated in the career intervention programme focussed on the acquisition of self-knowledge per se with less emphasis on the salient features of models of person-environment fit (Parsons, 1909 & 1989; Dawis and Lofquistis, 1984; Holland, 1997) linking self-knowledge to suitable careers: “*I enjoyed identifying my personality (likes, dislikes, beliefs), doing something different to normal school, taking time to focus on my personal life [reflection in time line] [sic]” (9:10:1:6-10); “Today I just enjoy my self because I just have a good day when I was doing the collage it was great and funny because **today it was all about me and that help me a lot because now I know about myself** [sic] ...” (10:15:1:14-17) In which way does statement reflect an expansion of the previous models? ; “I’m very excited **because now I’m finally getting to know who am I** [sic]” (10:16:1:9-10) Ditto; “**All the exercises really helped me discover who I really am and who I want to be** some made me open up and some didn’t but I did enjoy all of them [sic] (9:1:1:25-28); “It [doing the collage] was a fun experience that **makes you think about what kind of person you really are. It was fun [doing the collage] and you***

*get to discover yourself everyday by asking one specific question: “Who am I really” [sic]. It’s a worthwhile experience” (9:5:1:14-17 & 21-22 & 24-26); “It [completing the one activity in the career intervention programme] was a little weird, because didn’t exactly know what to do or feel in terms of finding who you really are [sic]. It was thought provoking and helped a little [increasing knowledge about the self], “The poster [collage] was great and relaxing. **I got to know more about myself” (9:8:1:15-16); “During the time with Mrs Cook was a great experience [sic]. **Learnt a little more about myself ...” (9:9:3:4-6); Making the colage has been helpful because **it has made me realise who I am [sic] ...” (9:16:1:12-13); “It [doing the collage] made me to realise that in life you sometimes have to play around [engaging in the career intervention programme’s activities] **just to discover yourself [sic]” (10:14:1:16-17).*********

The data in my study suggest that the participants developed clearer pictures of themselves through story telling made possible in the intervention programme. That is, through narration participants related more constructive stories of their lives and in so doing developed clearer, authentic self-views. The findings of my study resonate with claims made in previous studies in this regard (Cochran, 2007; Di Fabio & Maree, 2013a; Savickas, 2008a, 2009).

Savickas (2008) maintains that individuals need to have a clear picture of themselves (Maree, 2009), an outcome that was achieved in my experimental groups. Having clearer pictures of themselves seemingly helped the participants make sense of their experiences (both past and present) and subsequently informed decisions they made about their futures: *“On my part the timeline showed me that I haven’t lived life as much as I have wanted to. I have held myself back in a lot of things, lot of situations where I could have just said, let me do it for the fun, to just experiment, to do crazy things, not crazy like, but to be more adventurous which is something I like doing” (5:3:14-18); “... maybe ... I haven’t lived spontaneously enough. That’s in the past though, so **what I hope to do is to live life to the fullest from now on and to the optimum level when I’m older, because I love doing new adventurous things so, fingers crossed” (9:11:2 & 3: 30-32 & 2-5).*** Put differently, the participants in my study did not only use knowledge about themselves to answer questions about their future careers. Instead, in line with literature on the postmodern theory of career construction (Savickas, 2005), participants

used knowledge about themselves to shift their questioning from, “Which career shall I choose?” to ask broader questions pertaining to “What am I going to make of my life?” (Savickas et al., 2010a) or “What matters to me most?” (Giddens, 1991), i.e. more useful questions to ask in an unpredictable world

## ii. Making a career choice

Participants from the experimental groups from Penryn College and Mthombo High School maintained that the career intervention programme either confirmed the career choices they had in mind: *“I felt that it [collage] didn’t change my opinion of what I should do, it just sort of backed up everything that I had been thinking ...”* (5:2:8-9), or helped them make career choices: *“The collage was cool to me because **now I really know what I want to do**. Cause when I was pasting those pictures, that thing getting into my mind, oh why paste those pictures [sic]? Cause I want to become this”* (7:1:27-30); *“The test made me **realise what I truly want to do**”* (9:9:1:7-8); *“... that [career intervention programme] help me alot because **now I know what is a best career I should go for** [sic]”* (10:15:1:6-7). Maree (2009) and Savickas (1999) previously acknowledged the potential role played by educators and counsellors in helping learners manage life transitions and ultimately in making informed (career) decisions. The findings of my study confirm this statement and support the results of a more recent study by Di Fabio and Maree (2011) who found that group-based life design counselling helped the participants in their study reduce their career decision-making difficulties. Further to this, the findings of my study support those made by Lapan et al. (2003) who, in a longitudinal study with adolescents in rural schools, found that learners who received career development support in high school were supported in attaining their career goals (making career choices). However, my findings are not exclusively applicable to learners from rural school. Therefore, a conclusion reached is that learners from more affluent schools also benefit from receiving career support at school (through an intervention programme based on career and self-construction) when making career choices. Savickas (1999, p. 334) explains how through *teaching, coaching and rehearsing*, educators and career counsellors can assist learners in this regard. An observation that has not been reported on in previous studies and based on the results delineated above, is that an

alternative approach (not necessarily based on teaching, coaching and rehearsing), namely an intervention programme based on career self-construction principles, has the potential to help learners make informed career choices. Implicit in the statements made by participants from both schools in my study is that they actively took part in the intervention programme. Their participation, and not direction given to them by the researcher as facilitator of the intervention programme, ultimately helped them make career choices: *“I think **the collage thing** it actually, from what I wanted to be, it kind of like **the whole experience took me to different aspects of what I really want to be**”* (5:5:24-26). In line with literature on narrative counselling, the participants in my study actively engaged in various activities as their futures were constructed or designed through story-telling (Amundson, 1998; Brott, 2001; Chen, 1997, 2007; Cochran, 2007; Guichard, 2005; Hartung, 2007; Savickas, 2005; Savickas et al., 2009; Tolentino, Garcia, Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2013; Patton & McMahon, 2006a; Usinger & Smith, 2010).

The participants were invited to share their life stories in the intervention programme. Being invited to share their personal stories while taking part in the intervention programme seemingly put participants in a position whereby they were able to make decisions regarding their career choices: *“Learnt ...**what exactly I want to do even though I have an idea of my future career already**”* (9:9:3:5-8); *“... that [career intervention programme] help me alot because **now I know what is a best career I should go for [sic]**”* (10:15:1:6-7); *“**I now know what careers I must follow ...**”* (10:16:1:4-5); *“**Collage it show me the to my career of life [sic]**”* (10:20:1:17-18). Several researchers (Brott, 2001; Maree, 2015a; Savickas, 2009) argue that a storied approach (inherent in the career intervention programme) gives individuals the opportunity to deconstruct past, unproductive life stories so that new, functional stories can develop. This outcome is confirmed in my study since the participants made informed career choices after they shared their personal stories.

Participants from both schools displayed clear signs of self-construction (Guichard, 2005) and career construction (Savickas, 2005) in terms of developing plans for their futures and imagining *possible selves* (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 242) after they took part in the career intervention programme: *“It [participating in the career intervention programme] has made me realise that my career will be close to, if not, the*

*fashion industry [sic] ... I need to be around fashion and media – I want to be, I need to be a Mogul, because I truly feel that it's something that has been in me and something Africa and the rest of the world [sic]. I want and need to be someone Africa, U.S.A, U.K, Asia and both of the Poles look to and truly say, “Yep, he is the guy that revolutionised pop-culture” [sic] (9:11:4:7-20); “The activity this time around made me realize that I want a profession, but a profession [sic] in the entertainment industry. I feel I am very artistic and creative both in my words and behaviour therefore [sic] I would enjoy dealing with the entertainment industry such as hip hop music, urban wear clothing and the business side of the entertainment industry” (9:14:1:7-17); “I enjoy myself [making the collage] [sic]. I make my future plan today [sic]. My day with Mrs Cook was very nice” (10:1:1:17-19); “... the collage also demonstrate my dream and career what ... kind of person am I going to be in future [sic]” (10:4:1:18-21). My findings confirm previous assertions (Cochran, 2007; Del Corso & Briddick, 2015; Di Fabio & Maree, 2013; Guichard, 2004, 2005; Guichard & Dumora, 2008; Savickas, 2001, 2005, 2010a) that participants’ identities develop in an exploratory process and potentially change in response to career decisions they make.*

Savickas et al. (2009) names *intentionality* as one of the goals of the life design process, whereby individuals determine what is important to them through on-going reflection. Participants from both schools named choosing meaningful careers as a career choice influence prior to the implementation of my intervention programme: “*Understanding what I want to do, why it is important and how it could help me and others*” (3:5:35-36). The career intervention programme seemingly gave participants the opportunity to determine what was important and meaningful to them: “*The collage was cool to me because now I really know what I want to do. Cause when I was pasting those pictures, that thing getting into my mind, oh why paste those pictures [sic]? Cause I want to be this*” (7:1:27-30). Participants were able to make decisive and informed career decisions after they uncovered what was important to them. Several researchers (Chen, 2001; Cochran, 2007; Di Fabio & Maree, 2013; Giddens, 1991; Guichard, 2010 as cited in Di Fabio & Maree, 2013; Hartung, 2007; Maree, 2009; Maree, 2015a; McMahon, 2007; Savickas, 2003, 2005, 2007a; Savickas et al., 2009) emphasise the importance of subjective meaning-making in the career construction process. This process ultimately

creates an awareness of alternative work opportunities and (career) prospects (Savickas, 2010c), as confirmed in my study.

Moreover, the participants in my study seemingly retold their life stories clearly (Maree, 2015a; Savickas, 2005; Savickas et al., 2009) after participating in the career intervention programme and took ownership of their (career) decisions: *“For me it helped to be concerned about my future because at first I thought that the second choice was law, but since I did those activities that you gave us, I realised that law is not my thing. “Now I am focusing on what I want and not on what people want me to do” (7:2:43-46); “I now know what careers I must follow ...” (10:16:1:4-5); “Now I am focusing on what I want and not on what people want me to do” (7:2:43-46).* This finding reflects what a number of researchers (Chope & Consoli, 2007; Christensen & Johnston, 2003; Maree, 2010b, 2013a; Savickas, 1993; Savickas et al., 2009) emphasise, namely that clients who validate what they share during counselling session are in a better position to make career decisions as they authenticate their life stories by finding resonance between their self-concepts and career aspirations.

### **iii. Clarified what participants value**

My study confirms that qualitative intervention techniques (such as making collages) could, amongst other things, help participants from both schools identify their values (McMahon & Patton, 2002). Clarifying values helped participants narrate their life stories and ultimately have clearer, authentic self-views. This finding corresponds with claims made in this regard by Cochran (2007), Di Fabio and Maree (2013), and Savickas (2008, 2009).

The benefit of acquiring knowledge on the self is discussed in detail in 5.3.1.1, i. In summary, the benefit of gaining self-knowledge, by, for example, clarifying one’s values, is in line with Parsons’ (1909, 1989) model that emphasises the need for the self-knowledge and information in the world of work so that individuals can match their skills to future careers (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). Furthermore, my findings resonate with assertions made by Swanson and Fouad (1999) and Chen (2007) that self-knowledge (enhanced through clarifying values) potentially clarifies future goals and ultimately helps individuals make career choices.

Making collages was specifically named as a useful instrument to determine what participants valued: *“The lessons we’ve spent making a collage have showed [sic] me exactly what I value most” (9:4:1:14-16)*. Fritz and Beekman (2007) as well as Zunker (1998) have previously shown practitioners how to engage clients in the counselling process actively by, for example, making collages. In line with literature on narrative counselling (as discussed in section 5.3.1.1, ii), participants constructed or designed their futures through story-telling when they were given the opportunity to engage actively in the career intervention programme through making collages (Amundson, 1998; Brott, 2001; Chen, 1997, 2007; Cochran, 2007; Guichard, 2005; Hartung, 2007; Savickas, 2005; Savickas et al., 2009; Tolento et al., 2013; Patton & McMahon, 2006a; Usinger & Smith, 2010).

Participants’ responses in my study also suggest that timelines have the potential to make individuals aware of their respective values: *“Day 2 (completing the timeline) was very good it got me back wher I had good time, and helped me to discover my values [sic]” (10:9:1:8-9)*. Timelines (Goldman, 1992) have traditionally helped individuals explore their life histories (McMahon & Patton, 2002) and make sense of their lives (Fritz & Beekman, 2007). Super (1963), Hickson, Christie and Shmukler (1990), Maree (2010), Savickas (2005,2008), as well as Swanson and Fouad (1999), agree that the identification of values is useful to individuals as they construct themselves and their futures. The authors maintain that clarifying one’s values makes the subjective realities of individuals more explicit and are ultimately incorporated into one’s self-concept and future orientation. Career counselling (and/or intervention programmes) should encourage the process of exploring possible selves (Oyserman, et al., 2006), an outcome that is apparently actualised in the career intervention programme through, amongst other things, clarifying participants’ values, and ultimately facilitated the self-construction (Guichard, 2005) and career construction (Savickas, 2005) processes.

#### **iv. Improved work ethic**

One participant from the experimental group from Mthombo High School identified performance at school as a factor that influences career choices prior to the implementation of the intervention programme: *“I want to be a civil engineer but last*



*year I failed the subject Physical Science so I changed” (3:2:26-27).* Participants from both schools also named a positive work ethic (that potentially improves academic performance) as a means to achieving their respective career goals before the experimental groups took part in the career intervention programme: “*Hard working – cause [sic] if you aren’t you can’t achieve much in what you are doing” (1:6:40-41).*

The career intervention programme seemed to motivate participants from both schools to work harder at school to achieve the career goals they set for themselves: “*I also enjoyed seeing what path I would have to take to get there and how much hard work is needed to live my dreams” (9:15:1:26-29); “... being taught my her [researcher]” made the participant realise “how hard I must work to reach my dastanation [destination] in future [sic]” (10:4:1:11-14).* Prioritising their schoolwork aligns my data with one of the goals of life design intervention models, namely to reduce indecisiveness and develop intentionality (engaging in activities that validate who they are and what is important to them) (Savickas et al., 2009). My findings further correspond with what Tiedemann (1964) as well as Watson and McMahon (2015) refer to as engaging clients in purposeful action as they strive to actualise their identities and construct themselves and their futures. In other words, the career intervention programme was beneficial in that it motivated the participants into purposeful action through working harder at school to aid the self-construction (Guichard, 2005) process.

Participants’ improvement in work ethic signals one of the four revised sub-stages, namely *Competence*, of Super’s (1957) *Growth* stage postulated by Super et al. (1996), and described by Hartung et al. (2008, p. 67) as the developmental phase in childhood when individuals acquire *proficient work habits and attitudes*. In motivating participants to develop a positive work ethic, they appear to acquire more productive work habits and develop a positive attitude to their schoolwork. Implied signs of career construction (Savickas, 2005) are evident in my data if one considers the assertion by Lapan et al. (2003) who maintains that academic achievement (attainable through more productive work habits and a positive attitude towards work) benefits the career development of individuals. The authors name growth in academic performance as one of the areas that develop capacity of individuals to adapt (Savickas, 1999) to school-to-work transitions. Furthermore, in line with the findings of a study by Claes and Ruiz-

Quintanilla (1998), one can also conclude that participants who improve their academic performance (by addressing their work ethic) would inevitably be motivated to be more proactive in achieving their career aspirations.

**v. Career information**

It is apparent from the research findings that the career intervention programme gave participants from both schools the kind of opportunities that lead to self-knowledge (see section 5.3.1.1, i). A number of participants from Mthombo High School information on different careers: *“For me it helped me a lot because I discovered that there are lots of different careers that I can do ...”* (7:1:18-19); *“I experienced more and more careers that I didn’t know of [sic] ...”* (10:6:12-13). Only one participant from Penryn College said that he/she got career-related information from his/her participation in the career intervention programme. This finding confirms the findings of a previous study (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001) that learners from low resource schools greatly value career-information given to them by their schools.

Del Corso and Briddick (2015) found that adolescents often lack career information and rely on adults to impart information in this regard to them. Furthermore, the information received from adults is often taken as fact. An observation in my research findings is that postmodern techniques such as the career intervention programme offers an alternative means of receiving career information. Further to this, the career intervention programme does not include activities that impart information to participants but encourages exploratory behaviour to elicit this information: *“I enjoyed exploring different careers”* (9:10:1:3 &5).

Swanson and Fouad (1999) argues that school-to-work programmes should ideally incorporate the basic components underlying person-environment fit (Holland, 1997; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). That is, career development is enhanced when individuals acquire self-knowledge and occupational information. Such information seems to have been acquired through participation in this career intervention programme (see section 5.3.1.1, i). Hartung (2007) would argue that the participants’ vocational maturity in this study developed due to the fact that they became more curious about the world of work.

According to Super's (1957, 1990) developmental approach to vocational choice, adolescents become increasingly interested in the world of work and strive to gather information in this regard in conjunction with information on themselves. Put differently, Super (1957, 1990) would contend that the participants in my study were able to commence the process of constructing their careers by acquiring self-knowledge (see section 5.3.1.1, i) and information on careers through their participation in the intervention programme. Information gathered in this regard would ultimately be used to answer the questions, "Who am I?" (Super, 1963a) and "What do I want to do with my future?" (Hartung et al., 2008). Attempts made by the participants in my study to answer the afore-mentioned questions exemplify the active exploration in which adolescents engage during the *Curiosity* sub-stage of career development (Super et al., 1996).

#### **vi. Clarified interests**

Consideration of the present, by, for example, taking current interests into account, is an important consideration in the career development of individuals as it has implications for the future (Chen, 2007). Responses in my study confirm these sentiments, namely that the participants from both schools found it beneficial to clarify their interests when they considered their future careers: *"From my part I think it [the career intervention programme] has been useful in the sense that I was kind of here and there about what I wanted to do and I had my eyes set on law because it is something that I felt I can ... but I have always had other passions, and just like, especially with the collage exercise, just when I picked things like instinct in things that I love. So there was a lot of just like fashion things that I picked out [while doing the collage] and so it just means that it made me think about – do I see myself doing law in 10 years time [sic]?" (5:1:10-17).*

In line with theories of person-environment fit (Parsons, 1909; Dawis & Lofquistis, 1984; Holland, 1997); the importance of clearly understanding one's current interests in addition to individual skills, values as well as knowledge about the world of work when future career choices are made; are emphasised (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). Similarly, Super's (1957) developmental theory, maintains that individuals derive a future orientation when they consider their interests (as well as strengths and values) as

they strive to answer questions pertaining to their self-perceptions. The importance of identifying and clarifying interests is also named in the more recent theory of career construction (Savickas, 2005) as individuals gain clearer pictures of themselves and ultimately develop their (vocational) personalities (Maree, 2009).

Quantitative approaches relying on objective, standardised tests have traditionally been recognised as useful instruments in eliciting factual information such as individual interests (Maree & Beck, 2004; Niles, 2003; Rafael, 2007). Based on literature by Savickas et al. (2009), the authors would argue that my career intervention programme seemingly gave participants the opportunity to gain insight and new perspectives into their respective interests (and abilities) by actively engaging them in the tasks in which they participated. In so doing, a qualitative approach successfully clarified participants' interests, achieving one of the goals of life design interventions, namely *activity*. The finding that my career intervention programme clarified participants' interests therefore confirms the results of previous studies (Barclay & Wolff, 2012; Maree, 2015a; Savickas & Taber, 2006) that demonstrate the effectiveness of qualitative techniques such as career construction interviews (CCI), in assessing career interests. Moreover, the career intervention programme, was successfully used in a group setting to help individuals deal with career concerns (transitions), confirming the findings of other researchers regarding the success of qualitative techniques when working with groups of individuals (Barclay, Stoltz & Wolff, 2011; Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). Furthermore, an observation is that my career intervention programme offers an alternative, qualitative approach (based on and inspired by the CCI) to assessing career interests as the CCI (Savickas, 2011b) (used by, for instance, Barclay and Wolff (2012) as well as Savickas and Taber (2006)), was not utilised in my study (solely because of the group-based nature of my research). The finding that my career intervention programme can be used to assess career interests supports the call for inclusive approaches (Maree, 2010b; McMahon & Patton, 2002; Niles, 2003; Patton, 2007; Savickas & Taber, 2006) that recognise the importance of using qualitative approaches in conjunction with quantitative techniques to facilitate self-awareness, through, amongst other factors, clarifying interests.

**vii. Highlighted positive factors in life**

In a study with migrant workers, Schultheiss et al. (2011) found that life CV's gave participants the opportunity to reframe prior experiences and ultimately reach new understandings of past events. My career intervention programme used an alternative approach similarly to enable the participants from both schools in my study to develop alternative ways of looking at past (negative) events by highlighting positive factors in their lives: *"I used to believe [prior to participating in the career intervention programme] that life is hard but now [after participating in the career intervention programme] I realise that life is easy you only make to be hard [sic]"* (10:4:1:22-24).

Participants found it beneficial to identify positive factors in their lives: *"The timeline was good and reminded me of all the good things of my life instead of all the bad things I'm going through right now [sic]"* (9:2:1:21-24). Responses in this regard confirm the inherent therapeutic effects of narrating life stories that are ultimately used to change *bad events into good outcomes* (McAdams, 2001, p. 113) as well as the assertion that Savickas (2001) made regarding a central premise of career construction techniques, namely to promote the development of more balanced and objective views of individuals' past and present experiences.

**viii. Opportunity to express emotions**

Responses suggest that the career intervention programme was beneficial in that it gave participants from Penryn College the opportunity to express themselves and more specifically allowed them to express their emotions: *"I have learn [sic] to become a bite [sic] able to open up and let people see what I think of my self [sic] and life what it has put me through [sic]"* (9:3:1:28-30); *"Creating my collage was fun because I express my feelings and I got to [sic] deep with mine but only few people can understand [sic]"* (9:3:1:17-19). Savickas (2011b, p. 39) would argue that signs of self-construction through self-expression are evident in the responses made by participants, as they were encouraged to *speak their minds*. Moreover, Del Corso and Briddick (2015) maintain that adolescents inevitably have to deal with anxiety that develops as they anticipate facing their first significant career transition, namely having to leave home. Galton and Morrison (2000) as well as Jindal-Snape (2010) concur in stating that transitions lead to

stress and anxiety and furthermore argue that learners will benefit from receiving support at school to handle these emotions effectively. My findings confirm these assertions in that my intervention programme was reportedly beneficial to the participants as they could express their emotions openly.

