

CHAPTER ONE

Overview and Rationale

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

In this section I briefly sketch the context of this investigation in terms of two aspects. Firstly, current international concerns with regard to career theory are presented, and secondly, the development of career psychology in South Africa is described. This discussion with regard to changing international career trends and emerging South African career development forms the theoretical background for my study.

Career paths are nowadays complicated by imperative career development changes that occur internationally, and by the call for indigenous understanding of career development in South Africa. The late 1990's brought awareness to the 'changing world of work' as a phenomenon (Prinsloo, 1999; Rayman, 1999; Niles, 1997; Harris-Bowlsbey, 1996; Stoltz-Loike, 1996; Watts, 1996). Watts (1996:43) writes that having a '*job for life*' does not happen anymore and that organisations cannot provide secure employment due to rapid economic change. Handy (1989) supports this statement and explains that companies' staff consists of flexible 'portfolio' workers who are actually employed in several different other jobs at various other companies. In accordance with this, Watts (1996) finds that a preference exists for small and medium-sized companies with part-time and temporary workers, as opposed to large-scale companies with permanent staff. He continues by declaring that the conventional idea of career development as a lifelong process implies newer, more radical attention to career counselling services, due to the fact that a large number of people will have to manage more than three careers in their lifetimes (Watts, 1996). Patton (2001:5) agrees with Watts' views as she reflects:

Career development is the process of managing learning and work over the lifespan. In managing learning and work well, individuals are able to make productive choices and move toward building their desired futures.

I concur with Watts (1996) and Patton (2001) and decline the notion that people have one career for life. I suggest that client-partners be viewed as *people with a lifetime of career options and career choices*.

These international career concerns are mirrored in South Africa, making career development an export product and decontextualised in terms of South African ideals (Stead & Watson, 2002; Stead & Watson, 1998). The implication of international influence on South African career programmes is that these programmes are in embryonic stages (Stead & Watson, 1998). Furthermore, South African research with regard to career counselling is limited and mainly

focused on diagnostic features and education programmes (Stead & Watson, 1998; De Bruin & Nel, 1996). Therefore, more emphasis on the *process* and nature of career counselling is needed (Whiston, 2003; Stead & Watson, 1998).

Thus, a proposed change in career counselling research and practice has been on the table for a decade. Lent (1996) comments that transformation in the workforce will inevitably call for alterations in the professional roles and services of career counsellors. He (Lent, 1996) asserts that such alterations in career counselling call for a shift in the focus of career research as well as a revision of career theory. In this regard, Rayman (1999) suggests a number of important adjustments pertaining to career services following economic and social change in the new millennium. Some of the suggestions he considers to be imperative include that career counsellors need to acknowledge the lifelong nature of career development; career counsellors should accept and embrace technology as their ally; career counsellors should enhance the centrality of individual career counselling; career counsellors need to build co-operative relationships with a variety of collaborators, and utilise existing resources (Rayman, 1999).

Change and development in career counselling are important in South Africa. Watson and Stead (1996:295) suggest that career researchers and career psychologists in South Africa should consider '*employing an indigenous approach as a way of understanding career psychology within the South African context*'. In this regard Kim and Berry (1993) believe that indigenous psychology places the emphasis on people's self-understanding within their world and ecological context.

Based on the above line of argumentation, it follows that a challenge exists to explore alternative ways in which to conduct career guidance. I propose that one such a way is the asset-based approach. I am particularly interested in how an asset-based approach to career facilitation practices can address the complex career development paths of South African career-seekers.

No other research has been undertaken that links the asset-based approach to career psychology, except for an enquiry into a community's strategies for career education by Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003). Findings of this study include that there '*existed asset-based characteristics in a community's endeavours to develop career education*' (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003:326). According to my view, if an asset-based perspective forms part of a community strategy to educate community members with regard to careers, career facilitators might successfully gain

from this resource during their career counselling practices. I suggest an asset-based approach to career counselling as an alternative to a traditional approach.

During inquiry into the topic of traditional career counselling, I found that little emphasis is placed on the client as expert and essential member of the career counselling team. Traditional concepts of career counselling focus on the career counsellor as the *giver* of career related solutions (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002; Gothard, Mignot, Offer & Ruff, 2001; Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalk, 2000; Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999; Malan, 1999; Zunker, 1998; Herr & Cramer, 1996; Tolbert, 1974). As a result it is conventional for the career counsellor to provide an *expert service*. This expert service consists of the career counsellor steering the client into a career direction, which implies that the *client* comes with the *problem* of which career path to pursue. It is then expected of the *expert professional* to *solve* this problem. A thorough investigation of the client's personal profile in terms of *needs* and *deficiencies* is undertaken by means of a variety of assessment tools. The client rarely has the opportunity to acquire ownership of making a career choice and depends largely on the career counsellor's expertise.

Prinsloo (1999) concludes that the changing world of work has outdated the more traditional concepts used for career counselling. She proposes the term *career facilitation*. I choose to use the concept *career facilitation* as it views the client in totality and incorporates assets to help with the client's career development path (Prinsloo, 1999). As such, *career facilitation* moves away from the medical model (focusing on needs and expert advice) and fits into the framework of the asset-based approach (focusing on assets and collaborative problem solving) (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

As opposed to the traditional approach, I support Ebersöhn and Eloff's (forthcoming) vision that clients be regarded as *client-partners*. I propose the asset-based approach in career facilitation as an alternative perspective requiring acknowledgment of the unique abilities, talents, gifts, capabilities, resources, skills and knowledge of the client-partner, as signature strengths. This alternative perspective values the contributions of client-partners and their resources. Furthermore, the asset-based approach, as alternative perspective, requires a process whereby sustainable skills and resources are facilitated, and aims at client-partners *enabling* themselves rather than being *directed*.

Therefore, this study aims at exploring the collaborative relationship between the career facilitator and the client-partner for the duration of the career facilitation process. In this

collaborative relationship, the client and counsellor enter a mutual supportive network and co-exist as flexible entities that share the responsibility of exploring various career paths. The aim of the collaborative relationship would be to gather all the relevant information about possible careers and personal qualities available to both the client-partner and the career facilitator. In essence, the accessibility of personal and environmental assets may contribute to practical solutions and individual capacity building of the client-partner. Such access may ultimately enable the client-partner to develop career maturity, thus providing the capacity to make accountable career decisions. With this, a contribution might be made to existing knowledge with regard to functional and collaborative career facilitation. As such, value might be added by this study, as knowledge with regard to the client-partner as active participant and essential team member seems limited in the field of career facilitation.

1.2 STATEMENT OF INTENT AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to investigate the application of the asset-based approach in career facilitation practices. As such, my research question is:

How can the asset-based approach be applied in career facilitation practices?

Consequently, the aims of this study are to gain new insight with regard to applying an alternative approach or perspective to career counselling practices, and to possibly expand on career counselling as construct. *Therefore, this study is explorative and descriptive by nature.* I chose an *exploratory study* by which I can conduct an open and flexible investigation of the application of the asset-based approach during the career facilitation process (Durrheim, 2002). In addition, this study is *descriptive* by nature, as I aim at describing the application of the asset-based approach by doing accurate observations (Durrheim, 2002).

Exploratory questions that enquire about observable facts and identifiable key factors accentuate the objectives of the study (Mouton, 2001). In this regard, the secondary research questions that guide this study are:

- What is career facilitation?
- What are the principles underlying the asset-based approach?
- How can the strategies of the asset-based approach be implemented during career facilitation?
- How do client-partners apply asset-based principles during career facilitation?
- How does the career facilitator apply asset-based principles during career facilitation?
- What are the possible benefits of applying asset-based principles to career facilitation?

As researcher I wish to broaden the *theoretical framework* with regard to the application of the asset-based approach in career facilitation. Ultimately, I wish to contribute to a *practical cycle of enablement* in career development during which the focus remains on the assets and capacities of individuals within their particular contexts.

1.3 CONCEPTUALISATION

For the sake of clarification, the following concepts used in the study are elucidated: asset-based approach; asset-based principles; asset-based strategies; asset-based career facilitation; application; investigation; career development.