Narrative career counselling inherent in the career intervention programme necessitates that individuals *go above and beyond the surface scenes of the narration, probing and clarifying the deeper thoughts and emotions* (Chen, 2007, p. 31). Likewise, Savickas (2011b) promotes the expression of emotions as a short-term goal of career construction to give clients the opportunity to normalise the challenges they face. Responses in my study pertaining to the benefit of having the opportunity to express emotions thus confirm the above outcome and short-term goal of effective narrative inquiry.

It is noteworthy that none of the participants from Mthombo High School named the expression of emotions as a perceived benefit of the career intervention programme. My tentative explanation for this finding is that the participants from Mthombo High School (all of whom are non-English mother tongue speakers) would not necessarily find it beneficial to express their emotions in a second language. It is also possible that the participants from Mthombo High school were not comfortable expressing their emotions in the company of the researcher, as they were not familiar with me. It is therefore necessary to specify the type of school before concluding that my intervention programme was beneficial in helping learners express their emotions.

#### **ix. Opportunity to be honest**

What we gain from research done by Shamir (1991) is the understanding that work experiences are perceived as being meaningful if they promote the expression of workers' authentic selves. In the same vein, responses made by the participants from Penryn College confirm that the career intervention programme was beneficial and meaningful to them in that it enabled them to be honest about themselves: *“At first I tried to write or choose the right things that would correspond with what I think I am or who I should be and the career that I wanted to do. Then I realised that this would not help either me or Mrs Cook because I would not have been honest [sic]. From there I went*

*back erased all the lies and started from the beginning with honesty [sic]” (9:11:1:3-11).*

According to Savickas (2011b), self-construction goes beyond acknowledging one’s true self to expressing it. That is, individuals are helped to *know their minds* by *encouraging them to speak their minds* [honestly] (Savickas, 2011b, p. 39). Put differently, career construction is largely reliant on the extent to which individuals authentically reflect on themselves (Savickas, 2011b) and is actualised through (honest) self-expression as individuals develop a genuine and integrated sense of self (Savickas, 2009). In so doing facts are transformed into truths making what has meaning to individuals, apparent. In line with the afore-mentioned assertions, signs of self-construction are noted in the responses made by the participants from Penryn College when they were honest with themselves: *“This exercise (one of the career intervention programme activities) also help me put aside what other people want me to be because I had to be honest with myself [sic] ...” (9:14:1:17-20).* My findings further exemplify Logan’s (2004) argument that individuals who live blindly, without being honest about the ways in which they interpret their lives, fail to have clearly defined self-concepts. Moreover, reviewing the literature highlights that individuals who uncover inconsistencies (Logan, 2004) and details of their life stories (Brott, 2005; Del Corso & Rehfuss, 2011), through honest self-reflection, can potentially develop new, productive stories that ultimately help them make more informed decisions about their futures. Considering this statement suggests that the participants from Penryn College similarly developed more functional life stories that ultimately informed their career decisions through honest self-reflection.

It is important to note that none of the participants from Mthombo High School felt that the career intervention programme was beneficial to them in that it afforded them the opportunity to express themselves honestly. In line with the tentative explanation made in section viii, perhaps it was somewhat challenging for the participants from Mthombo High School to express themselves honestly in a second language and in the presence of a facilitator (researcher) with whom they were unfamiliar. Thus, the type of school needs to be specified before stating that my intervention programme was beneficial in that it gave participants the opportunity to be honest.

**x. No judgements experienced**

The following comment was made by one of the participants from Penryn College: *“I loved it [participating in the career intervention programme] because, for the first time in a long time **I could open up and feel unjudged** [sic]” (9:11:1:15-17)*. Thus it seems as if the career intervention programme gave him/her the opportunity to express himself/herself freely and in the process the participant did not experience any judgements. Inherent in the experience of not being judged is the premise that individuals know themselves better than anyone else does: a crucial element of career construction named in the literature by Anderson and Goolishian (1992), White (1997), and Cochran (1997, 2011). A review of the literature shows that non-judgemental approaches such as the career intervention programme help individuals design meaningful lives as they are based on the utmost respect for participants (Cochran, 1997, 2011; Maree, 2012a).

None of the participants from Mthombo High School stated that it was beneficial for them as if they were not judged during their participation in my career intervention programme. A tentative explanation for this finding is that the participants from Mthombo High School expected to be judged by the researcher as the facilitator of the intervention programme due to the fact that they were from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds with different home languages. A trend that emerged is that the type of school is an important consideration before one can state that my career intervention programme allowed participants to feel that they were not judged.

**xi. Participants seen as experts of their lives**

Prior to the implementation of the career intervention programme participants from both schools specified that taking ownership of their career choices (perceiving themselves as experts in that regard) was one of the ways in which they could manage career transitions they faced: *“... but at the end of the day, **you need to make your own decision because it is you that is going to live that life and you need to take responsibility for your own life** ...” (2:4:28-31)*; *“... but it actually is, **it is your life and your career**” (2:4:36-37)*; *“Understanding what I want to do, why it is important and how it could help me and others” (3:5:35-36)*; *“... you must have the feel what it does and when you choose you are sure that you want to choose it ...”[sic] (3:6:42-43)*. As



observed in my research, participants from Mthombo High School, unlike participants from Penryn College, did not state that the career intervention programme empowered them to feel as if they were the experts of their lives. A tentative explanation for this finding is that the participants from Mthombo High School might not understand the term empowerment as their experiences and socio-economic backgrounds have given them few if not any opportunities to feel empowered. Thus the trend that emerges is that the type of school should be specified before one can say that the career intervention programme based on career and self-construction gives participants the opportunity to feel as if they are the experts in their lives.

From a review of the literature we also gain an understanding that clients become the authors (experts) of their life stories during career and self-construction processes (Cochran, 1997, 2011, Del Corso & Briddick, 2015; Maree, 2013a, 2013b, 2015, Savickas, 1993, 1997b). My finding is that the participants from Penryn College found it beneficial to be seen as the expert of their lives. Self-construction which unfolded during the course of my study supports the assertions made by these authors: *“I also love filling in questionnaires [sic] and doing tests that require my opinion and where **I CAN’T BE WRONG!**” (9:11:1:18-20); “The collage was great because **I did what I wanted to do, I became my own boss [sic]** “ (10:14:1:14-16). Put differently, Maree (2013a) would maintain that responses from the afore-mentioned participants reflect that they were trusted to narrate their personal life stories clearly and confidently and were given the opportunity to affirm their self-perceptions (Savickas, 1993, 1997c) as they designed their lives. As such my findings confirm what Cochran (1997, 2011) refer to when stating that clients are informed individuals. Participants from Penryn College further accepted responsibility for their actions after participating in the career intervention programme, a principle inherent in career counselling according to Herr et al. (2004).*

My finding regarding the experience participants from Penryn College had in terms of being perceived as the experts of their lives during my intervention programme further confirms the premise by Anderson and Goolishian (1992) as well as White (1997) that it is beneficial for counsellors (researchers) to adopt a position of being inadequately informed about the clients’ (participants’) lives. Instead clients should be viewed as the sole experts of their lives. Brown et al., (2012), Chope and Consoli, (2007), Christensen

and Johnston (2003), Del Corso and Briddick (2015), Maree (2010, 2013a, 2015), Savickas (1993) as well as Savickas et al. (2009), clarify how perceiving clients as the expert of their lives is beneficial to them. The authors argue that putting individuals in charge of the stories they narrate facilitates the development of adaptability. That is, individuals who are afforded this opportunity are in a better position to determine and validate aspects of their life stories that reflect their authentic selves and are then able to adapt to transitions and unforeseen challenges they face, an outcome that the career intervention programme strove to achieve.

### **5.3.1.2. Theme 2: Negative experiences of career intervention programme**

Participants from the experimental groups from both schools named five negative experiences of my career intervention programme, namely difficulty completing some of the intervention tasks, frustration and/or confusion develops, difficulty looking at past, irrelevance of timeline and no definite career decisions. Each of these factors will be discussed to highlight participants' experiences in this regard.

#### **i. Difficulty completing some of the intervention tasks**

Some of the participants from Penryn College found aspects of the tasks incorporated into my intervention programme difficult to complete. For example, one participant found it challenging to disclose positive aspects of his/her life as this could be seen as boasting. Another participant from Penryn College found it difficult to complete the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) as he/she is fearful of writing tests. More than one participant from the afore-mentioned school named the timeline as a challenging activity in that it evoked painful, past memories that were difficult to think about (see section 5.3.1.2, iii). It is apparent from the above comments that the participants who experienced challenges when they completed some of my intervention tasks had past experiences that framed and shaped the experiences they subsequently had during my intervention programme. That is, the difficulties participants from Penryn College had completing some of my intervention tasks appear to be related to past experiences that were similarly challenging to master and/or evoked memories that were painful to recollect. This finding incorporates a systems perspective that essentially perceives people and their environments as systems. Interaction is an important feature of

systems, that is, whatever influences one part of the system (including past experiences) influences the whole system (Sinnott, 1987).

Del Corso and Briddick (2015), Di Fabio (2012), Di Fabio and Maree (2011), Hartung (2007), Maree (2012a), Savickas (2007) and Subic (2011) emphasise the significance of earlier experiences and past memories and argue that the process of acquiring self-knowledge is directly linked to how individuals make sense of these experiences and memories. Brott (2001), Chen (2007), Cochran (2007) and Savickas (2007a) explain how this is possible through narration. That is, life stories give insight into meanings individuals ascribe to both past (life histories) and present experiences that are ultimately used to help individuals re-construct more functional stories. This is an outcome my career intervention programme strove to achieve. Having to confront past memories through narration is therefore seen as a necessary exercise even though this process might be difficult for the participants from Penryn College

A further review of literature by Del Corso and Briddick (2015) as well as literature by Del Corso and Maree (2013) affirms that my career intervention programme gave participants from Penryn College the opportunity to construct themselves and their careers through their experience of engaging in (sometimes difficult) activities in my intervention programme. Del Corso and Briddick (2015, p. 262) explain that identities are *informed and shaped* by past stories and contend that self-development can be enhanced when clients are challenged to *open up or expand* future narratives. Put differently, McMahon and Watson (2012) maintain that stories do not only reside in the present but are embedded in past experiences as well. The authors therefore argue that the goal of career counselling (and my intervention programme) is to enable clients (participants) to co-construct future stories that resonate meaningfully with past and present stories. Self-construction and career construction is facilitated when individuals acknowledge the respective meanings they ascribe to all their life experiences, both past and present (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013). Being motivated to reflect on the meanings participants attributed to past experiences (including difficult ones) during their participation in my intervention programme therefore gave them the opportunity to facilitate the expansion of future narratives.

My tentative explanation for why none of the participants from Mthombo High School felt that some of the tasks in my intervention programme were difficult to complete is that they embraced all the activities without questioning them, or focusing on how difficult they were to complete, as they are unaccustomed to have new opportunities for self-development due to the limited resources in their school. It is therefore necessary to specify the type of school before concluding that some of the activities in my intervention programme were difficult to complete.

## ii. Frustration and/or confusion developed

Inherent in the responses made by some of the participants from Penryn College is that they had different expectations of my career intervention programme: “*The questions [those asked in the CIP (Maree, 2010c)] frustrated me*”. He/she added, “*I could not answer them. A lot of them were not questions that I had thought of before, so I could not answer them. I sat there, like ... skip*” [sic] (5:4:11, 14-15). I surmise that the explanation for why participants from Penryn College had different expectations of my intervention programme is based on their previous experiences of receiving career support at school, namely that they were unaccustomed to the types of activities in my intervention programme and expected a more direct approach, based on test results, to help them make career choices (see section 5.3.1.5, i).

Reviewing literature by Maree and Back (2004) offers a tentative explanation as to why none of the participants from Mthombo High School said that they got frustrated and/or confused while they were taking part in my career intervention programme, namely: these learners have inadequate resources and funding to utilise career support instruments that are currently available in South Africa. As such, it is possible that the participants from Mthombo High School did not have definite expectations of my career intervention programme and were simply grateful to receive career support. The type of school should therefore be specified before stating that my career intervention programme led to feelings of frustration and/or confusion in some participants.

The participants from Penryn College who stated that they got frustrated and/or confused when they took part in my career intervention programme appeared to be somewhat reluctant to engage in an exploratory process of discovering themselves as well

as salient features of the world of work before making their respective career choices. Choices made in this regard do not seem to be based on comprehensive and informed decisions: *“The test that we now have done twice [sic], has made me realize that I have now opened myself to a wider range of career choices. This has actually **made me more confused** about my career choice” (9:16:2:3-5).* My career intervention programme appeared to encourage participants from Penryn College to reconsider previous decisions by considering other career options. Signs of career construction are evident in this finding as the participants from Penryn College were challenged to perceive themselves as projects characterised by the active construction of the self through their participation in my career intervention programme (Savickas, 2011d).

Frustration and confusion are emotions that seemingly developed when the participants from Penryn College were encouraged, through their participation in my intervention programme, to explore themselves in relation to the world of work. Further signs of career construction, as described by Guichard (2004, 2005), Guichard and Dumora (2008), Hartung (2007, 2008) as well as Savickas (2005), are noted in this process, as these participants were encouraged to adopt a non-linear, exploratory approach to self-discovery. Although some of the participants from Penryn College said that they felt frustrated and/or confused, the findings of my study (see section 5.3.1.1, i, ii and v) ultimately show that these negative emotions did not adversely affect some the outcomes of my intervention programme, namely to enhance the development of self-knowledge, the acquisition of career information, and ultimately to help them make informed career choices.

### **iii. Difficulty looking at past**

Participants from Penryn College felt that the timeline in particular was challenging to complete as it evoked painful memories that were often hurtful to recall: *“I don’t like the timeline because **I don’t like thinking back to what hurt me** – if that makes sense. I like looking forward to what I can achieve now and in the future. Otherwise I feel like I – maybe I am holding myself back – I am standing in one place – saying I want to move forward and the timeline made me look back and **made me think about a lot of things I did not want to think about**” (5:6:34-39).* Thus, it seems as if the

process of self-construction (Guichard, 2005) and career construction (Savickas 2005) can be challenging when individuals recollect and confront past memories based on previous experiences. The significance of my finding in this regard is emphasised by Maree (2012b, 2015), McAdams (2001) and Savickas (2015a) who contend that earlier, sometimes painful recollections or stories are important to recall and acknowledge in that they help counsellors identify clients' major life themes and thereby facilitate the process whereby individuals actively overcome what they previously experienced in a passive manner. Reviewing literature by Chen (2007), Di Fabio and Maree (2013), as well as Maree (2013a), also makes one aware of the importance of memories in life themes (as used in my intervention programme) as career decisions and choices are often based on these memories. Giving the participants from Penryn College the opportunity to reflect on past memories confirms that my intervention programme incorporated an important feature of the life design framework, namely to utilise a contextual approach that stresses the importance of the environment as well as past and present experiences (Savickas et al., 2009).

Traces of psychodynamic theories are inherent in my intervention programme that seemingly incorporated the story-telling process as subjective perspectives (Hartung, 2007) and past stories (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015) are acknowledged and recognised in the career construction process. Del Corso and Briddick (2015) explain that narrations of past audience members facilitate the identification of individuals' authentic selves. As such, development is seen as a function of *parent-child relationships, childhood memories, and family* (Hartung, 2007, p. 106). Confronting painful memories during the course of my intervention programme acknowledges the emphasis Rafael (2007) places on conscious and unconscious aspects of the human mind. In particular, Maree (2013a) would urge participants to recollect early childhood memories (as they are named in the literature) as important determining factors when individuals make decisions and choices in their lives. Responses suggest that participants from Penryn College achieved this outcome in my intervention programme.

My findings also substantiate Di Fabio and Maree's (2013) description of career construction theory as a dynamic model that integrates meanings people ascribe to experiences, past memories and future aspirations, into life themes. Furthermore, a

review of literature by Rafael (2007) confirms signs of career construction in my participants who, through their participation in the various activities of my programme, were motivated to analyse their entire history to inform their self-perceptions. Analysing their entire histories in my intervention programme supports the assertion by Savickas (2001) that attention should be paid to a client's subjective perceptions of narrated facts instead of focusing on facts per se since individuals construct meaningful lives.

Participants from Mthombo High School are confronted with challenging life circumstances on a daily basis and are perhaps more accustomed to facing painful memories compared to participants from Penryn College. My thoughts in this regard offer a tentative explanation as to why the former group did not raise the issue of recalling past memories as a negative aspect of my intervention programme. The aforementioned tentative explanation necessitates that the type of school is specified before stating some of the activities in my intervention programme elicited painful memories that were difficult to recall.

#### **iv. Questioned relevance of timeline**

A participant from Penryn College questioned the use of timelines during my career intervention programme: *"The timeline did not fit for me – it was like the one that did not fit in ... Because the others were definitely linked to careers and yourself. With the timeline, I mean it is me, but it is not me as in what I am going to do in a few years [sic] time. This is me now. I just felt it was the odd one out if I had to pick the odd one out"* (5:8:9, 18-21). It is clear from this participant's response that he/she did not conceptualise the process of acquiring knowledge about the self in terms of the explanation offered in the literature by Del Corso and Briddick (2015) as well as Maree (2013), as a process that depends to some extent on the ways in which individuals made sense of past experiences (as depicted on timelines). Brott (2001), Chen (2007), Cochran (2007) and Savickas (2007a) furthermore explain how this participant, through narrating parts of his/her life story (on the timeline), potentially re-constructs and re-authors a more functional life story that could ultimately be used to help him/her manage the career transitions he/she faces.

The tentative explanation for why participants from Penryn College had different expectations of my intervention programme, as discussed in section ii, is also applicable to explain why the one participant from Penryn College did not understand the process of acquiring self-knowledge and did not fully appreciate the benefit of using timelines, as he/she was unaccustomed to this approach being utilised at school (see section 5.3.1.5, i). Furthermore, the second tentative explanation that outlines a possible reason for why none of the participants from Mthombo High School got frustrated and/or confused while they took part in my intervention programme, as described in sub-section ii, offers a possible explanation for why none of these participants questioned the use of timelines in my intervention programme, as they embraced all my intervention activities in their poorly resourced school.

**v. No definite career (for job analysis) decisions**

Four participants from Penryn College felt that my intervention programme did not help them make definite career choices (in other words, take a decision on fields of study and careers for thorough job analysis). It is apparent from the data analysis process that the participants from Penryn College who felt that my career intervention programme did not help them make career choices were in the minority compared to those who confirmed that it did help in this regard (see section 5.3.1.1, ii). One of the participants from the former group said that he/she had difficulty making a career choice due to the fact that my intervention programme made him/her aware of other possible career choices that he/she had not previously considered. The argument discussed in section 5.3.1.2, ii, pertaining to the reluctance of some individuals to engage in an exploratory process of gaining self-knowledge and career information thus applies to this individual: “... *I’m really confused [after completing the career intervention programme] on what I want to do because theres [sic] just so many things I can do ...*” (9:20:2:5-7). As stated (see section 5.3.1.2, ii) being exposed to other possible career options for one’s future does not necessarily denote a negative experience when individuals adopt a non-linear, exploratory approach to self-discovery that ultimately informs the career construction process (Guichard, 2004, 2005; Guichard & Dumora, 2008; 2007).



The remaining three participants from Penryn College who felt that my intervention programme did not help them make career choices all stated that they had difficulty completing the timeline (determined by analysing the qualitative data). Two of these participants said that they had difficult remembering details of their past: “*The timeline was very difficult to start with as I was only remembering this years [sic] memories and some of last year*” (9:7:1:19-21). “*Timeline was difficult to write out cause I can’t remember [sic] ...*” (9:12:1:15). The remaining participant from the above group said that he/she could only recall negative experiences when he/she thought about his/her past memories: “*The timeline is the thing I hate doing because it makes me realise that **I only remember the bad things***” (9:13:2:5-7). Linking the difficulty these three participants had in the timeline activity to their feeling that my intervention programme did not help them make career choices, confirms assertions made by Chen (2007), Di Fabio and Maree (2013), as well as Maree (2013a), who contend that it is important to consider memories in life themes as career decisions and choices are often based on these memories. Put differently, Individuals who have difficulty recalling memories may have difficulty making career decisions due to the fact that these decisions often incorporate memories from past experiences.

We also learn from Chen (2001), Cochran (2007), Di Fabio and Maree (2013), Giddens (1991), Guichard (2010) as cited in Di Fabio and Maree (2013), Hartung (2007), Maree (2009, 2015), McMahon (2007), Savickas (2003, 2005, 2007a), and Savickas et al., (2009), that career construction is actualised as individuals subjectively make meaning of their experience and ultimately become aware of different (career) prospects (Savickas, 2010c). Reviewing this literature helps one understand why individuals, exemplified by the three participants from Penryn College, who find it challenging to make meaning of their subjective (past) experiences because they are difficult to recall, may inevitably have difficulty making definite career decisions.

None of the participants from Mthombo High School stated that being unable to make career decisions was a negative aspect of my intervention programme. My tentative explanation for this occurrence relates to the fact that these participants are unaccustomed to receiving career support at their school due to the limited resources in this context. It is

therefore possible that they embraced the opportunities my intervention programme offered them in terms of informing their career decisions.

### **5.3.1.3. Theme 3: Changes to career intervention programme**

Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College proposed two changes to my career intervention programme. None of the participants from the experimental group from Mthombo High School recommended any changes in this regard given that they did not name any negative experiences of their participation in the intervention programme (see section 5.2.1.2).