1.3.1 ASSET-BASED APPROACH

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993:1) introduced a community-building strategy called '*asset-based community development*'. According to an asset-based attitude, communities are built with what is present in the community, utilising problem-solving capacities found within the community itself, and relying on relationships among community members.

According to Eloff and Ebersöhn (2001), the asset-based approach focuses on capacities, skills, and assets within a social system. Deficiencies in any given eco-system or subsystem are not ignored, but in fact confronted and addressed by focusing on the inherent assets in a system (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). The asset-based approach is a move away from the deficit paradigm, refocusing on strengths, resources and capacities of people (Lubbe & Eloff, 2004). As such, in order to apply the asset-based approach, I formulated asset-based principles to follow when conducting career facilitation as well as asset-based strategies to incorporate during career facilitation sessions with client-partners.

1.3.1.1 ASSET-BASED PRINCIPLES

Asset-based principles are fundamental beliefs appreciated by the asset-based career facilitator. Such beliefs include the following: that client-partners should take ownership of their career development processes; that finding career information and obtaining self-knowledge should be a shared responsibility between the career facilitator and the client-partner; that career facilitation sessions should enable client-partners to recognise and utilise sustainable skills; and that career facilitation should be a collaborative effort between all relevant stakeholders.

1.3.1.2 ASSET-BASED STRATEGIES

Asset-based strategies are regarded as methods of intervention or assessment that can be applied by the career facilitator and/or the client-partner. These include interviews; observation; post-modern exploration strategies; asset mapping; asset mobilisation; and networking.

1.3.2 ASSET-BASED CAREER FACILITATION

The utilisation of the asset-based approach as strategy during career facilitation is an unmarked way of understanding the context of the client. The goal of asset-based career facilitation is to recognise and to access those resources viable to the client when investigating the self and possible careers, in order to facilitate responsibility and ownership. I choose the construct *career facilitation*, based on my belief that it is a comprehensive alternative to career counselling. Prinsloo (1999) states that career facilitation is more than career education, because clients are viewed in totality, due to the career facilitator being conscious of other life roles of client-partners. For the purpose of this study, I define *asset-based career facilitation* as the application of asset-based principles and asset-based strategies, within a career facilitation process.

1.3.3 APPLICATION

Application means to apply one thing to another (Hawkins, 1991). In my study it implies that the principles of the asset-based approach be applied in two ways. Firstly, as career facilitator I applied the asset-based principles in career facilitation. Secondly, through facilitation, the client-partners applied asset-based principles in their career development activities.

1.3.4 INVESTIGATION

To investigate something implies to explore and examine a phenomenon with the aim of describing the essential parts and purpose of the phenomenon (Hawkins, 1991). The goal of describing something is to fully comprehend its value or importance. Thus, in this study *investigation* indicates two actions: an in-depth examination of the application of asset-based principles and strategies to career facilitation, and, secondly, a lucid description of the findings.

1.3.5 CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Career development refers to the ongoing process by which individuals advance through a series of stages, each of which is characterised by a relatively unique set of issues, themes and tasks (Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalk, 2000). In this study the career development of each individual is regarded as important and constant reference is made to the life-long career development path of the individual. An asset-based career facilitation process might enable

client-partners with sustainable career related skills, such as exploration and asset-mapping, possibly strengthening their career development.

1.4 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

I have selected the *phenomenological* thinking approach as meta-theory to guide my enquiry. Phenomenology advocates a naturalistic method whereby I can place myself in the situation of my client-partners in order to understand the meaning they give to their career paths (Denscombe, 2003; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002; De Vos & Fouché, 1998).