#### **i. Timing**

Although there was no consensus on a definite time frame, participants from Penryn College suggested that my career intervention programme should be implemented in school curricula before learners reach Grade 11. This sentiment seemingly acknowledges that career development starts in childhood, an assertion made by Hartung et al. (2008). The authors recognise that adaptable individuals appear to manage career transitions effectively and further argue that career adaptability potentially starts developing in childhood during which time individuals should begin imagining possible futures for themselves, develop problem solving skills and commence exploring future careers. Hartung (2015, p. 99) advocates that *childhood begins the life-long process of life design*.

The call for the earlier implementation of my career intervention programme also resonates with features of Super's (1957, 1990) developmental approach to vocational choice, naming the *Growth* stage, starting at the age of four and ending at 13 years old, as the first stage of career development (Super, 1963a). It is further contended that individuals in the *Growth* stage derive a future orientation as they acquire self-knowledge and clarify their interests and values. These were named as benefits of my career intervention programme by participants from both schools (see section 5.3.1.1).

Super's (1963a) *Exploration* stage is also reflected in the recommendation for the earlier implementation of my intervention programme. This developmental stage starts at 14 years old (sooner than the average age of the participants in my study) and ends at the age of 24 and is characterised by gathering information on the self and on the world of

work. These too were named as benefits of my intervention programme by participants from both schools (see section 5.3.1.1).

An important aspect of the life design framework is the presupposition that skills and knowledge about what is meaningful to people develop over an individual's lifespan (lifelong learning) and career development is, in essence, a lifelong process characterised by adaptability and change (Gottfredson, 2002; Maree, 2009; Savickas 2002a; Savickas et al., 2009; Super 1957, 1980). Patton and McMahon (2006c) also identify career development as lifelong learning process. The responses made by the participants from Penryn College who recommended that my intervention programme be implemented sooner than Grade 11 reflect the acknowledgement of lifelong learning in that they recognise the potential for knowledge and skill acquisition at an early age, as it is not confined to individuals who are about to leave school for the first time to pursue their future careers or embark on tertiary studies.

A second feature of the life design framework, namely that it is structured to be preventative (Savickas et al., 2009), is inherent in the suggestion made by participants from Penryn College to implement my career intervention programme sooner than Grade 11. The authors argue that interventions based on life design principles should be preventative by empowering individuals with skills and preparing them to make informed career decisions much sooner than when actual transitions occur.

The recommendation made by some of the participants from Penryn College to implement my career intervention programme sooner than Grade 11 ties in with the purpose of legislation passed in the United States (US) in 1994. The US government made provisions for school-age children to receive the proper education to allow them to get jobs when they left school with the passing of the School-to-Work Opportunity Act. The legislation sets forth a framework to help provide education about the work force and opportunities for all students. By implementing this programme in the seventh or eighth grade, students are able to explore jobs without the pressure of an immediate decision about the rest of their life. This legislation gives children the opportunity to develop skills outlined by Fouad (1997) such as self-exploration and decision-making so that they can start deciding what they enjoy and how they can incorporate that into their career choice.

## ii. More discussions

Participants from both schools named the influence of other people as a factor that ultimately influences their career choices, prior to the implementation of my intervention programme. One participant from Penryn College called for more group discussions during the implementation of my career intervention programme after he/she took part in it: *“What I didn’t enjoy: Environment could be **more open/discussion taking place** to help fit a profile of yourself in your own mind” (9:10:1:26 & 28-30)*. This response seemingly acknowledges the need for interaction with other people during the self-discovery process. This finding confirms the results of a study by Blustein, Phillips, Jobin-Davis, Finkelberg, and Roarke (1997) with individuals embarking on the world of work for the first time, who reported satisfactory outcomes when resources such as support offered by other people, were utilised in their decision-making processes.

The call for more discussions in my intervention programme made by a participant from Penryn College also resonates with a study by Long (1999) who reviewed literature on school-to-work transitions with Native Americans. The results of this study emphasise the importance of discussions in an engaging forum to give learners opportunities to express themselves and hear other opinions, as well as to acquire information about different careers.

The need for social discourse in my intervention programme expressed by a participant from Penryn College resonates with one of the core principles of career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), namely that co-construction takes place in the numerous interactions that take place between individuals in their social groups (Savickas, 2011d). In other words: identities develop as people establish what is meaningful to them through experiences and social discourse between individuals (Brott, 2001; Savickas et al., 2009). Savickas (2007a) and Savickas et al. (2009) state that individuals have a better chance of understanding themselves through dialogue and feedback received in interacting with others than through insights gained independently.

The recommendation for more discussions in my career intervention made by the participant from Penryn College also reflects the premise that discourse with counsellors (facilitator and other participants) gives individuals the opportunity to deconstruct past, unproductive life stories so that new, functional and more meaningful stories can

potentially develop (Brott, 2001). Amundson (1998), Chen (2007), Young et al. (2002) and Winslade (2007) further emphasise that interactions with significant others are more often than not, an integral part of narratives. To summarise: the recommendation for more discussions made by a participant from Penryn College recognises that career counselling (career interventions) should ideally move from *seeking truth to participation in conversation: from objectivity to perspectivity* (Savickas, 1993, p. 205).

#### **5.3.1.4. Theme 4: Career choice influences**

Participants from the experimental groups from the two schools in my study named two career choice influences after my intervention programme was implemented: the influence of others; and guidance from the researcher. Participants from the experimental group from Penryn College also named a third factor that was seen to influence career choices, namely, test results.

##### **i. Influence of others**

The influence of other people on an individual's career decision-making process, that is traditionally ignored (Schultheiss 2003), was named as an important consideration by participants from both schools, both prior to and after the implementation of my career intervention programme. This finding confirms assertions in the literature that careers do not spontaneously develop but are actively constructed through two interpretive processes, namely meaning-making (see 5.3.1.1.1. section ii and ix) and social interaction (Brott, 2001; Collin & Young, 2000; Gergen, 1994, 1999; Guichard, 2009, 2012; La Pointe, 2010; Savickas, 2005; Savickas et al., 2009; Schultheiss, 2007; Schultheiss et al., 2011; Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2010).

Savickas (2005) and Savickas et al. (2009) specifically describe the interpretive processes that take place between adolescents and significant others as a partnership when careers and life courses are designed. Savickas et al. (2009) further explain how through verbal discourse and reflection, individuals can identify factors that resonate with their core self and in so doing construct themselves. That is, the process of self-construction is the product of social interaction as individuals negotiate what is meaningful to them with other people. Signs of self-construction (Guichard, 2005) and career construction (Savickas, 2005) are therefore inherent in my intervention programme

as participants recognised that their subjective realities are co-constructed through dialogue and in partnership with others (Savickas, 2011a). My finding in this regard concurs with research done by Di Fabio and Maree (2011) who similarly use a group-based intervention programme and show that interactions with other people can facilitate the development of individual identities as participants hear their own voices and the voices of others as they narrate their life stories.

Features of systems theory are inherent in participants' responses when they acknowledged the influence other people had on their career decisions. These other individuals are one's audience (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015, McAdams, 1993, 1995, 1996; Savickas, 2005), defined by Del Corso and Briddick (2015) as individuals (systems) who have a direct influence and impact on an individual's life through dialogue. The participants in my study are therefore perceived as human systems that are interdependent on other systems such as the parents, caregivers, teachers, peers, and significant others (Patton, 2007). Consistent with general systems theory, participants came to know who they are and construct beliefs about the world through interacting with an audience (Savickas, 2005, 2011a).

Young, Antal, Bassett, Post, Devries, and Valach, (1999) specifically name discussions that take place between peers as an audience in the career decision-making process. Young, Marshall, Domene, Arato-Bolivar, Hayoun, Marshall, (2006) later broadened the extent of audience to emphasise the overall relational aspect of the career decision-making process. The findings of a study by Lapan et al. (2003) similarly highlight the important role that multiple sources potentially play in the career development of youth. Lapan et al., (2007), in a later study, concur with these findings and emphasise the important role school counsellors, teachers and parents play in supporting individuals find success early in their adult lives. Nota, Ginevra and Santilli (2015) emphasise the preventative role played by, amongst others, parents and teachers, in engaging the youth in actions that encourage them to think about their futures before they are faced with specific transitions. Unlike the findings of the afore-mentioned studies and assertions, my findings highlight the negative, discouraging impact interaction with various sources reportedly had on the career development of the participants from both schools in my study. It is noteworthy that parents in particular

were named in this regard: *“For the second testing I wasn’t as scared as the first one because I wasn’t narrow minded about the career I want to do [sic]. In this testing my choices did change but not majority [sic]. ... **my parents are the ones who keep forcing me into one particular career choice** which is why my first test might be a narrow minded choice”* (9:1:2:3-5 & 9-12). This finding exemplifies what Del Corso and Briddick (2015) are referring to when they caution against negative feedback that can be discouraging and advocate the use of positive feedback that can be encouraging to recipients as they strive to achieve their respective career goals.

The career intervention programme seems to have facilitated a shift in the thinking of participants (from both schools) in terms of the influence other people (particularly parents) have on their career decisions when one compares responses made prior to the implementation of the programme to the responses made after the implementation of the programme. For example, before taking part in the intervention programme responses included: *“I’ve been given a lot of advice from some teachers and some of my relatives about what they think is right because they know about my interests”* (1:2:48-50); *“I still don’t know till today if I need maths, but I am just taking it because **my parents expect me** and just in case I changed my mind and I don’t enjoy maths. So it could be pointless”* (1:9:34-38). *“I also believe in myself, but I also need somebodies help to me choice my goals. **Like this career, I chose it because of my friends and my tutors because I asked them what I want to do and they gave me those opportunities to discover my future** and I found that I can be these because **they showed me**. If it wasn’t for them I would not have a future today because I did not know what to do next” [sic]* (3:5:16-21). Post-intervention responses included: *“For me I have realised that in order to achieve my dreams **I have to sometimes play deaf and not listen to what my parents say and focus on what I want**”* (7:3:18-20); *“For the second testing I wasn’t as scared as the first one because **I wasn’t narrow minded about the career I want to do [sic]. In this testing my choices did change but not majority [sic]. ... my parents are the ones who keep forcing me into one particular career choice which is why my first test might be a narrow minded choice**”* (9:1:2:3-5 & 9-12). Pizzorno et al. (2014) examines the role played by parents in particular on the career development of their children. The study concludes that children’s career stories are not necessarily bound by the stories told

by their parents. That is, career stories are co-constructed with parents and some children will repeat parents' narratives while others will narrate their own stories. Signs of career and self-construction are implicit in the responses made by participants after they took part in my intervention programme as they appeared to find their own voices that informed future decisions they were to make. This finding concurs with the explanation offered by Del Corso and Briddick (2015) regarding the process of establishing one's own voice, namely that through narration (in the activities in my intervention programme) individuals can potentially begin to differentiate their own voices or beliefs from the voices of others. This process develops, as they are encouraged to examine feedback given by audiences critically. Del Corso and Briddick (2015) encourage individuals to seek out supportive audiences in the process of finding their own voices in their career narratives. Phillips et al. (2001) maintain individuals are spontaneously drawn to people who are supportive of their career goals.

The process whereby my career intervention seemingly helped participants from both schools authenticate their life stories by discerning their voices from that of their audience was not reliant on teaching, guiding or advising. Instead responses from participants from both schools suggest that narration through the various activities in my intervention programme achieved this outcome: "*It [the participant analysed pictures of outfits people wore in magazines when doing the collage] has made me aware that it [an interest in the world of fashion] has been here, but because everyone has always said you need a professional career*" (5:13:2-4). Guichard (2012) similarly advocates the use of narrative approaches instead of teaching, guiding or advising, as individuals co-construct themselves and their careers.

## **ii. Guidance from researcher**

Vanhalakka-Ruoho (2010) studies how young people describe their decision-making processes through written stories. The researcher's findings emphasise the relational aspects of these processes (see section 5.3.1.4, i). More specifically, parents, siblings, other relatives, friends, school counsellors, and teachers constitute this relational context in this study. School counsellors were seldom mentioned and teachers were almost never mentioned as significant role players in this context. Contrary to these



findings, my findings suggest that the researcher (assuming the role of a teacher<sup>16</sup> in presenting my intervention programme) played a significant role in informing the career decisions made by participants: “*So I feel very good with Mrs Cook because she teach us very well and she tries by all means to give us more information about our future and also our dreams [sic]*” (10:8:1:15-19). My findings in this regard concur with the results of an earlier study (Savickas, 1999) which concludes that teachers are important in facilitating the school-to-work transitions faced by their learners. Further to this, my finding that the researcher supported the career needs of the participants in my study links with the findings of a study by Lapan et al. (2007) who found that supportive teachers are among the people who potentially play an important role in helping young people find success early in their adult lives. Moreover, research by Blustein et al (1997) concludes that workers who are more satisfied with their jobs had proactive counsellors who gave them emotional and instrumental support. Although the participants in that study were adult workers (unlike the participants in my study) these findings also concur with the findings of my study in terms of the significant role of supportive counsellors (researcher). In the same vein, when one compares the role played by tutors in a study (Cohen-Scali, 2014) in French apprenticeship programmes to that of the researcher in my study, the findings of both studies emphasise the important role played by tutors and the researcher respectively in terms of supporting the career aspirations of the participants in both studies.

As discussed in section 5.3.1.4, i, narratives develop in the relational context comprising of clients as the authors of their stories and their audience (Del Corso and Briddick, 2015). Counsellors, or the researcher in my study, assume the role of an audience (Savickas, 2005, 2011a, 2011f), who ideally strives to empower clients to (re)write their life stories through collaborative processes of meaning-making (Maree, 2015a). Del Corso and Briddick (2015) argue that the subjective opinions of an audience are particularly important in adolescence in the co-construction of meaning to alleviate the high levels of anxiety that they often experience in response to having to face the first major transition in life, namely having to leave home. The authors further explain that

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<sup>16</sup> I am referring to the role of teachers who can potentially present my career intervention programme at school. Thus I am assuming a teaching role by implementing my intervention programme to learners.

adolescents tend to take the opinions of an audience as truth, since they lack experience and knowledge themselves. The tendency to do this was noted in my study when participants sought direct guidance from the researcher in terms of helping them make career choices: “*I am now interested in seeing what your (researcher’s) recommendations are*” (5:11:38); “*Yes, but in your case [as researcher] **people will look at it** [recommendations that are made] **differently because it is your profession to do so**” (5:10:33-34). “*Yes, **I will take your suggestion seriously**, simply because you are doing your job” (5:11:43-44).**

### **iii. Test results**

None of the participants from either school in my study named learning about the results of the standardised, pre-intervention CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) as a strategy to help them manage career transitions (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.1). Responses made by participants from Penryn College after they participated in the career intervention programme did suggest, though, that the results of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) were seen to help them make more informed career choices. The benefit of using a standardised test in this regard reflects one of the recommendations made by Swanson and Fouad (1999) who state that school-to-work programmes should ideally use test results to facilitate self-exploration.

Savickas et al. (2009) express concern with (career support) practices that only rely on the discovery of pre-existing, scientific facts. Instead, the authors advocate using approaches based on life design principles that facilitate the development of narrative realities. It is apparent from the discussion of my qualitative findings pertaining to the benefits of my intervention programme (see section 5.3.1.1) that life design principles were inherent in this programme and facilitated the self-construction (Guichard, 2005) and career construction (Savickas, 2005) processes of participants from both schools. Participants from Penryn College also felt that it was beneficial to them to have test results that they used to help them inform their career decisions. As such, the inclusive (integrated) nature of my career intervention programme was beneficial to the participants from this school. This finding supports the call for inclusive approaches made by Maree (2010), McMahon and Patton (2002), Niles (2003), Patton (2007) as well

as Savickas and Taber (2006), who argue that quantitative approaches and qualitative approaches used in conjunction with each other can facilitate self-awareness.

I am reminded of the fact that learners from previously disadvantaged schools in South Africa previously had little if any career support at school (Maree, 2012a, 2015b). The availability and quality of career counselling services offered to them is considerably different from services in more affluent schools (Maree, 2015b). Furthermore, until recently, more widely used tests were only available to English and Afrikaans speaking people (Maree, 2009). These are important considerations when considering possible reasons why none of the participants from Mthombo High School named the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) results as an influence in career choice. Counselling services in this context were traditionally used as a political instrument to perpetuate racism and preserve the economic power of white supremacy (Maree, 2009). The costs incurred in utilising these services are often also (regarded as) high (Maree & Beck, 2004). Against this background it is plausible to speculate that the learners from Mthombo High School were sceptical about the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) in terms of its potential role as a learning support instrument and were unaccustomed to benefitting from using test results, in spite of the finding that the CAAS-South Africa is an ideal instrument to use in South Africa to measure career adaptability (Maree, 2012a). An observation from my findings in this regard is that it is necessary to specify the type of school before concluding that the results of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) influenced participants' career choices.

#### **5.3.1.5. Theme 5: Life Orientation lessons**

Participants from the experimental and comparison groups from both schools commented on their experience of Life Orientation lessons prior to the implementation of the career intervention programme. Only participants from the comparison groups from the two schools made further comments in this regard after my intervention programme was implemented as these participants did not take part in this programme. Instead, these participants participated in the Life Orientation lessons offered by their respective schools. A discussion of their experiences of these lessons and changes to the lessons they subsequently proposed follows in sub-section i and sub-section ii.

**i. Experience of Life Orientation lessons**

Participants from the experimental and comparison groups from Penryn College discussed their experiences of their Life Orientation lessons prior to the implementation of my career intervention programme. Briefly, the findings in this regard suggest that the career facilitation they receive in this context is limited. A number of reasons for the limited exposure to career facilitation were cited by them (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.3, iii, a). Some of the participants from Penryn College felt that they spent little time discussing careers in class as time was mostly devoted to other, less important topics. Other participants from this school felt that they were not properly informed about career-related topics or that too much time was spent on topics that were unrelated to their career development. The repetitive nature of topics (unrelated to careers) covered during their Life Orientation lessons was also experienced by some of the participants from Penryn College. The purpose of other topics covered in their Life Orientation lessons was questioned as participants from this school felt that they did not acquire any skills after having been exposed to those specific topics in class.

In contrast, participants from both groups from Mthombo High School discussed how their career development was enhanced by their participation in the Life Orientation lessons offered in their school prior to the implementation of my intervention programme. Some participants from this school felt that the content of these lessons informed their career choices as they were informed of different career options available to them and made them aware of their respective strengths and weaknesses. Realistic goal setting and ways of achieving these goals were also outcomes that were seemingly achieved in their Life Orientation lessons. Participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High School also found it beneficial to have their values clarified during their participation in their Life Orientation lessons. These participants also said that they benefitted from receiving information on funding opportunities for tertiary studies during these lessons.

In speculating as to why there were discrepancies between the experiences of Life Orientation lessons for the two schools in my study prior to the implementation of my intervention programme, it is useful to consider that learners from previously disadvantaged schools such as Mthombo High School receive little if not any career

support at school (Maree, 2009, 2012a) (see section 5.3.1.4, iii), or limited access to career counselling in general (Maree, 2015b). With this in mind it is plausible to argue that these learners would be less critical of the career support they receive in these lessons, as it is, in all likelihood, the only form of career support available to them at school.

The repetitive nature of some of the topics covered during Life Orientation lessons was highlighted once again by some of the participants from the comparison group from Penryn College after the experimental group took part in my career intervention programme. Participants from the comparison group from this school reiterated that they did not feel that these lessons informed their career decisions. Other participants from this group felt that the topics covered during their Life Orientation lessons did not increase their self-knowledge.

Participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High School were more critical of their Life Orientation lessons in terms of the lack of career support these lessons offered them after participants from the experimental group took part in my career intervention programme. A tentative explanation for this change in opinion again relates to the fact that learners from this school were unaccustomed to receiving career support at school (Maree, 2009, 2012a) and grateful for the only support they received in this regard, namely the support offered to them during Life Orientation lessons. The support offered to their peers who were participants from the experimental group possibly made them aware of alternative support structures. A conclusion reached in considering the afore-mentioned tentative hypotheses is to specify the types of school before discussing how learners experience their Life Orientation lessons in terms of the extent of career support these lessons offer them.

The findings of a longitudinal study by Lapan et al. (2007) conclude that learners successfully transition into future adult roles if their career development is enhanced at school. The findings of this study ultimately called for the provision of comprehensive and consistent career development support at school. The need for such services in both schools in my study was noted when participants from all four groups from the two schools in my study discussed their experiences of Life Orientation lessons: “... *so something like careers is not something that is not something [sic] that is focused on*

*enough, enough to help us to be able to make decisions or make choices. We touch on it but we don't – it does not help us” (6:2:21-25); “Things that don't apply to me – it doesn't help me that much because, same applies to me, cause it doesn't help me that much, the topic about careers, it does not supply that much information and aah ... for the future it's only Life Orientation, our teacher always teach us about us how to behave and to have physical fitness and all that not about much about our future careers [sic]” (8:4:27-32).*

It is therefore apparent from the afore-mentioned findings that Life Orientation lessons are not perceived by participants from the comparison groups from both schools to have enhanced their career development after the participants from the experimental groups took part in my career intervention programme. My findings regarding the perceived lack of support offered to participants in the comparison groups from both schools during Life Orientation lessons do not concur with a study by Lapan et al. (2003) who found that the perceived support offered to their participants at school helped them achieve their career aspirations, unlike the experiences of the participants in my study. It is, however, noteworthy that the participants in the former study were 8th, 9th, and 12th graders unlike the participants in my school who were in Grade 11 in urban schools. Furthermore, contrary to the findings of a needs assessment survey conducted by Lapan et al. (2007), the participants from the comparison groups from both schools in my study did not acknowledge and value the support offered to them at school (during Life Orientation lessons) because they did not feel that their respective schools offered them sufficient career development support. My findings in this regard can be compared to the findings of a study by Kenny, Gualdrón, Scanlon, Sparks, Blustein and Jerrigan (2007) even though the participants in the latter study were 9th graders unlike the participants in my study who were in Grade 11. The 9th grades perceived minimal support in reaching their career goals at school like the participants from the comparison groups from both schools in my study. My findings regarding the perceived lack or absence of adequate career support in both schools in my study also resonates with previous studies (Dykeman, Wood, Ingram, Gitelman, Mandsager, Chen, & Herr, 2001; Johnson, Rochkind, Ott, DuPont & Hess, 2011; Parsad, Alexander, Farris, & Hudson, 2003). These studies also found evidence that learners are not receiving sufficient career development

support at school nor adequate career planning assistance to support the school-to-work transitions they inevitably have to face.

The findings of my study suggest that participants from the comparison groups from both schools felt that the career development support they received at school in the context of their Life Orientation lessons was inadequate and limited. This finding emulates the argument by Maree (2009) who maintains that school-based career support is limited in South African schools in that it constitutes only 20% of the Life Orientation syllabus. The author argues that the impact of career support efforts at school is further compromised by the fact that teachers have little or no formal training in the field of career counselling or psychology. Furthermore, in-service training programmes aimed at developing the teachers' skills in this regard do not seem to have the desired impact for learners.

## ii. Changes to Life Orientation lessons

Participants from the comparison group from Penryn College called for less repetition of topics that were seen to be unrelated to their career development during Life Orientation lessons. Instead they suggest that more time should be spent on career-related topics that give them the opportunity to explore the self and/or the world of work. Participants from Mthombo High School also suggested that more time is spent exploring the world of work and the different career options open to them: *“What do you enjoy doing – it’s like ok, I can do this but it’s not making, you are not delving deeper into who you are – it’s very platonic – it’s the same, it’s always what are your short-term goals, your long-term goals? What are your strengths or weaknesses? It’s to get good marks – long term to get a good job. Grade 9 again – same thing, Grade 10 again – same thing [sic]”* (6:3:37-43); *“Aah when we learn is that we will know the careers that are usual that we know and I thought, I thought maybe we would learn some of, learn of careers that are not usual in South Africa [sic]”* (8:2:45-47). This recommendation concurs with the assertion made by Swanson and Fouad (1999) who argue that school-to-work intervention programmes should give participants time for the type of exploration that leads to both self-knowledge and knowledge on the world of work.

The timing of specific activities aimed at supporting the career development of participants from the comparison groups from Penryn College was questioned by some of the participants from this group. This finding suggests that there is room for improvement in terms of structuring the content of Life Orientation lessons to meet the developmental needs of learners: *“I think in Grade 9 when we did the subject choices, they give [sic] us a lot of pamphlets on the universities. And at that stage I did not understand a lot of stuff and then this year [Grade 11] we never got anything again and I think now would be more beneficial than in Grade 9 [sic]”* (6:3:6-10). Signs of Super’s (1957) developmental approach to vocational choice is inherent in this recommendation in that it acknowledges that individuals have to fulfil different developmental tasks corresponding to their ages. So for example, individuals in Grade 9 are in the *Growth* stage according to Super (1957) and are primarily focused on developing their self-concepts. Older individuals (Grade 11) are in the Super’s (1957) *Exploration* stage and are typically more planful [sic]. This explains why the afore-mentioned participant said that he/she would have benefitted from receiving pamphlets from universities at this developmental stage.

Unlike the participants from the comparison group from Penryn College, participants from the comparison group from Mthombo High School were not concerned about the timing of specific career-related activities offered during Life Orientation lessons. I presume that this occurrence relates to the fact the participants from the latter school, like most black, South African learners, receive little to no career counselling at school (Maree, 2009, 2012a) and therefore appreciate any support they receive in this regard, irrespective of when it is offered to them. It is therefore important to specify the type of school before concluding that the participants in my study felt that the timing of Life Orientation lessons, aimed at supporting the career development of learners, should be addressed to provide optimal support.

Participants from the comparison groups from Penryn College called for more career-related information pertaining to, for example, information on various universities, and how to apply for admission at tertiary institutions: *“... they (Life Orientation teachers) should get examples of the forms (application forms for tertiary institutions) and then have you fill it out and then ... practice to fill them in [sic]”* (6:8:19-20); *“... when it comes to apply to university like I am a first child to I have no older siblings, so I*



*don't know where to start, where to start, what to do, anything and I think that should be taught [sic]" (6:8:8-11).* My findings in this regard refute the findings of a study by Rowan-Kenyon, Perna and Swan (2011) who found that support offered in high resource schools such as Penryn College, where individuals are more likely to further their studies directly in tertiary institutions, is focused on providing college-related information that will ultimately help them make a college choice, as opposed to facilitating their career development. In contrast, participants from the comparison group from Penryn College stated that they did not receive adequate support in both areas named in the above study during their Life Orientation lessons.

The tendency for more learners from high resource schools such as Penryn College to enrol directly into tertiary studies (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2011) supports my tentative hypothesis for why participants from this school were more preoccupied with the specific procedures needed to enter careers of their choice, unlike the participants from Mthombo High School, with limited resources, who were less likely to enter directly into tertiary studies.

When recommending changes to Life Orientation lessons, one participant from the comparison group from Mthombo High School felt that his/her teacher needed to recognise the importance of this learning area. This participant seemingly acknowledges that Life Orientation lessons can potentially offer learners comprehensive career development support and, in so doing, resonates with research findings that consistently demonstrate the efficacy of career interventions in improving the transitions they face (Lapan et al., 2003; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2011; Wood & Dahl, 2015).

The fact that most black learners receive little if not any career counselling at school (Maree, 2009, 2012a) supports my presumption that their teachers are unaccustomed to providing career support (in Life Orientation lessons) and therefore do not perceive it as a core outcome of their lessons. Based on this presumption, it is essential that the type of school is specified before concluding that the participants in my study felt that their Life Orientation teachers need to recognise the importance of their learning area in terms of the career support it potentially offers learners.

Another participant from the comparison group from Mthombo High School called for more emotional support from his/her Life Orientation teacher in terms of

motivating learners to develop their career aspirations in the face of the adversities, such as poverty, that they faced. Similarly, an earlier study by Blustein et al. (1997) recognises the importance of emotional support as one of the factors learners benefit from later in their adult lives. Learners who experience more job satisfaction in early adulthood received emotional and instrumental support from proactive counsellors when they were younger.

A tentative explanation for why none of the participants from Penryn College called for more emotional support from their Life Orientation teachers in the context of their career development at school is that these participants are faced with fewer adversities compared to the participants from Mthombo High School. They are therefore less likely to need emotional support in this context compared to the participants from the latter school. Therefore, before stating that the participants from the comparison groups in my study suggest that Life Orientation teachers need to offer them emotional support in the context of their career development, it is necessary to specify the type of school participants attend.

#### **5.3.1.6. Theme 6: Career adaptability**

Signs of career adaptability were noted in the comments made by participants from both schools prior to the implementation of my intervention programme (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.4) confirming assertions by Hartung et al. (2008) and Savickas' (1997a) that career adaptability is also relevant to adolescents as they prepare for their future work roles.

The quantitative findings of my research do not confirm that the career intervention programme implemented during my study improved participants' career adaptability compared to the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons as there were no significant differences between the pre- and post-scores for all four groups from both schools on all four subscales and for the total scores in the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

The discussion that follows highlights how my intervention programme helped the participants in my study develop the propensity to adapt to changing circumstances. A study by Barclay and Wolff (2012) similarly demonstrated the effectiveness of using

narrative career interventions, inherent in the CCI used in their study and in my career intervention programme, to increase adaptability skills. Since the context of my study did not call for the implementation of the CCI only (and precluded the use of the three early recollections technique or strategy), I was obliged to implement an alternative approach in my intervention programme.

Qualitative data pertaining to the four dimensions of career adaptability (namely: concern, control, curiosity and confidence) is discussed to shed light on the extent to which my career intervention programme and traditional Life Orientation lessons respectively enhanced participants' career adaptability to help them manage career transitions.

#### **i. Concern**

Participants from all four groups in both schools in my study expressed an interest in their futures prior to the implementation of my intervention programme. They expressed concern in this regard when they discussed their desire to have financially viable careers that ultimately result in successful futures in which they choose suitable careers and when they shared thoughts on furthering their tertiary studies and in discussing their respective career aspirations.

Responses from participants in the experimental groups from both schools suggest that my intervention programme gave them more direction in life and potentially made them more decisive. This was as a consequence of being more concerned about their respective futures: *“The overall reflection of all the lessons was very productive and really **made me think about what I really want to do with my life and career**” (9:1:1:22-25); “I was feeling very happy and I loved doing the collage it was very lovely and doing the collage made me feel like it is really and **I realise how important it is to have a mental picture of my future [sic]**” (10:3:1:14-19).* My findings therefore exemplify the description of concern in the literature by Glavin (2015) and Hartung et al. (2008).

Responses by participants from both groups in my study also suggest that my intervention programme motivated them to start planning for their futures as their optimism for what lies ahead grew, reflecting how concern is defined by Savickas (2001): *“The testing session experience [sic] was eye opening, because it got me thinking about*

*what I really want to do and what it's going to take to get there ... The first lesson we had after the testing made me feel excited about the period of transition into choosing what we want to do for a living” (9:4:1:2-5 & 9-12); “I am motivated a lot and I even wish that time could go faster and finish and reach my career” (7:5:27-28).*

Reference was indirectly made to the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) when participants from Penryn College<sup>17</sup> spoke about being tested during the course of my intervention programme. It is apparent from their responses that this instrument was not only used by the researcher to assess the constructs of career adaptability and ultimately to generate the qualitative results in my study, but it was also utilised by participants therapeutically to increase concern as they contemplated their futures. The assertion made by Savickas (2002a) resonates with this finding in discussing the versatility of another intervention, namely the CCI that can also be used for assessment and counselling purposes.

My intervention programme seemed to foster the development of reflexivity in the participants as they thought about their futures while engaging in the various activities: *“My experience [sic] ... made me think about my future and what I wanted to do ... made me think about my life” (9:20:1:4-5 & 15).* Participants’ responses in this regard demonstrate the distinction Savickas (2015a) makes between reflection (considering past events) and reflexivity (considering possibilities for the future). Furthermore, my findings are consistent with life design principles advocating the use of reflexivity as individuals construct their futures (Savickas, 2015a).

One of the findings of a study by Brown et al. (2012) of the career biographies of adults who were experiencing mid-career changes, is that self-reflexivity can help individuals develop, amongst other things, concern. My finding that participants in my study became more reflexive as a consequence of their participation in my intervention programme, and subsequently expressed concern, therefore concurs with the aforementioned conclusion reached by Brown et al. (2012). An observation from the above finding is that the potential to develop concern through learning to be more reflexive is

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<sup>17</sup> Refer to Chapter 5, section 5.3.1.4, iii, for a tentative explanation as to why the participants from Mthombo High School did not perceive the therapeutic effects of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

not exclusively applicable to adults but applies to adolescence (participants in my study) as well.

None of the participants in the comparison groups from the two schools indicated that their Life Orientation lessons enhanced their concern for their futures.

## **ii. Control**

Responses from participants from both schools suggest that they experienced a sense of personal agency in approaching their futures prior to the implementation of my intervention programme (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.4, iv, b). Two participants from Mthombo High School made related comments. One participant from this school said that he/she is ultimately responsible for his/her future. The second participant stated that he/she controls his/her future through his/her life choices.

In contrast, a number of participants from Penryn College said that they were in control of their futures prior to the implementation of my intervention programme. It may be surmised that learners from this school have a better sense of control over their futures compared to their fellow learners at Mthombo High School given that the former school has more resources, the learners are taught to be more self-sufficient and “given a voice”, where individuals are more likely to further their studies directly in tertiary institutions (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2011), and subsequently enhance their future career and job prospects. An alternative explanation for the difference in perceived sense of control between participants from Mthombo High School and Penryn College develops if one considers that black learners, such as those from Mthombo High School, generally do poorly in their Grade 12 examinations, limiting their access to university or are at risk of failing their first year of university (Maree, 2012a). One can speculate that these difficulties faced by participants from this school adversely affect the sense of control they have over their futures.

None of the participants from Mthombo High School mentioned that my career intervention programme helped them develop a sense of control over their futures after it was implemented. Only one participant from Penryn College stated that my career intervention programme helped him/her foster a sense of control over his/her future. It is

therefore apparent that my career intervention programme did not significantly develop participants' sense of control over their futures.

The following comment made by a participant from Penryn College regarding the development of control after participating in my intervention programme substantiates the finding of a study by Hirschi (2009), that an increase in career adaptability (concern) predicts an increase in sense of power: “... *now no matter who says what – when I see you I see this or that. I know what I am and I know what I want to be. So it [career intervention programme] has given me ... the attitude to say no, it is about what I want*” (5:10:28-32). This response also highlights Savickas' (2001) description of control whereby individuals become accountable for their futures and any decisions they make in constructing their careers.

None of the participants from the comparison groups from either school indicated that their Life Orientation lessons enhanced the sense of control they have over their futures.

### iii. Curiosity

Participants from both schools indicated that they were motivated to engage in exploratory behaviour to enhance self-knowledge and/or to elicit information about their environments prior to the implementation of my intervention programme.

Responses from participants from both schools suggest that my career intervention programme motivated them to engage in the afore-mentioned exploratory behaviour: “... *one of the things I have always wanted to do was to take a photography course and become a photographer. When I made my mind map – collage I saw that I liked a lot of pictures, most of the things were around art and then **after the lesson I decided I was going to start taking the photography leap activity** [an extra mural activity offered at Penryn College] (5:12:26-30); “Yes, since you came, at first I said I wanted to be a lawyer, but then I was indecisive. I asked my sister to arrange an interview with some of her friends who are lawyers and stuff and they told me what lawyers was about this and that and for me it was boring. **So I am now going to try and engage with other people who are more like me**” [sic] (7:4:7-11). This outcome of my career intervention programme, that is fostering the development of curiosity, contrasts*

with Glavin's (2015) description of individuals with limited curiosity' who inevitably have closed attitudes towards new experiences and ultimately fail to make informed career decisions.

None of the responses from participants from the comparisons groups from either Penryn College or Mthombo High School said that their Life Orientation lessons motivated them to engage in exploratory behaviour to acquire self-knowledge and/or information on their environment. Instead, being self-motivated, motivated through interactions with other people, through the media and attending a school-based outreach programme (Penreach), were named in this regard: "... *through your parents, family, friends ... TV for instance and then just looking out at, looking someone doing something, saying it looks interesting [sic] ...*" (6:7:44-49): "*Me and my friend – we sit and then talk about the future, talk about the careers, tell one another this [career choice] is good for you ... Last week I went to Penreach cam [campus] – that where I learnt more about the future, cause they talked about values that. That where I started to think about my future [sic] ...*" (8:5:39-44). The notion that curiosity, as a construct of career adaptability, is in essence a social process facilitated by interactions between people substantiates the assertions by Brown et al. (2012) as well as Nota and Soresi (2003) in this regard. This finding also reinforces the conclusions drawn in a study by Brown et al. (2012), who found that learning through interactions that take place between adults at work, potentially develops, amongst other things, curiosity. Furthermore, Kenny and Bledsoe (2005) found in a study with urban, high school learners that support from family, teachers, and close friends facilitates the development of the four dimensions of career adaptability. My findings substantiate part of these findings in the notion that support offered by significant others appears to facilitate the development of curiosity (one of the four components of career adaptability) in participants from the comparison groups from both schools.

#### **iv. Confidence**

Responses from participants from both schools suggest that they were not deterred from achieving their career goals prior to the implementation of my intervention programme.

Some of the participants from Mthombo High School named financial constraints as a factor that influences their career choices prior to the implementation of my intervention programme as many of their parents do not have enough money to pay for their tertiary studies (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.2, ii, a). Participants from the experimental groups from Mthombo High School indicated that my career intervention programme increased their confidence levels and seemingly helped them overcome obstacles such as financial constraints they faced in striving to achieve their career aspirations: *“Well for me, since I want to be a journalist or maybe a writer, so like, it maybe sometimes that my parents will not have enough money to send me to school, so doing those activities made me realise I am good at baking cooking so I can open my own catering company and still get the money”* (7:5-6:48-50 & 1-2). Responses suggest that participants from Mthombo High School felt empowered to overcome the aforementioned obstacles as their confidence levels grew, thus reflecting the assertion by Savickas (2001) that confidence reflects the ability to strive for one’s goals and aspirations as individuals are empowered to overcome obstacles they face (Hartung et al., 2008) as they construct their futures. My findings in this regard also reinforces the conclusions of a study by Hirschi (2009), who found that career adaptability, with confidence as a one dimension thereof, predicts the development of a sense of power in individuals.

The timeline seemed to increase confidence levels in one of the participants from Mthombo High School as he/she gained perspective on his/her life by helping him/her reflect on negative experience of the past and subsequently using his/her understanding of those encounters to gain new insights in the present to ultimately inform future perspectives: *“Writing the time line helped me to write down and reflect on all the bad things that has happened to me, made me to realise that I am strong and I can be whatever I want to be [sic]”* (10:14:1:9-12). Savickas (2011f) maintains that the process whereby the propensity to adapt to change occurs by linking the past, present and future, signals an increase in concern, which is one of the dimensions of career adaptability. My findings expand on this assertion by showing how confidence levels also increase through the process of linking the past, present and future.



None of the participants from Penryn College said that my intervention programme had a positive effect on their confidence levels in terms of being motivated to achieve their career goals in spite of any obstacles they might face. As discussed in section 5.2.1, an optimistic attitude facilitates flexibility and responsiveness in changing environments (Aspinwall et al., 2001). One can therefore argue that learners from Penryn College, who have more opportunities than learners from Mthombo High School, are likely to be more optimistic about their futures and are consequently inherently confident that they can achieve their career goals without having to rely on my intervention programme to assist them in this regard. My tentative explanation as to why my intervention programme was not seen to improve participants from Penryn College's level of confidence is based on this argument. A trend that emerges from my findings is to specify the type of school before concluding that my intervention programme improved participants' levels of confidence.

None of the participants from the comparison groups from either school indicated that their Life Orientation lessons increased their confidence levels.

## **5.4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

In this chapter, I discussed the results of my study by integrating my findings with existing literature on my research topic according to the pre- and post-intervention themes and sub-themes. These themes were generated from the quantitative and qualitative data. A summary of the results will now be provided by briefly referring back to the following themes: benefits of career intervention programme, negative experiences of career intervention programme, changes to career intervention programme, career choice influences, Life Orientation lessons, and career adaptability.

### **5.4.1.1. Benefits of career intervention programme**

With regard to the benefits of my career intervention programme, it appeared as though participants from both school obtained further insights into themselves through their participation in my programme. The narration of participants' respective life stories, inherent in the various activities in my intervention programme, could speculatively account for the insights achieved in this regard (Brott, 2001; Cochran, 2007; Di Fabio & Maree, 2013a; Savickas, 2008a, 2009). It appears as though participants were able to

make more informed decisions regarding their respective futures after they developed clearer pictures of themselves.

A second sub-theme that emerged from the data is related to the experience participants from both schools had in terms of being able to make career decisions through the storied approach incorporated (Brott, 2001; Maree, 2015a; Savickas, 2009) into my intervention programme. My findings will hopefully contribute to the number of studies (Di Fabio & Maree, 2011) promoting the use of the group-based intervention programme to reduce career choice indecisions. In addition, my findings expand the conclusions reached in previous studies (Lapan et al., 2003) with learners in rural schools, to show that school-based support intervention can also help learners from urban schools be more decisive when making career decisions. My findings also show that interventions that succeed in reducing career indecisiveness do not necessarily need to incorporate *teaching, coaching and rehearsing* (Savickas, 1999, p. 334), if they incorporate principles based on self-construction (Guichard, 2005).

Signs of self-construction (Guichard, 2005) and career-construction (Savickas, 2005) were noted when participants from both schools stated that their values were clarified through their participation of my intervention programme. The value of having a positive work ethic in particular (ultimately to improve participants' marks at school) was named as a factor that influences career decisions prior to the implementation of my career programme. Participants indicated that my career intervention programme was beneficial in that it motivated them to work harder at school.

With regard to the sub-theme obtaining career information, only one participant from Penryn College felt that this was a benefit of my intervention programme. Eight participants from Mthombo High School said that my intervention programme was instrumental in giving them career information, thus confirming reports in the literature (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001) that learners from low resource school greatly value career-information given to them by their schools. Adolescents seem to rely on factual, career information imparted to them by adults (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015). My career intervention programme seemingly offers an alternative approach, based on postmodern techniques that encourage exploratory behaviour, to elicit career information to participants. Signs of career and self-construction were evident as participants gathered

information on themselves (see above discussion) and information on the world of work (Super, 1957, 1990).

Participants from both schools named another sub-theme, namely clarified interests, as a benefit of my intervention programme. This is an important consideration in the career development of individuals as interests inform career decisions (Chen, 2007; Savickas, 2005). It is thus apparent that my career intervention programme demonstrates the effectiveness of a qualitative approach in clarifying interests, particularly in a group setting (Barclay et al., 2011; Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). In essence, responses confirming that my career intervention programme is successful in this respect support the call for inclusive approaches (Maree, 2010b; McMahon & Patton, 2001; Niles, 2003; Patton, 2007; Savickas & Taber, 2006) incorporating both quantitative techniques utilising objective, standardised tests (Maree & Beck, 2004; Niles, 2003; Rafael, 2007) and qualitative approaches.

An interesting finding related to the seemingly therapeutic effect of my career intervention programme that enabled participants from both school to reframe past, negative life experiences into positive outcomes. This finding contributes to existing literature that shows that life CV's similarly gave migrant workers the opportunity to reach new understandings of past events (Schultheiss et al., 2011). My findings and those of the afore-mentioned study exemplify the assertion by McAdams (2001) who argues that there are inherent therapeutic benefits in approaches that utilise narration, and furthermore reflect a central premise of career construction techniques, namely the potential for such techniques to facilitate the development of more balanced, objective views of past and present experiences (Savickas, 2001).