I hold theoretical prepositions and generalisations about my client-partners and career psychology, which are derived from the *asset-based approach*, *bio-ecological model of human development*, *Positive Psychology*, and the *career facilitation process* (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Seligman, 2002; Prinsloo, 1999; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Methodologically, I decided to conduct my study following a *qualitative approach*, as I regard reality as subjective to each individual, and presume that social phenomena are context-dependent. In addition, in this study I intend to present a detailed understanding of asset-based career facilitation, thus exploring a phenomenon of which little is currently known (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004; De Vos & Fouché, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Figure 1.1 provides a summary of the choices I made with regard to the research design, research methodology, ethical strategies and quality criteria. After presenting figure 1.1, I shall discuss the various aspects.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY		
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	Case Study Design: Instrumental case study	
Selection of cases (according to set criteria)	Potential for learning; Available and accessible (able to commit to the research process And able to reflect and express thoughts and feelings regarding the research process); In need of career facilitation support	
Data collection methods	Observation-as-context; Research diary; Field notes	Participant Reflections
Data collection period	Continuously from March to August 2005	At the end of the research process
Data capturing / source	Written form: Field notes and Research diary	Written form: Participant reflection
Agent	Researcher	Client-partner
Data analysis and interpretation	Thematic analysis: Data analysis approach of Morse and Field (1994) <i>in conjunction with</i> eight step model of Tesch (1990)	
Measures to ensure rigour	Trustworthiness strategies: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and crystallisation	
Ethical considerations	Informed consent; Deception of participants; Violation of privacy; Action and competence of researcher	

FIGURE 1.1 The research design and methodological choices of the study

To guide my concentrated exploration, I selected *an instrumental case study* (Cresswell, 2005; Lindegger, 2002; Stake, 2000a). I chose three (3) cases according to criteria, namely that each case had to be potentially informative to me; the participants had to be available, accessible and in need of career facilitation support. Later I selected two (2) additional cases in order to saturate themes that emerged.

Data were collected in terms of Angrosino and Mays de Pérez's (2000) *observation-as-context*-method, documented in the form of field notes and a research diary. Another data source was reflective reports written by client-partners. Data were analysed according to *thematic analysis* (Henning, *et al.*, 2004; Silverman, 2000). Themes were extracted according to the eight step model of Tesch (1990) in conjunction with the data analysis approach of Morse and Field (Morse, 1994), with no hypotheses in mind and by means of inductive reasoning (Creswell, 2005). I indicated how the principles of the asset-based approach and the process of career facilitation were authenticated through the data (Silverman, 2000).

As far as possible, I aimed at following a true and rigorous research design, engaging in the research field and persisting in observation (Seale, 1999; Poggenpoel, 1998). I recognised *various sides* from which to explain the application of the asset-based approach by acknowledging the context of client-partners (Richardson, 2000; Seale, 1999). Furthermore, in order for other career practitioners to apply the asset-based strategies in their settings, I provided a detailed description of the cases (Seale, 1999). In addition I supplied an audit trail whereby all documents can be accessed (Seale, 1999).

My research diary helped me to examine any bias on my account. I attempted to be free from bias by means of constantly reflecting upon the research process, as well as the career facilitation process. In addition, the asset-based career facilitation process motivated client-partners' active engagement in the process, as well as creating the opportunity for client-partners to reflect upon the career facilitation process (Seale, 1999).

To ensure an ethical study, I obtained written consent from the client-partners and also informed them about the nature of the asset-based facilitation process. Furthermore, all information pertaining to the client-partners was kept confidential (Strydom, 1998). As researcher I aimed to follow the instructions and advice of leaders in the field of research. As career facilitator I am driven by my passion for career psychology and I depend on the skills and competence I acquired through my studies of asset-based principles and career facilitation.

1.6 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One is an introductory orientation and discussion, where the rationale for the study is stated in conjunction with the research question and accompanying research objectives. This chapter gives an outline of my paradigmatic perspectives as researcher, as well as an overview of the choices I made with regard to the research design, research methodology, ethical strategies and quality criteria.

Chapter Two deals with the theoretical framework relevant to the study. Literature that relates to the research question is discussed, and a proposed link offered between the asset-based approach and career facilitation.

Chapter Three describes the research process. This chapter includes the aim of the study, meta-theoretical assumptions, theoretical assumptions and methodological assumptions. Furthermore, attention is given to the research design of the study, including data collection methods as well as data analysis and interpretation techniques. The chapter concludes with an in-depth discussion of measures to ensure a rigorous study, in addition to ethical issues considered.

Chapter Four outlines the analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings, alongside careful deliberation through literature control.