It is widely reported that transitions individuals have to face elicit an array of emotions (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015; Galton & Morrison, 2000; Jindal-Snape, 2010). Participants from Penryn College<sup>18</sup> said that my career intervention programme gave them the opportunity to express their emotions openly. This outcome appears to confirm that narration implicit in the career construction process promotes the expression of emotions (Chen, 2007; Savickas, 2011b).

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<sup>18</sup> In section 5.3.1.1, viii, I offer a tentative explanation as to why none of the participants from Mthombo High School said that my intervention programme helped them express their emotions.

Self-construction (Guichard, 2005) and career construction (Savickas, 2005) were potentially actualised through the facilitation of honest self-expression (Savickas, 2009, 2011b), another sub-theme that emerged when participants from Penryn College<sup>19</sup> discussed the benefits of my intervention programme. Giving participants from Penryn College the opportunity to be honest was also valued as it enabled these individuals to uncover inconsistencies (Logan, 2004) and develop more functional life stories (Brott, 2005; Del Corso & Reh fuss, 2011) that were ultimately used to inform their future career decisions.

One participant from Penryn College<sup>20</sup> appreciated his/her experience of not being judged during his/her participation in my career intervention programme. The seemingly non-judgemental approach inherent in my intervention programme recognises a crucial component of the career construction process, namely the acknowledgement that individuals know themselves better than anyone else does. Non-judgemental approaches (as experienced in my intervention programme) are further valued as they are seen to help participants design meaningful lives due to the fact that they are based on the utmost respect for individuals (Cochran, 1997, 2011; Maree, 2012a).

Participants from Penryn College<sup>21</sup> referred to their experience of being recognised as the expert of their lives and were thus seen as informed individuals (Cochran, 1997, 2011) while the researcher (counsellor) adopted a position of being inadequately informed about the participants' (clients') lives (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992; White, 1997) during the course of my intervention programme. This recognition is valued as it signals the emergence of career and self-construction processes (Cochran, 1997, 2011; Del Corso & Briddick, 2015; Maree, 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Savickas, 1993, 1997b), as participants were trusted to narrate their life stories (Maree, 2013a) and given the opportunity to affirm their authentic selves (Savickas, 1993, 1997c). More specifically, being able to validate aspects of their life stories to reflect their authentic selves, is seen to be beneficial in the literature in that it enables individuals to adapt more

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<sup>19</sup> Refer to section 5.3.1.1, ix, for a tentative explanation as to why none of the participants from Mthombo High School state that my intervention programme facilitated self-expression.

<sup>20</sup> In section 5.3.1.1, x, I give a possible explanation for why none of the participants from Mthombo High School said that they did not feel judged during the course of my intervention programme.

<sup>21</sup> In section 5.3.1.1, xi, I tentatively hypothesise as to why none of the participants from Mthombo High School did not state that my intervention programme recognized them as the experts of their lives.

effectively to transitions and unforeseen challenges they face (Brown et al., 2012, Chope & Consoli, 2007; Christensen & Johnston, 2003; Del Corso & Briddick, 2015; Maree, 2010b, 2013a, 2015).

#### **5.4.1.2. Negative experiences of career intervention programme**

A few participants from Penryn College<sup>22</sup> found it challenging to complete some of my intervention tasks. Responses indicate that their difficulties were related to past experiences that subsequently affected their experiences of aspects of the activities in my intervention programme. The process of self-construction (Guichard, 2005) and career construction (Savickas, 2005) was facilitated when participants acknowledged what past experiences (including more challenging ones) meant to them (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013).

Some of the participants from Penryn College<sup>23</sup> seemed to be reluctant to engage in self-discovery activities of an exploratory nature and subsequently got frustrated and/or confused during my intervention programme. It was apparent that these individuals expected a more direct approach based on tests results.

Some of the participants from Penryn College<sup>24</sup> found the timelines difficult to construct as they reportedly evoked painful memories. Memories that are sometimes difficult to recall, cannot be ignored when individuals construct themselves and their careers, as they constitute an integral part of life themes to help people overcome what they previously experienced in a passive manner (Maree, 2012b, 2015; McAdams, 2001; Savickas, 2009, 2015).

A participant from Penryn College<sup>25</sup> questioned the relevance of one of my intervention activities, as he/she could not understand the link between career development and narrating past and present experiences on a timeline. Individuals' self-knowledge increases as they make sense of past and present experiences (Del Corso & Briddick, 2015; Maree, 2013) through narration of life stories on timelines to help them

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<sup>22</sup> In section 5.3.1.2, i, I surmise the reasons why none of the participants from Mthombo High School seemingly struggled with some of my intervention tasks.

<sup>23</sup> Refer to section 5.3.1.2, ii, where I suggest a possible reason for why participants from Mthombo High School did not get frustrated and/or confused during my intervention programme.

<sup>24</sup> I give a possible explanation as to why none of the participants from Mthombo High School had difficulty recalling the past in section 5.3.1.2, iii.

<sup>25</sup> A tentative explanation for why none of the participants from Mthombo High School questioned the relevance of the timelines is given in section 5.3.1.2, iv.

re-construct more functional life stories that are ultimately used to help them manage career transitions (Brott, 2001; Chen, 2007; Cochran, 2007; Savickas, 2007a).

Four participants from Penryn College<sup>26</sup> said that my intervention programme did not help them make definite career choices. Reasons for this appeared to relate to the reluctance on the part of some of these participants to engage in an exploratory process of gaining self-knowledge and career information and to the difficulties experienced completing the timelines (as discussed). Guichard (2004, 2005) as well as Guichard and Dumora (2007, 2008) argue that a non-linear, exploratory approach to self-discovery does not necessarily denote the occurrence of a negative experience. Instead such approaches are seen as necessary to inform the career construction (Savickas, 2005) process. Chen (2007), Di Fabio and Maree (2013), as well as Maree (2013a) explain that participants who found the timelines challenging due to the difficulties they had recalling memories will inevitably find it hard to make career decisions, as decisions in this regard often incorporate memories from past experiences.

#### **5.4.1.3. Changes to career intervention programme**

With regards to proposed changes to my intervention programme, participants from Penryn College firstly felt that the programme should ideally be implemented before Grade 11, in line with the assertion made in the literature by Hartung et al. (2008), who advocate that career development starts in childhood. Super's (1957, 1990) Growth stage (Super, 1963a), specifies that this process starts at the age of four. Furthermore, the call for the earlier implementation of my programme seemingly acknowledges two important components of the life design framework. The first assertion relates to lifelong learning, that is, skills and knowledge about what is meaningful to individuals develops over an individual's lifespan (Gottfredson, 2002; Maree, 2009; Patton & McMahon, 2006c; Savickas, 2002a; Savickas et al., 2009; Super, 1957, 1980). Secondly, life design frameworks should be preventative by empowering individuals with skills to prepare them to make informed decisions before actual transitions occur (Savickas et al., 2009).

One participant from Penryn College suggested that more discussions should take place during the course of my intervention programme. The expressed need for more

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<sup>26</sup> Refer to section 5.3.1.2, v, where I surmise as to why none of the participants from Mthombo High School felt that my intervention programme did not help them make career choices.

social discourse resonates with the findings of earlier studies (Long, 1999) and expresses one of the core principles of career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), namely that discussions are of paramount importance in career development of individuals.

#### **5.4.1.4. Career choice influences**

The influence other people (audience) have on one's career choices through verbal discourse and reflection has been reportedly on extensively in the literature (Brott, 2001; Collin & Young, 2000; Gergen, 1994, 1999; Guichard, 2009, 2012; La Pointe, 2010; Savickas, 2005; Savickas et al., 2009; Schultheiss, 2007; Schultheiss et al., 2011; Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2010), and was named by participants from both schools in my study in this regard before and after my intervention programme was implemented. Interestingly enough, there appears to be a shift in perception in terms of the influence of an audience (particularly parents) on one's career choices when participants' responses are compared before and after the implementation of my intervention programme. It is evident that they readily accepted the career-related advice they received from audiences prior to their participation in my intervention programme. Signs of self-construction (Guichard, 2005) and career construction (Savickas, 2005) are apparent after participants took part in my intervention programme, as they seemingly chose not to repeat their parent's narratives and instead narrated their own stories. This finding adds to assertions made in the literature advocating the use of supportive audiences to help individuals find their own voices in their career narratives and furthermore contributes to the number of studies utilising group-based interventions, acknowledging the role of audience in the career decision-making process (Di Fabio & Maree, 2011).

The participants from both schools valued the role the researcher (as a teacher in presenting my intervention programme) played in informing the career decisions they made. This finding corresponds with earlier studies confirming the important role teachers potentially play in facilitating school-to-work transitions (Savickas, 1999), supporting learners' career aspirations (Blustein et al., 1997; Cohen-Scali, 2014) and promoting their sense of wellbeing in early adulthood (Lapan et al., 2007).

With regards to the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) test results, participants from Penryn College<sup>27</sup> found it beneficial to know the outcome of this test after they took part in my intervention programme to help them make informed career choices. However, it is clear from the responses made pertaining to the benefits of my intervention programme, that participants also valued the experience of narration inherent in my programme. This finding supports the call for inclusive approaches incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to facilitate self-awareness (Maree, 2010b; McMahon, & Patton, 2002; Niles, 2003; Patton, 2007; Savickas & Taber, 2006).

#### **5.4.1.5. Life Orientation lessons**

The majority of the participants from Penryn College consistently stated that their participation in their Life Orientation lessons was not beneficial to them in terms of supporting their career development prior to, and after the implementation of my intervention programme. Reasons cited by them in this regard included the limited time spent on career discussions, not being properly informed about career-related topics, the repetitive nature of topics covered in class that were unrelated to careers and did not develop any useful skills. In contrast, participants from Mthombo High School appeared to benefit from receiving career support during their Life Orientation lessons prior to the implementation of my intervention programme<sup>28</sup>. Interestingly enough, these participants were more critical of their Life Orientation lessons after the experimental groups took part in my intervention programme<sup>29</sup>. Overall, my findings suggest that the majority of the participants from both schools said that they received limited or inadequate career support at school (during Life Orientation lessons). This finding resonates with the findings of earlier studies (Dykeman et al. 2001; Johnson et al., 2011; Maree, 2009; Parsad et al., 2003).

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<sup>27</sup> In section 5.3.1.4, iii, I speculate as to why none of the participants from Mthombo High School stated that it was beneficial for them to utilise the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) test scores to inform their career decisions.

<sup>28</sup> In section 5.3.1.5, i, I speculate why participants from Mthombo High School felt that their Life Orientation lessons supported their career development prior to the implementation of my intervention programme.

<sup>29</sup> See section 5.3.1.5, i, for a possible reason why the participants from Mthombo High School were more critical of Life Orientation lessons after my intervention programme was implemented.



Participants from Penryn College<sup>30</sup> called for less repetition of topics unrelated to careers during their Life Orientation lessons. Responses from participants from both schools highlight the need to spend more time exploring the self and/or the world of work. Participants from Penryn College also questioned the timing of specific career-related activities they covered during their Life Orientation lessons. One participant from Mthombo High School said that his/her teacher needed to recognise the importance of Life Orientation lessons. In so doing, this participant recognised that schools can potentially support the career development of learners as stated in previous research findings (Lapan et al., 2003; Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2011; Wood & Dahl, 2015). Another participant from Mthombo High School added that his/her Life Orientation teacher should offer him/her more emotional support. Blustein et al. (1997) similarly emphasise the importance of receiving emotional support from proactive counsellors.

#### **5.4.1.6. Career adaptability**

Participants from both schools expressed an interest in their careers (concern) prior to the implementation of my intervention programme. Qualitative data analysed in my study confirms that concern grew during the course of this programme in participants from both schools as they became more reflexive. They were subsequently motivated to plan for their futures with more optimism. This finding adds to the conclusion reached by Brown et al. (2012), who similarly shows how self-reflexivity fosters, amongst other things, the development of concern. It is interesting to note participants also used the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) in a therapeutic capacity to increase concern as they contemplated their futures. This finding adds to existing findings that similarly show the versatility of the CCI as an assessment and counselling strategy (Savickas, 2002a).

Another sub-theme that was confirmed prior to the implementation of my intervention programme was a sense of personal agency in participants from both schools in terms of the extent of control they perceived to have over their futures. It was however noted that this only applied to a limited number of participants from Mthombo High

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<sup>30</sup> In section 5.3.1.5, i, I give tentative explanations for the different responses from participants from the two school regarding the changes they recommended to life Orientation lessons.

School compared to the number of participants from Penryn College<sup>31</sup>. None of the participants from Mthombo High School and only one participant from Penryn College indicated that their participation in my intervention programme increased the sense of control they had over their futures. It is therefore apparent that my intervention programme had a limited effect in this regard.

The sub-theme curiosity was confirmed prior to the implementation of my intervention programme when participants said that they were motivated to engage in exploratory behaviour to elicit information on the self and/or careers. Responses suggest that my intervention programme motivated participants from the experimental groups from both schools to engage in further exploratory behaviour.

Participants from both school appeared to be confident in their ability to reach their career goals prior to the implementation of my intervention programme. Responses made by participants from Mthombo High School suggest that my intervention programme increased their confidence levels further and seemingly motivated them to overcome obstacles (such as financial constraints) that they faced in achieving their career aspirations. This finding adds to the findings of a study by Hirschi (2009), who concludes that adaptive individuals feel empowered. One participant from Mthombo High School said that the timeline he/she constructed enhanced his/her confidence levels as he/she reflected on past experiences and linked them to the present to gain a new perspective on his/her life. Savickas (2011f) states that concern (for one's future) develops in response to the process whereby individuals link the past, present and future. My findings add to this assertion in concluding that confidence levels, instead of concern, increases in response to the afore-mentioned links drawn by individuals.

My overall findings pertaining to the theme of career adaptability concur with those of Barclay and Wolff (2012) in terms of the effectiveness of narrative career interventions to increase adaptability skills. My intervention programme seemingly offers an alternative approach to the CCI as used by these researchers and therefore adds to the body of literature advocating the use of narrative approaches to increase career adaptability. An analysis of the quantitative findings do not however confirm that my

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<sup>31</sup> I surmise as to why fewer participants from Mthombo High School felt they had less control over their futures prior to the implementation of my intervention programme, compared to the number of participants from Penryn College, in section 5.3.1.6, i.

intervention programme improved participants' career adaptability compared to the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons across all four subscales and for the total score in the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Yet none of the post-intervention responses suggest that Life Orientation lessons develop career adaptability. Participants shed light on this seemingly contradictory finding in stating that they are not reliant on these lessons to foster their curiosity (as a component of career adaptability), but engage in exploratory behaviour through self-motivation, motivation that developed through their interaction with other people, through the media, and when they attended school-based outreach programmes.

## **5.5. CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter, I interpret the findings of my study by relating them to the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2 as well as subsequent literature I reviewed. I conclude the chapter by summarising my findings according to the main themes from the quantitative and qualitative data. In Chapter 6 I review my research questions in the light on findings, make recommendations for further studies, and outline the limitations of my study. I conclude by sharing my personal reflections on my study.

## **CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter 1, I discuss how my interest in facilitating the management of career transitions grew in response to my experience of working with learners in diverse contexts. Their plight in this regard was emphasised in the literature I reviewed with emphasis placed on the lack of career support offered in schools. I endeavoured to describe my research efforts in the preceding chapters by positioning myself within constructivism as my main theoretical framework, ultimately to provide richer insights into the extent to which my school-based intervention programme helped learners manage career transitions they faced.

This chapter commences with a synopsis of my study. Thereafter, I review my research questions and strive to answer them in the light of my findings. I also revisit my ethical considerations and make recommendations for the improvement of practice, further research, theory building in Educational Psychology, and future policies. I conclude this chapter by reflecting upon my overall experience of my study.

### **6.2. SYNOPSIS**

In Chapter I, the background to my study is discussed, focusing briefly on the strategies that help individuals manage career-related transitions, followed by information in this regard pertaining specifically to adolescents. Further to this, I make reference to literature pointing out the lack of career support offered to learners in schools. I conclude the background to my study by positioning my research efforts within two diverse contexts, namely Penryn College and Mthombo High School. Thereafter, the rationale for my study is presented according to my personal and academic motivations for engaging in my chosen research topic. I subsequently contextualise my study within the broader context of career counselling and then discuss the status of career facilitation in the South African context and, more specifically, in the two schools in my study. My primary and secondary research questions are formulated followed by the assumptions inherent in my study. I also specify the aims of my research and clarify key terms used. Thereafter, I briefly outline my research methodology and strategies. The ethical considerations are then discussed followed by the anticipated limitations of my study.

I discuss literature pertaining to the topic of my study in Chapter 2 by firstly focusing on the contemporary arrangement of work. Thereafter, my discussion centres on reviewing literature pertaining to school-based career transition support. Various theoretical perspectives are discussed before I augment theories, as far as possible, that are seen to inform my research topic, culminating in the theoretical framework of my study. Underpinned by theories relating to my research topic, I present my conceptual framework to illustrate how I link the key concepts in my study. I conclude the chapter with a critical overview of the literature reviewed.

Chapter 3 commences with a discussion of my research design by firstly explaining how the research questions asked in Chapter 1, necessitated the use of a mixed-methods research design. I also discuss my design in terms of a case study focusing on the career transition experiences of Grade 11 learners in two contrasting educational settings. Thereafter, I discuss the final research design inherent in my study, namely a quasi-experimental, pre-test/post-test comparison group design, to specifically determine the extent of change in participants' career adaptability before and after the implementation of my intervention programme. Steps taken to analyse the data are also addressed in this chapter. Factors regarding the criteria for quality assurance are furthermore discussed for the qualitative and quantitative data respectively. The role of the researcher, as well as the ethical considerations in the context of my research design, are outlined. Finally, the limitations of my study in this context are discussed.

In Chapter 4, I draw a participant profile to describe those who took part in my study, followed by a discussion of the results of the quantitative data analysis process. This commences with the descriptive statistics to highlight the means and standard deviations for pre- and post-intervention CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) scores. The results of the pre-intervention, quantitative data analysis are discussed to determine whether or not there was initial bias between the two schools and/or four groups in my study. Thereafter, the results of the differences between the pre- and post-intervention scores are analysed to ascertain if there are statistically significant differences among the four groups studied. Finally, the pre-intervention followed by the post-intervention, qualitative results, are discussed after the data generated in the focus-

group interviews as well as the data from the reflective journals kept by the participants in the experimental groups, are analysed.

In Chapter 5, I relate the quantitative and qualitative results of my study to my theoretical framework and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as well as the subsequent literature reviewed in striving to answer the primary and secondary research questions. This process culminates in the triangulation and summarising of the results.

### **6.3. REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

My main research question is stated as: *To what extent can career and self-construction interventions enhance learners' ability to manage career transitions?* I divided this question into three sub-questions in my efforts to answer the main research question comprehensively:

- *What is the nature of current school-based (career facilitation) programmes in helping learners from diverse backgrounds manage career transitions and how effective are these programmes in this regard?*
- *How is self-construction facilitated by means of the intervention explained in my study?*
- *What is career construction and how is it facilitated by means of the intervention explained in my study?*
- *To what extent will career and self-construction address the career transition needs of diverse groups of learners?*

#### **6.3.1. What is the nature of current school-based (career facilitation) programmes in helping learners from diverse backgrounds manage career transitions and how effective are these programmes in this regard?**

School-based (career facilitation programmes) are discussed in the context of Life Orientation lessons. Career facilitation initiatives during Life Orientation lessons were not valued by any of the participants from Penryn College prior to the implementation of my intervention programme, with the exception of one individual, after the implementation of my intervention programme. Overall, these individuals felt that insufficient time is allocated to their career development during Life Orientation lessons with time spent instead on unrelated, repetitive topics.

Participants from Mthombo High School experienced aspects of their Life Orientation lessons favourably before my intervention programme was implemented. The content of these lessons were valued in terms of the experience of having their values clarified, receiving career information regarding financial support for tertiary studies and helping them identify their abilities and weaknesses to inform their career choices. Interestingly, participants from this school were more critical of their Life Orientation lessons after my intervention programme was introduced. In Chapter 5, I tentatively explain why this occurred. Only one participant from each school named goal setting as a useful skill acquired during the experiment. The same participant said that his/her participation in Life Orientation lessons taught him/her how to persist, focus and be confident: skills that could be utilised in his/her career development.

Participants from both schools proposed numerous changes to these lessons to enhance the quality of career support offered in this context. Suggestions in this respect include modifying teaching and assessment approaches, having educators with a positive attitude towards their lessons, introducing career support earlier in schools, incorporating practical, career-related activities, planning career-related activities more effectively, and avoiding repeating topics covered in class.

Participants did not associate any of the four adaptive skills, namely concern, control, curiosity and confidence, with their Life Orientation lessons when they discussed factors that developed their propensity to adapt to their environments as they negotiated career-related transitions.

### **6.3.2. How is self-construction facilitated by means of the intervention explained in my study?**

A comprehensive overview of some of the existing literature on self-construction is covered in Chapter 2. In Chapter 4 and 5, I highlight the areas where signs of self-construction were evident in my study. Participants from both schools seemingly recognised and valued the basic premise of constructivism as the meta-theory of my study and the foundation of Guichard's (2005) self-construction theory: namely that knowledge and self-identity are constructed through discourse in social interactions. It is apparent that my group-based intervention programme gave participants from both school

opportunities to engage in dialogue to this end. One participant from Penryn College did however remark that he/she would have benefitted from having had more opportunities to discuss tasks during my intervention programme during the course of its implementation.

The emergence of self-construction is noted in some of the responses made by the participants in my study. It is however important to note that signs of self-construction are not uniformly evident across both schools. In Chapter 5, I give tentative explanations for these occurrences. Firstly, participants from both schools appeared to be motivated into purposeful action through, for example, being motivated to work harder at school, as a consequence of taking part in my intervention programme. Secondly, being recognised as the experts of their lives and having the assurance that they could express themselves honestly, was appreciated by participants from Penryn College. Thirdly, in encouraging the expression of narrative realities based on life-design principles, my intervention programme seemed to acknowledge the respective meanings ascribed to all life experiences, both past and present, of participants in both schools. Signs of self-construction were furthermore evident in participants' narrations of their life stories as they developed clearer pictures of themselves. Participants from Mthombo High School furthermore valued the information they received regarding the world of work during the course of my intervention programme.

Difficulties encountered by participants from Penryn College during the course of my intervention programme highlight challenges inherent in the self-construction process for those individuals. Recalling past, painful memories was named in this respect. Some of the participants from Penryn College also got frustrated and/or confused, as they were encouraged to engage in self-discovery activities of an exploratory nature. In Chapter 5, I surmise as to why these difficulties were not encountered by participants from Mthombo High School (see Chapter 5, section 5.4.1.2).

Assertions made in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 advocate that self-construction is evident as individuals adapt in terms of the extent of concern, control, curiosity and/or confidence that develops in response to changing environments. Responses from participants in both schools confirm that self-construction unfolded as their concern and curiosity increased during the course of my intervention programme. The development of self-construction through an increased sense of control over one's



future manifested itself to a limited extend during my intervention programme as only one participant from Penryn College commented in this regard. Moreover, only participants from Mthombo High School seemingly constructed themselves as their confidence levels grew through feelings of empowerment that developed, as they worked through my intervention tasks.

### **6.3.3. What is career construction and how is it facilitated by the intervention explained in my study?**

According to Savickas (2011b, 2015b), career counselling is not a model of vocational guidance (which orientates people to the world of work and how they ‘fit’ into the world of work). It is not a career education model either (i. e. a model that educates people about their developmental tasks and how to cope with the demands of work in a rational manner). In contrast, it represents a true counselling model by focusing on what Savickas refers to as the process whereby people are helped to construct their careers through dialogue with other people. Practitioners apply career construction theory when they perform career counselling to (a) *construct a career through small stories*, (b) *deconstruct and reconstruct the small stories into a large story*, and (c) *co-construct the next episode in the story* (Savickas, 2011b, p. 5).

In Chapter 2, section 2.4.3, I discuss career construction theory as one of the theoretical perspectives used in Chapter 5 to inform the findings of my study. In essence, career construction is less general than self-construction in that it focuses on the sense of identity derived from one’s career (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013; Savickas, 2005, 2010a). As discussed in Chapter 4 and 5, signs of career construction are evident in the responses from participants from both schools. They were given opportunities to narrate their life stories and identify life themes inherent in these stories by engaging in exploratory activities in my intervention programme, as they were encouraged to become the authors of these stories. In acquiring self-knowledge through authentic self-reflection (thinking about the past), reflexivity (thinking about possibilities for the future) and discourse in my intervention programme, these participants seemingly developed clearer pictures of themselves that in turn helped them develop their understand of what past, present and future experiences meant to them. The meaning-making process helped them make more

informed decisions about their futures, signalling the unfolding of career construction, as they attempted to uncover what mattered to them in life.

A positive work ethic, ultimately to improve their marks at school, developed as participants from both schools completed my intervention tasks. In Chapter 5, I discuss how various authors (Savickas, 1999, 2005; Lapan et al., 2003) maintain that academic achievement develops individuals' capacity to adapt to school-to-work transitions. Furthermore, enhanced academic achievement potentially motivates them to be more proactive in achieving their career aspirations (Claes and Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998). Implied signs of career construction are thus noted in the afore-mentioned discussion, as participants' propensities to adapt to career-related challenges seemed to grow through their participation in my intervention programme.

The group-based approach inherent in my intervention programme afforded the participants from both schools opportunities to co-construct their subjective realities through dialogue. In so doing, they recognised the power of an audience to help them identify factors that resonated with their core selves in the context of their future careers, thereby signalling another aspect of the career construction process.

#### **6.3.4. To what extent will career and self-construction address the career transition needs of diverse groups of learners?**

Overall, responses pertaining to sources of career support from participants in both schools confirm their preference for my intervention programme as opposed to their Life Orientation lessons. As discussed in Chapter 5, signs of career and self-construction appeared to manifest during the course of my intervention programme and seemingly addressed the respective career transition needs of learners in contrasting environments.

As expected from Grade 11 learners, the participants from both schools in my study were preparing for the transition from school to embark on their future careers. The following career transition needs corresponded across the two schools: the need for self-knowledge; the need for support in making informed career decisions; to be actively involved in my intervention programme; to share their life stories with an audience; to develop plans for their futures as they imagined possibilities for themselves; to determine what was meaningful to them; to clarify their values and interests; to have a positive

work ethic; and to develop career adaptability skills. The afore-mentioned needs appear to have been met in the context of my intervention as career and self-construction unfolded while the participants worked through the various activities (see Chapters 4 and 5).

In line with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and subsequent literature reviewed during the literature control process in Chapter 5, it is also evident that participants' needs in terms of the pending transition from school did not always correspond across the two school contexts. Participants from Penryn College needed to express their emotions, engage in activities that facilitated honest self-expression, experience no judgements, be perceived as the experts of their lives, receive career support early in life, receive input from the researcher to inform their career decisions, and learn about the results of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). In contrast, participants from Mthombo High School indicated that they would benefit from any career support they received irrespective of when it was offered to them. More specifically, these participants stated that they needed more career-related information compared to the participants from Penryn College. Furthermore, the participants from Mthombo High School also needed emotional support from their teachers and expressed their need to have Life Orientation teachers who had a positive attitude towards their learning area. These participants also mentioned the need for financial support. Although it was not acknowledged as a need by participants from Mthombo High School, the benefits of being acknowledged as the expert of one's life as the process of knowing oneself unfolds through honest, non-judgemental approaches is discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.3.1.1, ix, x and xi. Here I surmise that cultural and linguistic differences between these participants and the researcher accounted for this occurrence.

Career and self-construction processes inherent in my intervention programme meets most of the career transition needs named by participants from Penryn College (see Chapters 4 and 5). One shortcoming in this regard is the fact that my intervention programme was only implemented in Grade 11 and these participants felt that they would have benefitted from taking part in it earlier in their school careers. Participants from Mthombo High School acquired career-related information while career and self-construction processes were underway during my intervention programme (see Chapters

4 and 5). As expected, financial constraints were named as barriers faced by participants from this school in their efforts to manage the career transitions they face. Evidence of self-construction was noted as these participants adapted to their environment by becoming more confident in being able to overcome financial challenges during their participation in my intervention programme.

In contrast to this, career and self-construction, through the development of career adaptability that was manifested through an increase in concern, was not evident in the responses made by participants from Mthombo High School. Furthermore, none of these participants, unlike the participants from Penryn College, recognised the potential therapeutic benefit of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) to improve adaptability skills through increasing concern. A tentative explanation for the difference observed in this respect is discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.3.1.4, iii. Lastly, my intervention programme seemed to have a limited effect on the extent of control participants from both schools had over their futures. Lastly, my intervention programme seemed to have a limited effect on the amount of control that participants from either of the two schools had over their own futures.

### **6.3.5. Revisiting the primary research question**

It was apparent from the responses from participants from both schools that making informed career decisions is an integral part of the management of career-related transitions. The processes of career and self-construction, implicit in the life stories that participants from both schools narrated during my intervention programme, seemingly gave them insights into themselves and informed subsequent career decisions they made. Furthermore, participants from Mthombo High School valued the information they received on the world of work during their participation in my intervention programme. In so doing, my intervention programme met a career transition need that is often associated with low resource schools such as Mthombo High School (see section 6.3.4).

Furthermore, the promotion of social discourse during my group-based intervention programme facilitated the processes of career and self-construction, as participants from both schools acquired self-knowledge. Therefore, opportunities to engage with an audience during the course of my intervention programme further

informed the career decision-making process and in so doing helped participants from both schools manage this aspect of the career transition process.

In striving to actualise their identities and construct themselves, participants from both schools were motivated into purposeful action by, for example, working harder at school to improve their academic performance. Therefore, career and self-construction inherent in this action during my intervention programme ultimately increased their chances of achieving their career aspirations; another important component of the management of career-related transitions.

Participants from Penryn College valued the experience of not being judged during the course of my intervention programme as they were recognised as the expert of their lives. This process enabled them to affirm their authentic selves as they adapted to transitions and challenges they face. Furthermore, participants from this school appreciated having the opportunity to express themselves honestly, including being able to express their emotions openly, as they uncovered inconsistencies in their life stories, potentially to facilitate the development of more functional life stories that inform their career decisions. In Chapter 5, section 5.3.1.1, viii, ix, x and (xi), I tentatively explain why this was not applicable to participants from Mthombo High School.

In Chapter 2, I refer to literature promoting the use of career interventions that help individuals adapt to changing environments. It is further advocated that career and self-construction emerges as adaptability skills develop. Quantitative data analysed **does not confirm that my intervention programme improved participants' career adaptability compared to the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons** across all four subscales and for the total score in the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). That is, my intervention programme did not improve the participants' overall career adaptability (measured quantitatively) compared to the standard, Life Orientation lessons. However, an analysis of the qualitative data indicates that, **the majority of participants from both schools stated that their Life Orientation lessons do not facilitate career and self-construction through the development of career adaptability** (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.2), whereas my intervention programme was seen to develop career adaptability skills (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.1.6). Analysing responses by participants from both schools clarify this seemingly contradictory finding in

confirming that they were not reliant on these lessons to foster their curiosity (as a component of career adaptability), but engaged in exploratory behaviour through self-motivation; motivation that developed through their interaction with other people, through the media, and when they attended school-based outreach programmes.

#### **6.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

I confirm that the following ethical considerations named in Chapter 1 were adhered to during the course of my study:

- Ensured transparency in terms of informing all role players of the purpose of the project, the procedures to be followed and their rights in terms of their participation. The voluntary nature of participation was emphasised and participants were told verbally and in writing that, should they wish to do so, they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Obtained written, informed consent from the participants (see Annexure G), the parents or guardians (see Annexure F), the headmasters of the two schools (see Annexure E), and the Department of Education (see Annexure H) to conduct the research.
- Maintained confidentiality by ensuring that the data cannot be linked to individual participants by name.
- Communicated results to participants for verification purposes to avoid misinterpretations of the research findings.
- Counselling services were made available to individuals who manifested behaviours and emotions in response to their participation in my study. Arrangements in this regard were made with a fellow psychologist to ensure that my role as a researcher was not integrated and confused with my role in my profession.
- Adhered to the ethical guidelines specified in the Ethics and Research Statement of the Faculty of Education of the University of Pretoria and The Professional Board for Psychology.

## **6.5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Having implemented my intervention programme in two schools and, after considering the benefits, negative aspects and recommendations named by the participants in my study, the following recommendations are made:

### **6.5.1. Recommendations for the improvement of practice**

In terms of the improvement of practice, I make the following suggestions, keeping in mind the various role players who are ultimately responsible for the success of career support efforts:

- Recognising that career development starts in childhood, I suggest that intervention programmes such as my own are implemented in schools earlier than Grade 11. In so doing, learners will be able to explore themselves and the world of work without the pressure of having to make immediate decisions about their futures.
- Underpinned by constructivism, career and self-construction processes inherent in intervention programmes such as mine recognises and incorporates the powerful role of an audience and the culture in which life roles are enacted to facilitate the process whereby participants' identities are co-constructed. With this in mind, I recommend that sufficient time be allocated to the completion of the tasks in my intervention programme, so that learners have more opportunities to identify cultural scripts and to engage in dialogue with their peers, educators and parents.
- Incorporating the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) as an assessment and therapeutic instrument to give learners additional opportunities to develop career adaptability skills. Educator training in terms of administering and utilising information generated by this instrument is therefore essential to this end.
- Allocating sufficient time for follow up discussions especially if learners become frustrated and/or confused as they actively engage in exploratory activities.
- I anticipate that it is easier for learners to express themselves more openly if they are familiar with the facilitator of any intervention programmes that are similar to

mine. If this is the case then it is advisable to group the learners with familiar facilitators as far as possible to encourage dialogue and rapport between them.

### **6.5.2. Recommendations for further research**

A number of tentative explanations for observations made in my research are discussed in Chapter 5, leaving room for further research efforts in this regard. Therefore, following areas can potentially be explored:

- The extent to which intervention programmes based on similar principles to mine enable learners to express their emotions openly if they are presented in the mother tongue of the learners.
- The possibility of facilitating honest self-expression during intervention programmes based on career and self-construction if they are presented to learners in their mother tongue and by a familiar facilitator.
- The extent to which the cultural and socio-economical backgrounds of facilitators influence learners' experiences of feeling judged during their participation in intervention programmes that are similar to mine.
- Examining the extent to which intervention programmes (ones that help learners manage career-transitions through career and self-construction) make learners feel that they are the experts of their lives after they are given other opportunities to build their sense of empowerment.
- Ascertaining why learners from low resource schools in areas challenged by disadvantage, seemingly embrace school-based, career support initiatives without questioning them and/or respond to them without frustration and/or confusion.
- Exploring why some learners do not seem to have difficulty recalling painful memories.
- Identifying factors that influence learners' expectations of career support initiatives.
- Exploring why some learners are apprehensive about engaging in exploratory activities to facilitate self-knowledge and information on the world of work.



- Identifying possible reasons for why some learners appear to be reluctant to use the results of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) as a career support instrument.
- Exploring how Life Orientation teachers perceive their roles in terms of offering career support to learners.
- An in-depth study to identify and describe factors that enhance learners' career adaptability skills, as my findings suggest that Life Orientation lessons are not instrumental in this regard.

### **6.5.3. Recommendations for theory building in Educational Psychology**

In discussing the academic rationale for my study in Chapter 1, I emphasised that adolescents are among those who ask questions pertaining to their futures as they negotiate the many changes and transitions they inevitably face in an ever-changing, unpredictable, and globalised world. The importance of career support initiatives in the field of Educational Psychology is widely advocated in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and subsequently literature reviewed in Chapter 5. My findings call for further research endeavours exploring the extent to which alternative intervention programmes adequately prepare individuals for the many transitions they face. I place emphasis on school-based, career support programmes that adequately prepare learners for school-to-work transitions, the first of many transitions they will face.

Overall, participants in my study seemingly valued my intervention programme advocating the use of career and self-construction to help them manage the career transitions they face. It is hoped that future research undertakings that similarly facilitate the co-construction of identity will be explored to determine the extent to which they support learners as they transition through life. Existing and emerging theories in the field of Educational Psychology should therefore underpin future research endeavours in this regard.

In Chapter 2, I adhered to the call made by Savickas and Lent (1994) in the literature that it is unlikely that a single theory will offer comprehensive explanations for career behaviour given the unpredictable nature of contemporary society and the world of work. I subsequently converged different theoretical perspectives as far as possible,

depicted in Figure 2.3, section 2.5, to formulate the theoretical framework for my study. The benefits of this exercise are apparent in Chapter 5 when I drew on primary facets of more than one theory to interpret my data.

#### **6.5.4. Recommendations for future policies**

The results of my study (see Chapter 5), confirm the benefits of an intervention programme based on career and self-construction in helping learners manage career transitions. Future policies may benefit from making provision in the school curriculum for interventions based on career and self-construction to help learners in this regard.

### **6.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

As discussed in Chapter 1, the data in my study was gathered from a relatively small group of learners from specific educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Cohen et al. (2001) caution against the inclination to generalise my quantitative findings to the population. Further to this, the inherent nature of the case study design utilised in my study, is an in-depth investigation of my specific intervention programme (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) that is not seen to be generalizable.

Furthermore, Mthombo High School is not fully representative of the majority of schools from disadvantaged backgrounds due to the financial and academic support it receives from Penreach. This limits the generalizability of the quantitative findings of my study further.

I am more familiar with many participants from Penryn College in my capacity as an educational psychologist in this school. By contrast, I did not know any of the participants from Mthombo High School. I anticipated the potential limitations of The Halo Effect, described in Chapter 1, section 1.13. I avoided making bias judgements as far as possible due to my familiarity with participants from the former school by verifying my interpretations with the participants in my study and the expert advice I sought from my supervisor.

### **6.7. A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE STUDY**

My reflections on my overall experiences of my study are encompassed in the following discussion covering the findings I anticipated, findings that surprised me,

disappointing findings, findings that I did not expect and thoughts pertaining to the meaning my study holds for me.

### **6.7.1. Findings that were anticipated**

Responses from participants from both schools confirmed my expectation that career and self-construction would unfold as they engaged in my intervention programme. I furthermore anticipated that parents would influence the career decisions of participants irrespective of the school they attended. I expected parents to have less of an impact in this regard as participants began identifying their voices as they narrated their life stories. My expectation in terms of the effectiveness of career-support initiatives offered during Life Orientation lessons was also confirmed, namely that participants from both schools did not value the support they received in this context. Finally, I anticipated that some of the results of my study would not be uniformly applicable to participants across both school, given their contrasting educational settings.

### **6.7.2. Findings that surprised me**

I am surprised at the perceived versatility of the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) for therapeutic purposes in career counselling over and above its intended purpose as an assessment instrument. I was also surprised to learn, after conducting my literature control, that some of the difficulties that participants from both school encountered during my intervention programme were often necessary and actually helped facilitate career and self-construction processes.

### **6.7.3. Disappointing findings**

I am disappointed that the quantitative findings of my research did not confirm that my intervention programme significantly improved participants' career adaptability compared to the standard, traditional Life Orientation lessons as there are no significant differences between the post- and pre-scores for all four groups from both school on all four subscales and for the total scores in the CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Furthermore, I am disappointed to learn that my intervention programme appears to have a limited effect on developing the personal agency or sense of control of the

participants, as they approach their futures. That is, my intervention programme did not facilitate this facet of managing career-related transitions.

#### **6.7.4. Findings that I did not expect**

I did not expect the participants from both schools to embrace the various activities in my intervention programme as fully as they did. No signs of being reluctant to engage in the activities were apparent, even when specific tasks presented challenges to them or were unfamiliar to them. I did not realise the extent to which these participants are ready to embrace alternative career-support initiatives.

Furthermore, I did not expect participants from Mthombo High School to have insight into factors that seemingly facilitated the development of their career adaptability prior to the implementation of my intervention programme.

#### **6.7.5. What this study meant to me personally**

The start of my research project intentionally coincided with the departure of my two children as they embarked on their tertiary studies as university students. It is in my nature to feel fulfilled when I can devote my time completely to the task at hand. Having fewer and different responsibilities as a mother gave me the time and space to immerse myself totally in my study. As a task-focussed person I had to remind myself to take time out to do other things I also enjoy and not sacrificing them while I strove towards my goal of contributing knowledge to the field of career psychology.

I embrace academic challenges and find fulfilment in research, particularly when I believe that my efforts in this regard can potentially make a difference in the lives of other people. This process did come with its challenges when I had to embrace aspects of our technological world to source literature relevant to my research and be more attentive to the technical aspects of my writing.

I remain astounded at the quality of support I received from my promoter. His utmost professionalism and dedication to his work is and will always be a source of inspiration to me, especially on days when I questioned my ability to complete my research.

I write this final chapter with mixed emotions. I feel relieved that I shall shortly achieve one of my long term goals, but am somewhat apprehensive as I think about

possible answers to the question, “What next?” I find comfort in remembering one of the inherent principles of the life design framework, namely: learning is a lifelong process. As such, this project is not the end of something but signals the beginning of new possibilities as I am challenged to adapt to further, inevitable changes in my life. As I write the final chapter of this thesis, I find comfort knowing that the next chapter of my life story is about to unfold as I negotiate what is meaningful to me.

## 6.8. CONCLUSION

The potential benefits of receiving school-based career support are widely advocated in the literature. Consistent and comprehensive career-support initiatives in this regard are particularly relevant and necessary to prepare learners for the school-to-work transitions they face and future transitions they will inevitably have to manage in an ever-changing, unpredictable, and globalised world. The educational challenges encountered in the South African context are to recognise the lasting impressions of career counselling practices that were traditionally used to perpetuate racism and preserve the economic power of white supremacy (Maree, 2009; Maree & Molepo, in press), and to meet the current and future challenge of finding intervention initiatives that are applicable to learners across diverse cultural and socio-economical settings.

In this study, the extent to which career and self-construction helps participants from diverse backgrounds manage career transitions is explored through a school-based intervention programme. In essence, the reported findings confirm the overall success of my intervention programme in this regard as participants’ got to know themselves and the world of work better. Implementing my intervention programme in groups of learners gave them the opportunity to construct themselves and their future careers in dialogue with an audience. Furthermore, as a school-based intervention programme offered to groups of learners, one’s attention is drawn to the potential benefits of this initiative in making career support accessible and affordable to more learners. In the end, my ultimate hope is that my study has contributed (albeit incrementally) to my participants’ self-clarity (Savickas, 2015, p. 139) which, as explicated by the undisputed role model and leader in our field, namely Mark Savickas, [it] *enables clients to make their intentions more apparent to themselves and their counsellors* (Savickas, 2015, p. 139).