Chapter Five includes an overview of the chapters. Conclusions and recommendations of the study are discussed. The way in which the quality criteria were applied to ensure a trustworthy study is described and an indication is also given of how the role of the researcher unfolded in the study. Finally, the challenges of the study are discussed as well as ideas for further research.

1.7 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to investigate the application of the asset-based approach in career facilitation as an alternative to the medical model. The findings of this study could possibly contribute to existing knowledge with regard to the asset-based approach and expand on knowledge with regard to career facilitation. Using an instrumental case study supported the aim of the study as it assisted me in formulating detailed descriptions of how the asset-based approach can be applied during career facilitation. Furthermore, working from a qualitative viewpoint allowed me to collect, analyse and interpret data from a phenomenological perspective. Chapter 2 describes the asset-based approach and illustrates the link between the asset-based approach and career facilitation.

CHAPTER TWO

Potential partners: The Asset-based approach and Career facilitation process

2.1 INTRODUCTION

I indicated the aim of my study in chapter 1, which is to investigate the application of the asset-based approach during career facilitation. Consequently, a detailed description of the *asset-based approach*, as well as of *career facilitation* is offered in this chapter.

This chapter includes a discussion of the asset-based approach and indicates how this approach reflects tenets of Positive Psychology. Secondly, an overview of the development of self-exploration and career exploration as aspects of career facilitation is provided. A proposed link between career facilitation and the asset-based approach is presented throughout the discussion.

2.2 THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

In this section I shall describe the origins of the asset-based approach, investigate the asset-based approach's fundamental underpinnings by aligning them to career facilitation, and situate the asset-based approach within Positive Psychology.

2.2.1 FUNDAMENTAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH

Before applying a theory, one needs to know the basic constructs of the theory. I shall therefore consider the definition of an *asset* and offer a description of the various constructs used in the asset-based approach:

Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003:14) define '*assets [as] skills, talents, gifts, resources, capacities and strengths that are shared with individuals, families, schools, institutions, associations, the community and organisations*'. Three important issues are implied, namely recognition of assets, attention to the bio-ecological model, and the notion of sharing resources and talents. The asset-based approach (mirroring Positive Psychology) emphasises the positive knowledge of what is present (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003). As such, the focus is on two sets of resources or assets, namely those of the individual and those of the environment. When engaging in self-exploration, as part of reaching career maturity, for example, the point of departure will always be the recognition of assets within the individual, as well as resources around the individual.

The asset-based approach developed in the 1990's and grew from Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) efforts with regard to community development. They challenged the conventional way of addressing rural problems (which is to rely on expert service providers and funding from agencies) and observed that *assets* within the community can be utilised as building blocks (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Initially, the asset-based approach concentrated on tangible assets within the environment (Ebersöhn & Eloff, forthcoming). These *outside* or *environmental* assets (also called *assets within the community*), are identified with the help of the bio-ecological model. The reason for focusing on *community* assets is clear, as Kretzmann and McKnight are essentially *community researchers* (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Their interest lies in creating strong and healthy neighbourhoods, therefore using the assets from within the community to create well-being, rather than relying on funding and expertise from service providers outside the community.

Furthermore, the asset-based approach reflects essences of the *bio-ecological model* of Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The bio-ecological model is a multi-dimensional model of human development that is useful in unfolding fundamental processes involved in *change* (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). I regard *change* as the *shift* from the needs-based approach to the asset-based approach. The bio-ecological model acknowledges the contributions on micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-levels. The relevance of the attention given to the bio-ecological model lies in '*understanding how the origins, maintenance, and solutions to social issues...cannot be separated from the broader social context and the systems within it*' (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:58).

Probably the most important argument in the asset-based approach is the notion of *sharing*, which indicates a two-way relational dynamic interplay between all the role-players (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). To share assets is like building a bridge between two cities, City A and City B, linked by a broad river. City A has all the means to produce wheat but does not have the technology to process the wheat. City B, on the other hand, is situated on barren land but has factories where they can process wheat and produce other products. As such, these two are potential assets to one another. To build a bridge between the two cities, both of them need to recognise the other's potential to be of help. If City A does not feel comfortable enough to send its wheat to the other side of the river, or City B decides that it does not want to process wheat, the two are lost to one another in terms of being assets. In this regard I concur with Ebersöhn and Mbetse's (2003) statement that indicates the insignificance of simple asset identification. An asset only becomes an asset to an individual when the asset is mobilised (Bouwer, 2005;

Ebersöhn & Mbetsi, 2003). Without movement or engagement the asset is worthless to the individual. If the person is able to recognise and map certain routes or networks as assets, but fails to or is unable to access these routes or networks, the resource becomes nothing more than a dead end. Thus, for a skill, talent, gift, resource, capacity or strength to be recognised as an asset, it should be accessible, attainable and functional.