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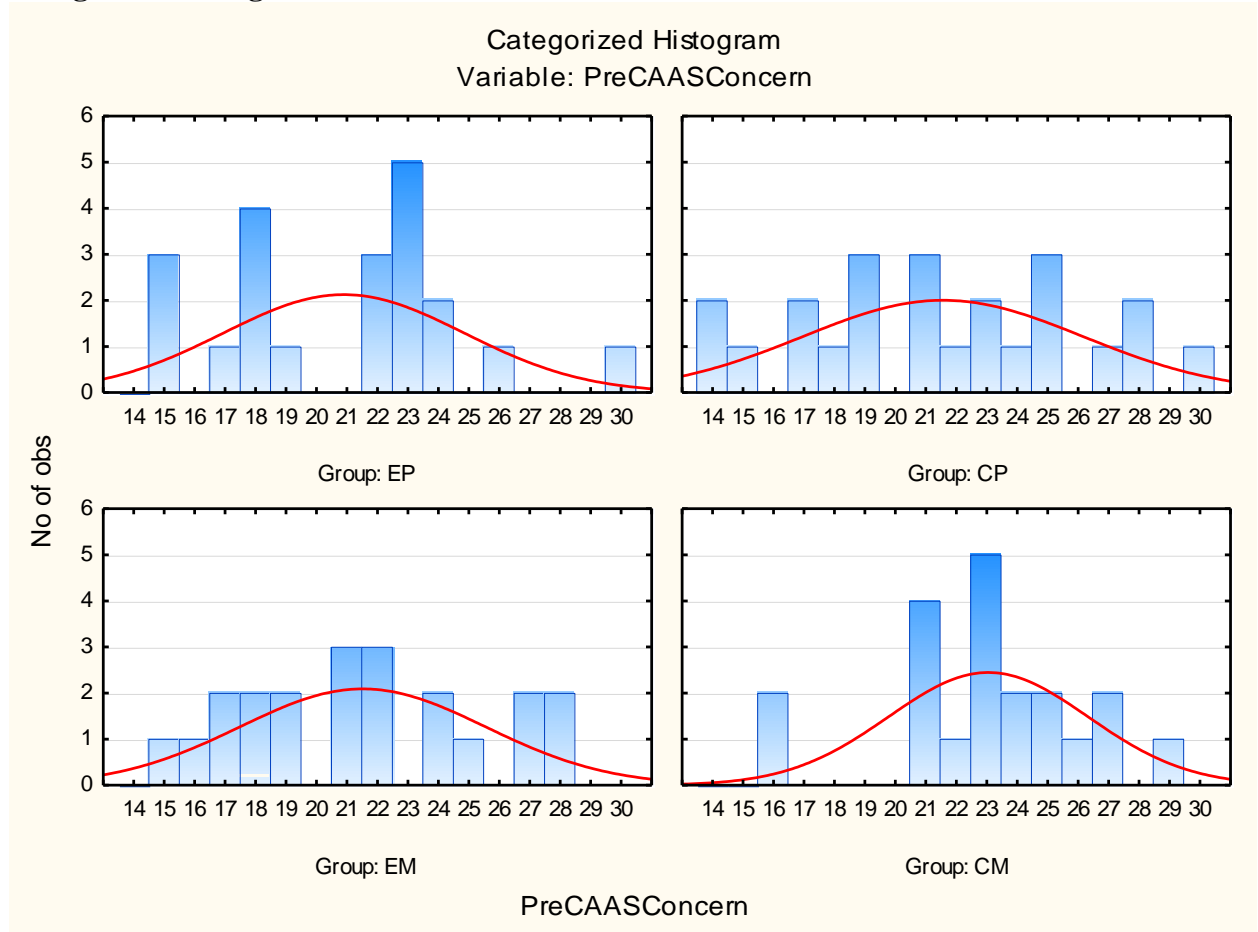
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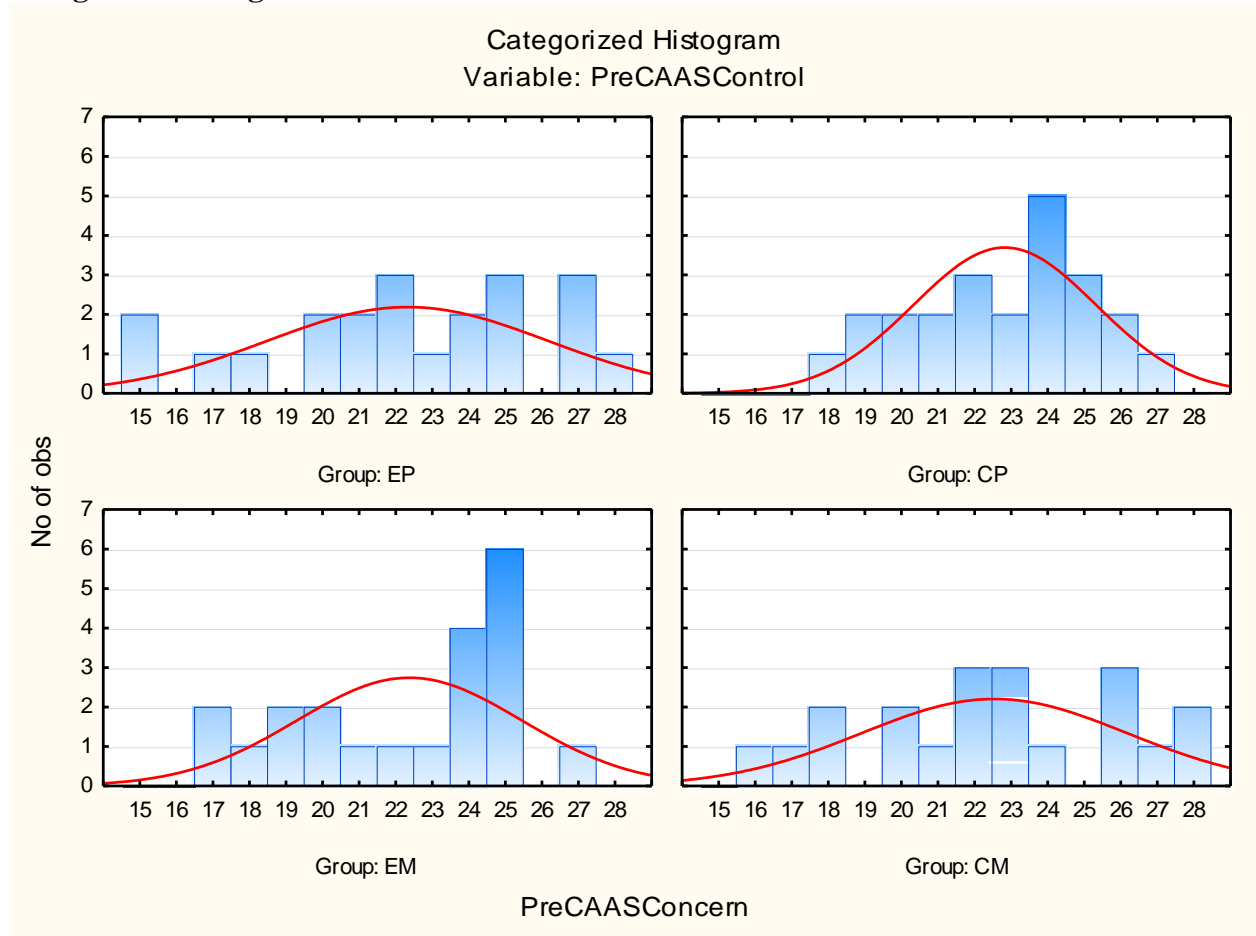
## Annexure A

Categorized histograms for the pre- and post CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) scores for each scale and for the total score.

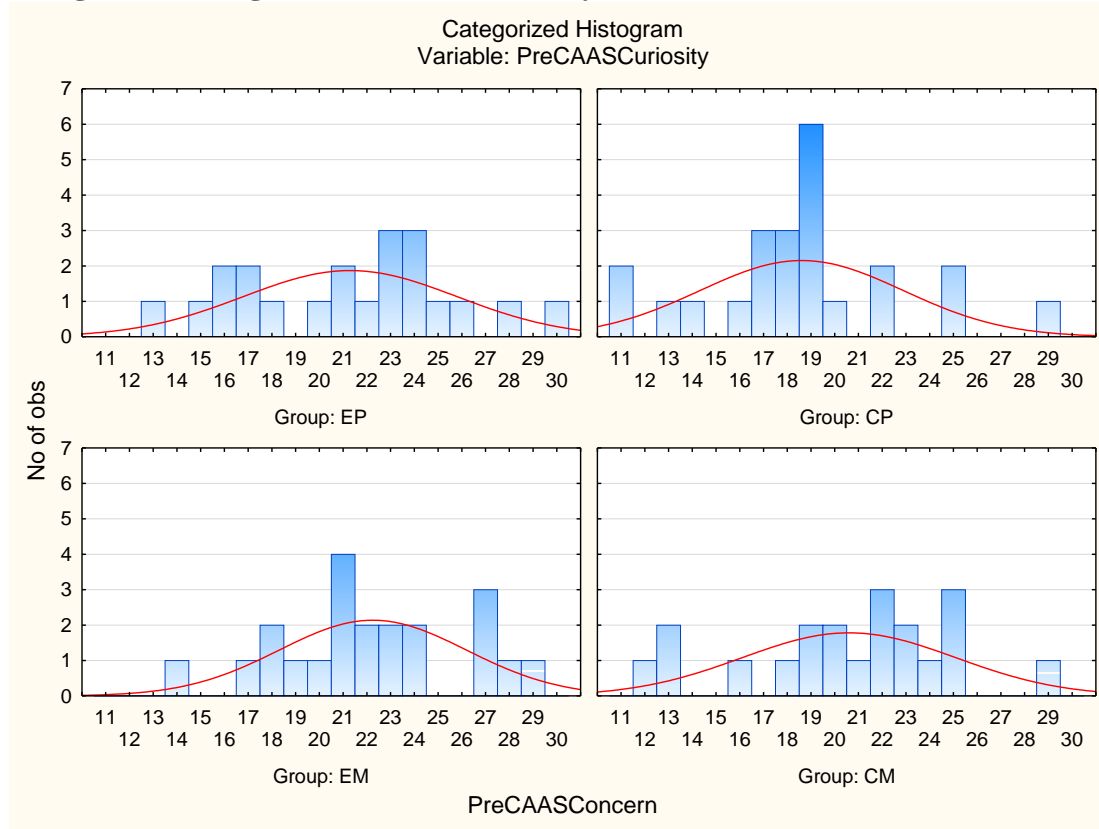
### Categorized histogram: PreCAASConcern



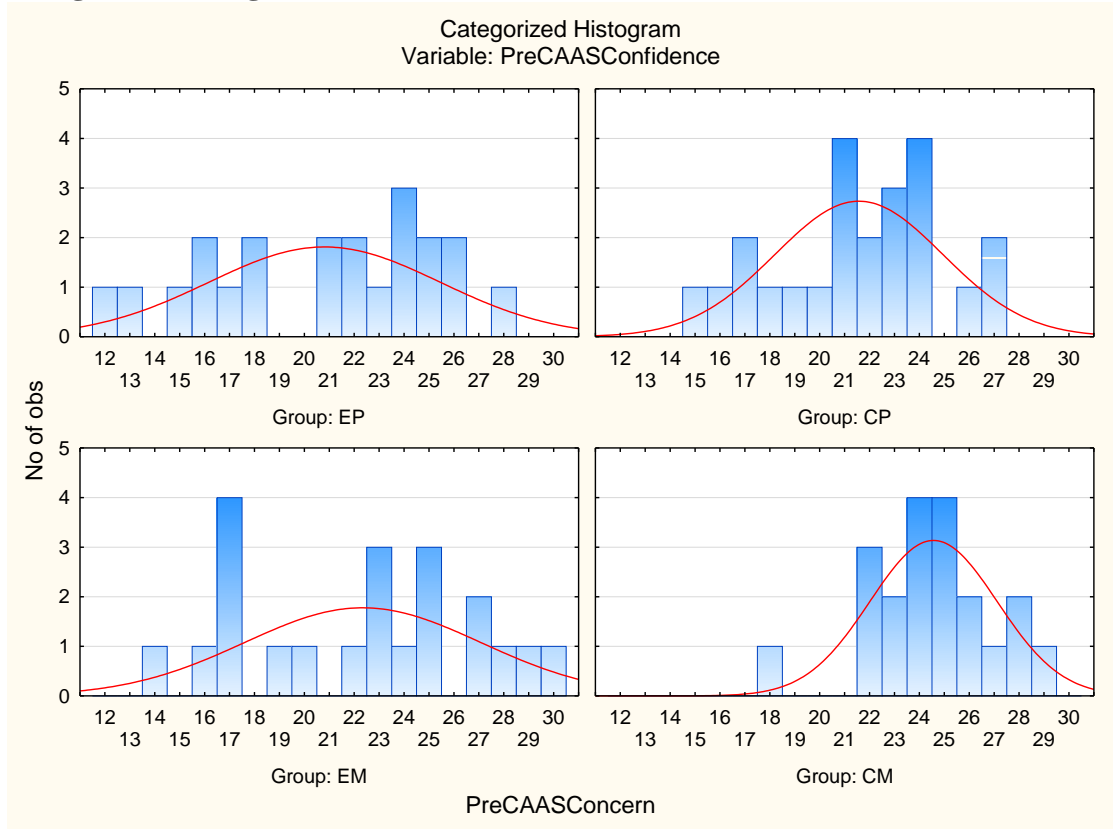
### Categorized histogram: PRECAASCONTROL



### Categorized histogram: PreCAASCuriosity

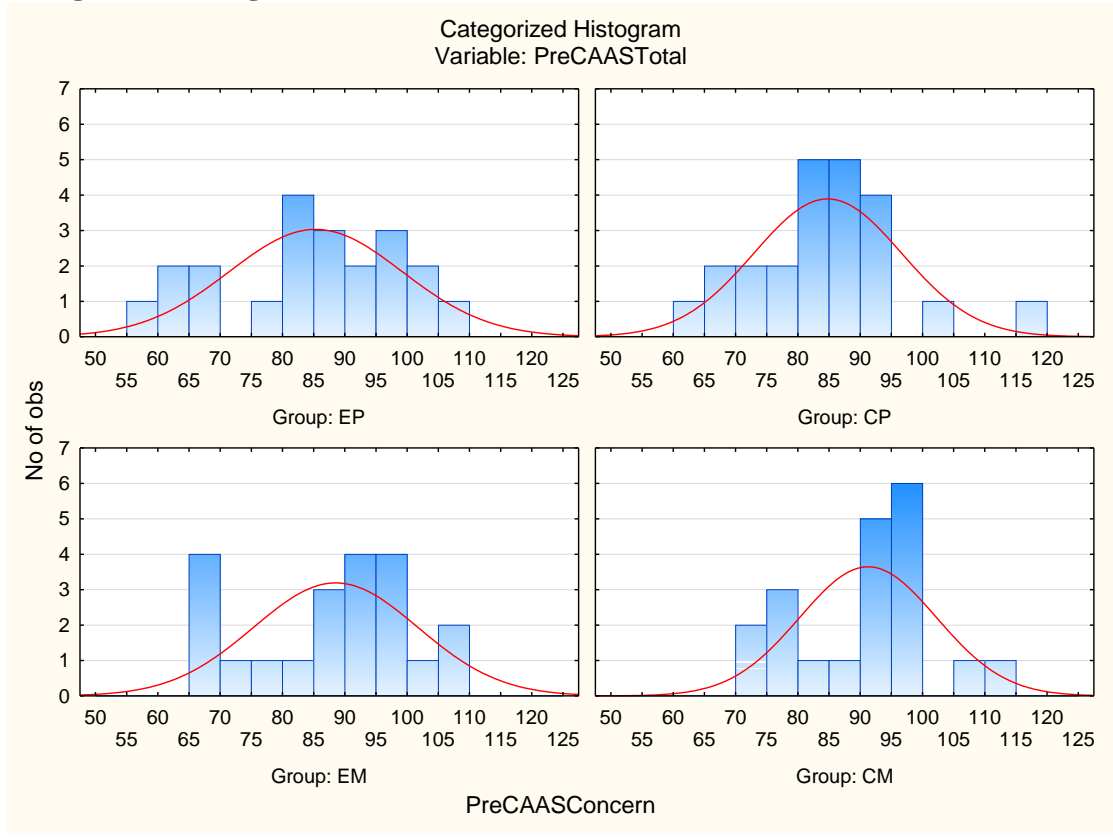


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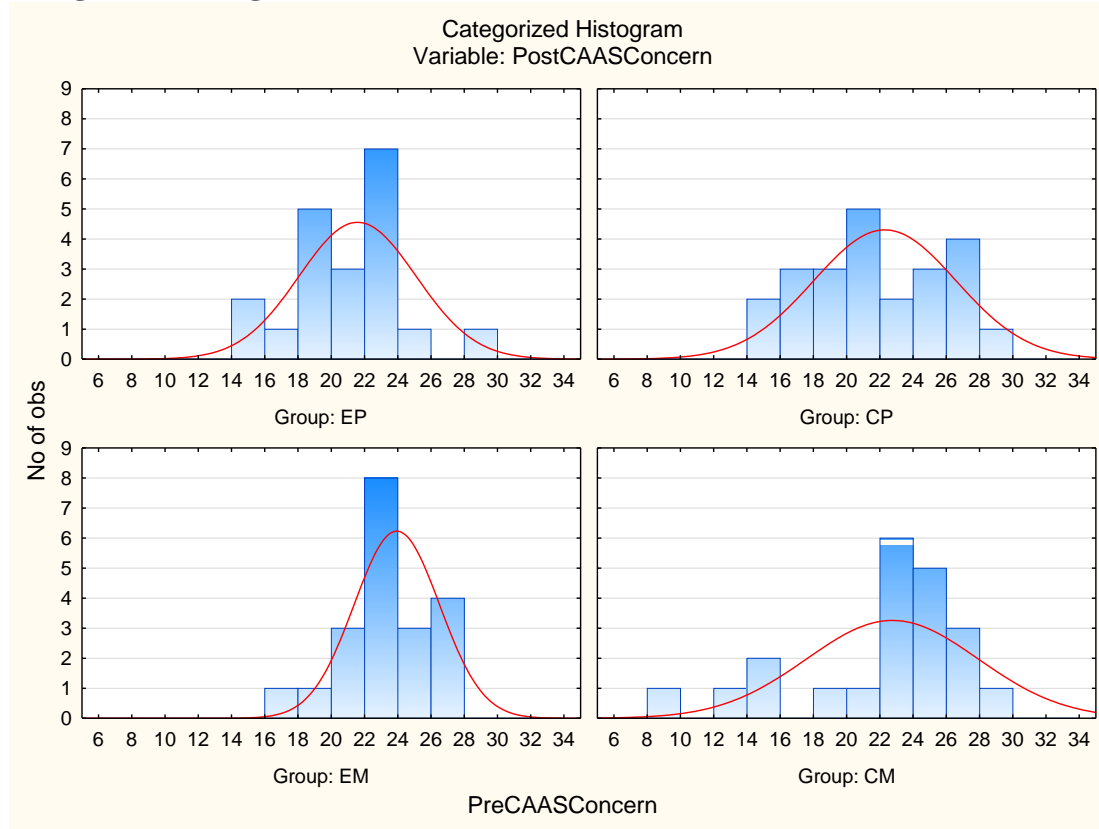




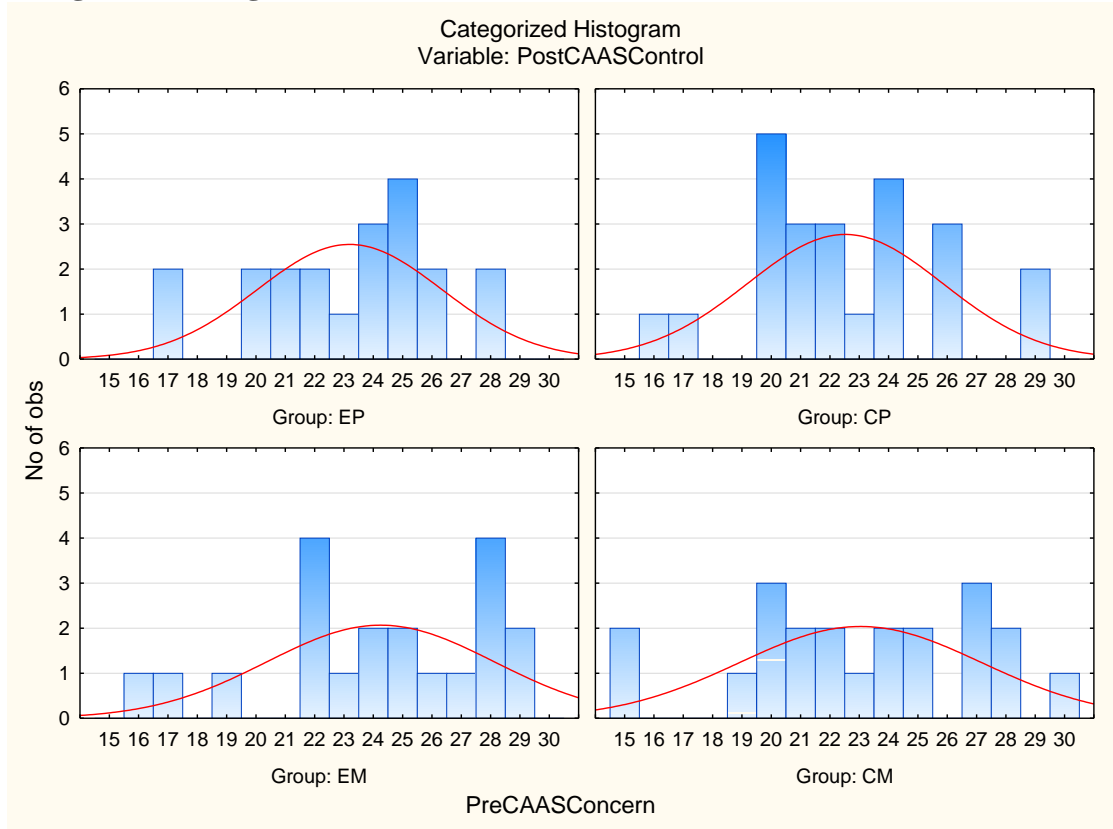
### Categorized histogram: PreCAASTotal



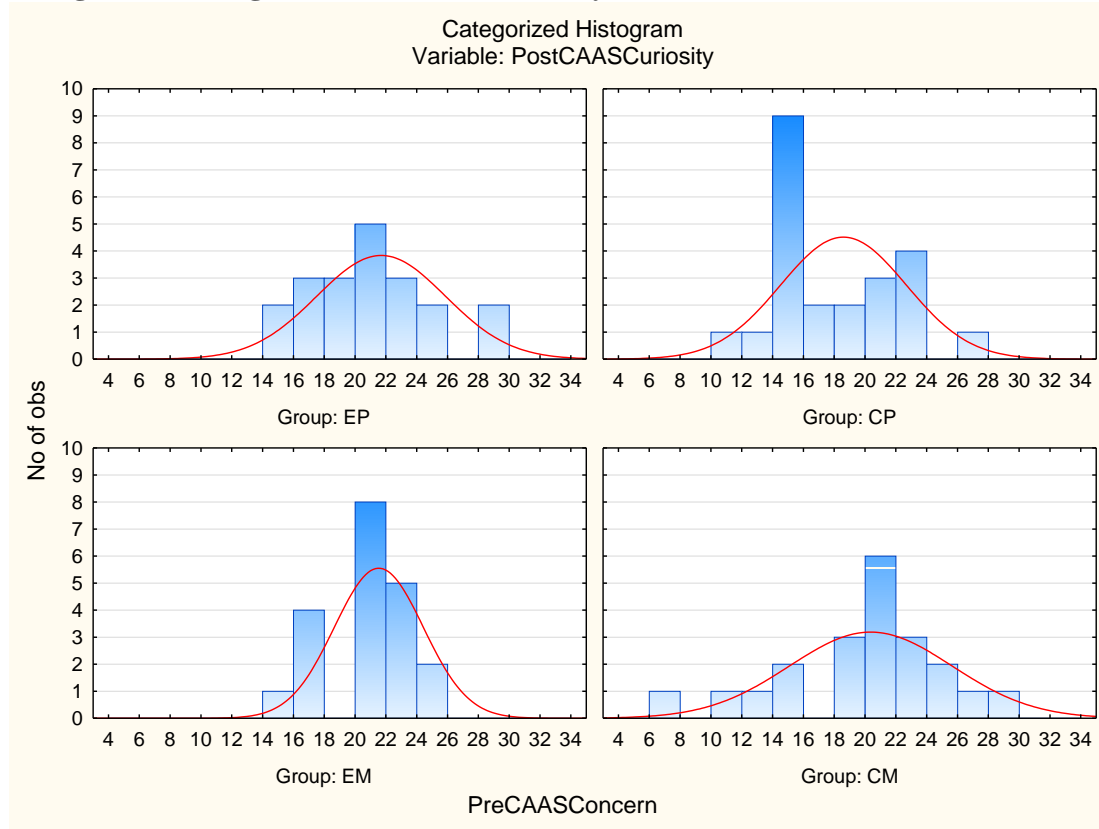
### Categorized histogram: PostCAASConcern



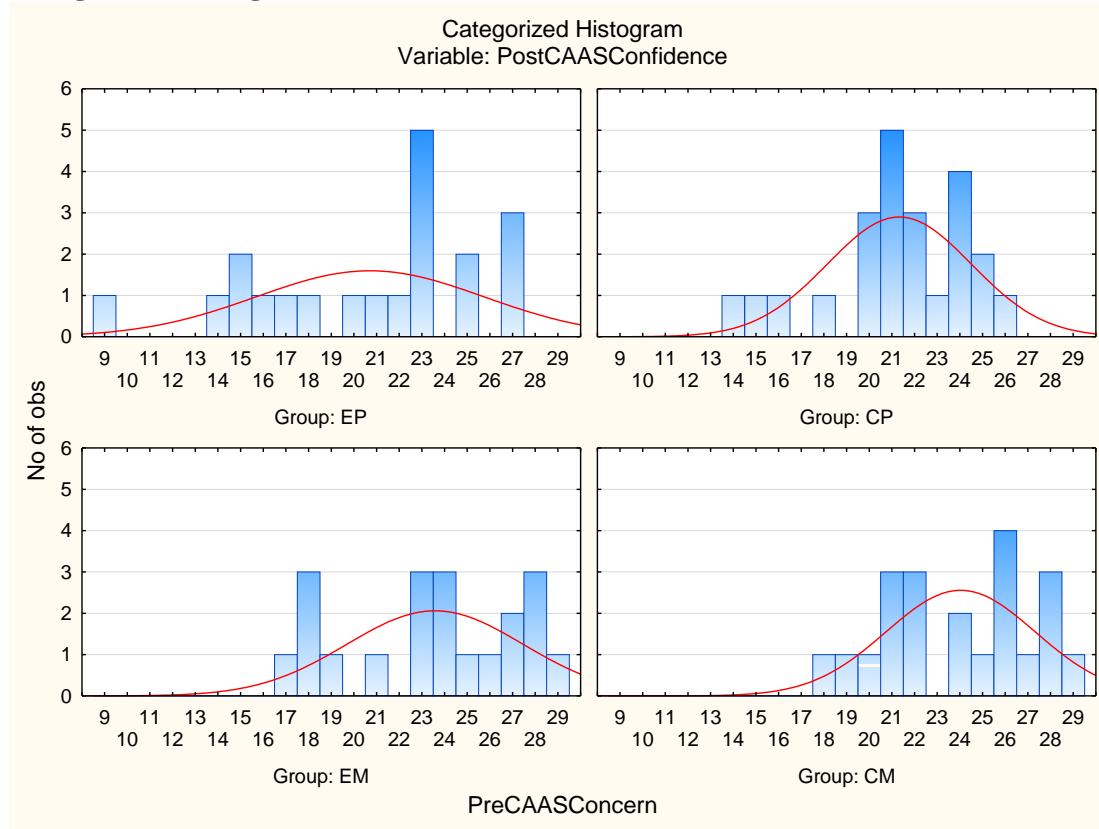
### Categorized histogram: PostCAASControl



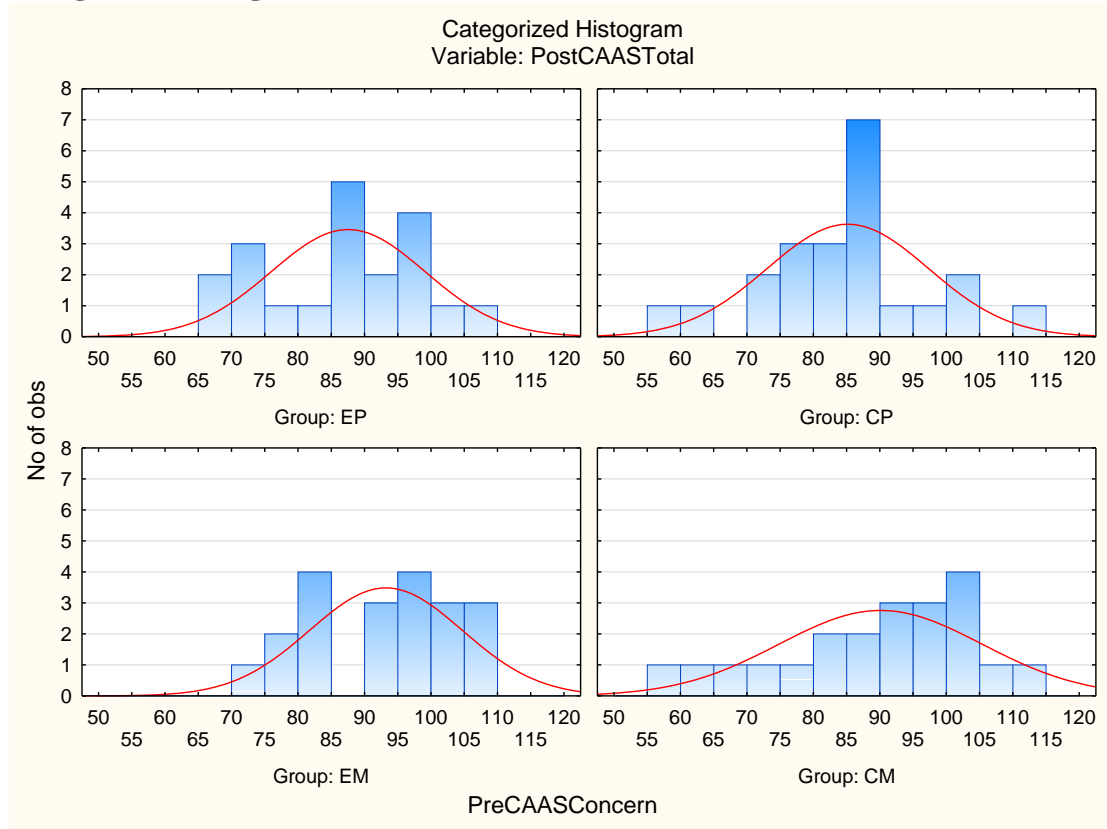
### Categorized histogram: PostCAASCuriosity



### Categorized histogram: PostCAASConfidence



### Categorized histogram: PostCAASTotal



## **Annexure B**

### **Pre intervention focus group interview questions for experimental groups**

1. What thoughts do you have, if any, about your future?
2. Describe any activities that you have engaged in with the intention of exploring options for your future?
3. What personal characteristics are important to assist you in making decisions about your future?
4. What factors make it hard for you to make decisions about your future?
5. How useful has your participation in Life Orientation lessons been in helping you explore options for your future?
6. Elaborate on the specific aspects that have or have not contributed to the influence it has had on you.
7. What changes would you like to see in your Life Orientation lessons?

### **Post intervention focus group interview questions for experimental groups**

1. To what extent has your participation in the intervention programme been useful to you?
2. Elaborate on the specific aspects that have or have not contributed to the influence it has had on you.
3. Did the intervention programme help you develop the following skills and if so explain in what ways?
  - a. Got you thinking positively about your future.
  - b. Motivated you to overcome any obstacles in trying to achieve your career goals.
  - c. Motivated you to engage in activities that will ultimately help you make future decisions.
  - d. Shaped your career interests.

## **Annexure C**

### **Pre intervention focus group interview questions for comparison groups**

1. What thoughts do you have when you think about your future?
2. Describe any activities that you have engaged in with the intention of exploring options for your future?
3. What personal characteristics are important to assist you in making decisions about your future?
4. What factors make it hard for you to make decisions about your future?
5. How useful has your participation in Life Orientation lessons been in helping you explore options for your future?
6. Elaborate on the specific aspects that have or have not contributed to the influence it has had on you.
7. What changes would you like to see in your Life Orientation lessons?

### **Post intervention focus group interview questions for comparison groups**

1. To what extent has your participation in Life Orientation lessons been useful to you?
2. Elaborate on the specific aspects that have or have not contributed to the influence it has had on you.
3. Did the Life Orientation lessons help you develop the following skills and if so explain in what ways?
  - a. Got you thinking positively about your future.
  - b. Motivated you to overcome any obstacles in trying to achieve your career goals.
  - c. Motivated you to engage in activities that will ultimately help you make future decisions.
  - d. Shaped your career interests.



## Annexure D

### CD with relevant quantitative and qualitative data:

- Quantitative data:
  - Data spreadsheet
  - Data summary
  - Corrected data listing
  - Corrected data frequencies
  - CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) scores by group
  - CAAS (Savickas, 2011d; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) summary statistics
  
- Qualitative data:
  - Transcriptions for pre intervention focus group interviews
  - Transcriptions for post intervention focus group interviews
  - Journal entries for experimental groups (post intervention)

## Annexure E: Request for informed consent from respective headmasters



**Attention: The Headmaster: .....**

**RE: CONSENT FOR PHD RESEARCH AT .....**

I am currently enrolled for my PhD (Educational Psychology) at the University of Pretoria. The purpose of my study is to explore learners' management of career-related transitions.

For the purpose of my study, I will require one Grade 11 class to complete a *Career Adapt-Ability Questionnaire* and the *Career Interest Profile* before and after an intervention programme. A second Grade 11 class will be asked to complete the above tests but will not take part in the intervention programme as they will serve as a comparison group in my study. Furthermore, from the Grade 11 classes, 6 learners from each class will be selected to take part in a focus group interview before and after the one class completes the intervention programme.

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.

Your favourable consideration of my request for permission to conduct my research at .....will be appreciated. Further to this, the naming of your school in my research is requested.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Antoinette Cook**  
**Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Prof. J.G. Maree**  
**Supervisor**

.....  
**DECLARATION**

Herewith I, the undersigned, grant Antoinette Cook permission to conduct her research study (as discussed and stipulated in the letter) at .....

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Headmaster**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## Annexure F

### Request for informed consent from the participants' parents/guardians



4 April 2013

### REQUEST FOR INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(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 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. The purpose of this study is to explore learners' management of career-related transitions through career and self-construction.

You child will need to take part in an intervention programme that will be implemented in his/her class. For the purpose of this study, I will require one class of Grade 11 learners to complete a *Career Adapt-Ability Questionnaire* and the *Career Interest Profile* before and after the intervention programme. From the group of learners, 6 learners will also be selected to take part in a focus-group interview before and after the intervention programme.

The following ethical principles apply:

- *Participation is voluntary.*
- *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.*
- *Participants will not receive any monetary compensation.*
- *No participating party will be harmed or placed at risk of any kind.*
- *No reference will be made to any information that may convey any particular personal or identifiable information.*
- *You and your child reserve the right to access any information that has been collected throughout the research process at any time.*

- *You and your child 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 assent you are giving permission for the following sources of data to be released:

- Scores from the pre- and post-assessment of test results from the *Career Adapt-Ability Questionnaire* and the *Career Interest Profile*
- The verbatim transcription of the content recorded during the focus group interviews.
- The analysis, interpretation and reporting of the content discussed during the focus group interviews.
- Notes and reflections made by the researcher throughout the research process.

If you have any queries before or during the study, or after its completion, you are welcome to contact me (0828929174).

Yours sincerely,

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**Antoinette Cook**  
**Researcher**

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**Prof. J.G. Maree**  
**Supervisor**

---

### **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 Antoinette Cook. 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) complete the following pre- and post-intervention questionnaires: the *Career Adapt-Ability Scale* and the *Career Interest Profile*, (b) make himself/herself available for the focus group interviews if required, (c) participate in the intervention programme. I also consent to the publication of the research findings, subject to anonymity and confidentiality.

Participant's name:

.....

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) name:

.....

Signature(s):

.....

Date:

.....

## Annexure G

**Request for informed consent from participants in both groups respectively:**

**Request for informed consent from participants in the experimental groups**



### **LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT: PARTICIPATION IN THE CAREER INTERVENTION PROGRAMME**

*The purpose of the proposed study:*

#### **EXPLORING THE MANAGEMENT OF CAREER-RELATED TRANSITIONS THROUGH CAREER AND SELF-CONSTRUCTION**

Dear participant

You have been invited to participate in a research project aimed at exploring **the management of career transitions through career and self-construction**. I am attempting to develop four aspects of career adaptability that can potentially enhance the management of career transitions individuals will face. These include motivating learners to consider future career prospects, encouraging them to take part in activities that give them opportunities for career exploration, build their confidence levels and enhance their sense of control over career-related decisions they will ultimately make. The research is also aimed at developing learners' career interests.

Participation in this research project will involve the following:

- Discussions with you to establish your understanding of “career adaptability” “career interests” and “career choice”.
- Two questionnaires will be administered and they will take approximately 90 minutes to complete (The *Career Adapt-Ability Questionnaire* and the *Career Interest Profile*).
- To facilitate quality assurance, the intervention will be followed up with the administration of the same questionnaires.
- The application of an intervention programme for the duration of 6 sessions of approximately 45 minutes each. This will be conducted with a class of Grade 11 learners after the first administration of the *Career Adapt-Ability Questionnaire* and the *Career Interest Profile*.
- The following guidelines will direct my attempts to facilitate the management of career-related transitions:
  - Examining the extent to which career-based (career facilitation) programmes are useful to learners from diverse backgrounds in managing career transitions
  - Exploring the concepts of “career and self-construction”
  - Completing activities in an intervention programme based on career and self-construction
  - Exploring the extent to which this programme helps learners manage career-related transitions
  - Exploring the concept of “adaptation”
  - Exploring the concept of “career choice”
  - Exploring the concept “career interests”
  - Keeping a reflection journal to monitor and reflect on your daily/weekly experiences of the intervention programme and progress.

**Please note the following:**

1. When you cannot answer a question or respond to a statement because you have not actually experienced the situation, or if you do not understand a

certain term or statement, you should ask the test administrator to explain the particular term, statement to you.

2. You should remember that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers and there is no time limit for completing the questionnaire. You are requested to work as fast as you can, and not leave out any of the questions.
3. 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.
4. I intend to use the data obtained for research purposes in a **completely anonymous and confidential manner**.
5. 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**.
6. Participation in this research is voluntary and you may decide to withdraw at any stage.
7. There is no known risk involved in the research. Possible benefits include the fact that participation will probably help to improve ability to manage any career-related transitions you are facing or will face in the future.
8. There are no costs involved.

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/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

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: 082 892 9174. Should you wish to speak to my supervisor, Prof. J.G. Maree, I will gladly supply his contact details upon request.

---

**Mrs. A. Cook**  
Researcher

---

**Prof. J.G. Maree**  
Supervisor

## Request for informed consent from participants in the comparison groups



### LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT: PARTICIPATION IN THE CAREER INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

*The purpose of the proposed study:*

#### EXPLORING THE MANAGEMENT OF CAREER-RELATED TRANSITIONS THROUGH CAREER AND SELF-CONSTRUCTION

Dear participant

You have been invited to participate in a research project aimed at exploring **the management of career transitions through career and self-construction**. I am attempting to develop four aspects of career adaptability that can potentially enhance the management of career transitions individuals will face. These include motivating learners to consider future career prospects, encouraging them to take part in activities that give them opportunities for career exploration, build their confidence levels and enhance their sense of control over career-related decisions they will ultimately make. The research is also aimed at developing learners' career interests.

Participation in this research project will involve the following:

- Discussions with you to establish your understanding of “career adaptability” “career interests” and “career choice”.

- Two questionnaires will be administered and they will take approximately 90 minutes to complete (The *Career Adapt-Ability Questionnaire* and the *Career Interest Profile*).
- To facilitate quality assurance, the intervention will be followed up with the administration of the same questionnaires.

The following guidelines will direct my attempts to facilitate the management of career-related transitions:

- Examining the extent to which career-based (career facilitation) programmes are useful to learners from diverse backgrounds in managing career transitions
- Exploring the concept of “career and self-construction”
- Completing activities in an intervention programme based on career and self-construction
- Exploring the extent to which this programme helps learners manage career-related transitions
- Exploring the concept of “adaptation”
- Exploring the concept of “career choice”
- Exploring the concept “career interests”

**Please note the following:**

1. When you cannot answer a question or respond to a statement because you have not actually experienced the situation, or if you do not understand a certain term or statement, you should ask the test administrator to explain the particular term, statement to you.
2. You should remember that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers and there is no time limit for completing the questionnaire. You are requested to work as fast as you can, and not leave out any of the questions.

3. 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.
4. I intend to use the data obtained for research purposes in a **completely anonymous and confidential manner**.
5. 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**.
6. Participation in this research is voluntary and you may decide to withdraw at any stage.
7. There is no known risk involved in the research. Possible benefits include the fact that participation will probably help to improve ability to manage any career-related transitions you are facing or will face in the future.
8. There are no costs involved.

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/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

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: 082 892 9174. Should you wish to speak to my supervisor, Prof. J.G. Maree, I will gladly supply his contact details upon request.

---

**Mrs. A. Cook**  
Researcher

---

**Prof. J.G. Maree**  
Supervisor

## **Annexure H**

### **Request for informed consent from the Mpumalanga Department of Education**

## **Annexure I**

### **Ethical clearance certificate**



RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**CLEARANCE NUMBER :**

EP 13/02/02

**DEGREE AND PROJECT**

PhD

Exploring learners' management of career-related transitions through career and self-construction

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

Antoinette Cook

**DEPARTMENT**

Educational Psychology

**DATE CONSIDERED**

19 June 2015

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

APPROVED

Please note:

*For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years*

*For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.*

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS  
COMMITTEE**

Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Liesel Ebersöhn", is written over a horizontal line.

DATE

19 June 2015

CC

Jeannie Beukes  
Liesel Ebersöhn  
Prof JG Maree

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following condition:

1. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.



## **Annexure J**

### **Certificates of attendance for the research support sessions**

## Annexure K

### Letter from the external coder

*Dr. Magdarie Meijer*

BA HED BEd MEd PhD (UP)

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20 May 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Prof/Dr/Mr/Ms

Hereby I, the undersigned, confirm that I have acted as Ms Cook's external coder. I have checked her data analysis and agree with the findings. I believe that the themes and subthemes identified in her study have been reported accurately.

Yours sincerely



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Dr. Magdarie Meijer

## Annexure L

**National Senior Certificate Examination: Topics for Grade 11 Life Orientation Curriculum pertaining to learners' career development in schools such as Penryn College that are affiliated to the Independent Examinations Board**

| Topic                      | Grade 11 (Learners receive 2 hours instructional time per week)   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Careers and career choices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements for admission to higher education institutions</li> <li>• Options for financial assistance for further studies</li> <li>• Competencies, abilities and ethics required for a career</li> <li>• Personal expectations in relation to job or career of interest</li> <li>• Knowledge about self in relation to the demands of the world of work and socio-economic conditions</li> </ul> |

Independent Examinations Board (2014)

**National Senior Certificate Examination: Topics for Grade 11 Life Orientation Curriculum pertaining to learners' career development in schools such as Mthombo High School that are affiliated to the governmental Department of Education**

| Topic                     | Grade 11 (Learners receive 2 hours instructional time per week)   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Career and career choices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring and evaluating knowledge about self, interests, abilities and personal expectations in relation to career requirements and socio-economic considerations</li> <li>• Researching the requirements for admission to additional and higher</li> </ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>education courses, as well as options for financial assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrating competencies, abilities and ethics that will assist in securing a job and developing a career</li><li>• Reflecting on, refining and applying own study skills, study style and study strategies</li></ul> |
|--|---|

Department of Education (2003)