For example, if a client-partner wants to explore construction work as a career, and he identifies his uncle as an asset, because his uncle owns a construction work company, but there is no contact between the families, the asset cannot be mobilised and therefore not used. However, if a collaborative relationship exists between the client-partner and the uncle, the uncle's experience of and knowledge about the construction world becomes a valuable asset. As such, forming a network of accessible assets forms an integral part of the process of identifying assets (Bouwer, 2005).

To summarise, any individual is situated within a social context, which is characterised by dynamic interaction. Within such a social context possible assets can be identified, in the same way that possible barriers and challenges might be present. A strong community relies on its own assets, but also recognises and mobilises its partners' assets through sharing (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). The asset-based approach illustrates the importance of a systems approach and is fundamentally a support-based and relationship-driven theory, which aims at recognising assets, mobilising these assets and creating sustainable skills. The asset-based approach in conjunction with the bio-ecological model and the theory of Positive Psychology might be utilised in career facilitation by means of creating a map of accessible resources. Such a map can include skills, talents, gifts, resources, knowledge and competencies of the individual, career information resources within the family, school and peer-group systems, career-shadowing opportunities in surrounding businesses and positive attitudes and values towards career awareness in the greater society.

2.2.2 ALIGNING ASSET-BASED PRINCIPLES TO CAREER FACILITATION

In order to understand the asset-based approach, a description of its underlying principles is offered. After consulting literature on the asset-based approach, I formulated a theoretical base. Figure 2.1 reflects my conceptualisation of the fundamental underpinnings of the asset-based approach.

Nature of people

- People are able to adapt and to cope and make their own decisions, thus personal agency.
- People are characterised by assets and barriers.
- People possess assets that they might not recognise or mobilise.
- People know themselves the best.
- People are part of a broader community.
- The broader community consists of individuals, local associations and local institutions that could contribute to an intervention process.

Theory of intervention

- Intervention is a process of support.
- Assets are identified, accessed and mobilised during intervention and kept as resources for future sustainable utilisation.
- An intervention's aim is to facilitate, develop and mobilise sustainable skills.
- Intervention denotes a safe place where skills and vulnerabilities can be shared by facilitator and client-partner.
- Intervention is relationship-driven and functional.
- Intervention constitutes a cycle of enablement rather than dependence.
- Intervention is essentially proactive.
- Intervention is network-based, therefore the asset-based practitioner and client-partner acknowledge other individuals, local associations and local institutions as possible assets that may be mobilised.

Intervention methods

- Interviews.
- Observation
- Post-modern exploration strategies.
- Asset mapping. Asset mapping is the process of making a graphic representation of identified assets in the systems where the individual is living. The process of making assets *visual* is intended to initiate the process of asset mobilisation (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003).
- Asset mobilisation.
- Networking.

Constructs used

- Assets / Resources / Signature Strengths.
- Identify / map / mobilise / network.
- Partnerships / collaboration.
- The individual.
- The school.
- The classroom.
- The family.
- The peer group.
- Citizens' associations.
- Local institutions.
- The whole social system.

FIGURE 2.1 Proposed components of the asset-based approach (Adapted from Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003)

The principles presented in figure 2.1 indicate a significant transformation in the way we, as caring professionals, enter the helping realm. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003:5) explain the principle of the medical model or needs based-approach as follows: *'If you can establish everything that is needed or deficient, you can map the plan for life skills counselling from there'*. Figure 2.2 compares the needs-based and asset-based approaches (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003:12).

NEEDS BASED APPROACH	ASSET-BASED APPROACH
<i>Ontology</i>	
Focus on deficits and needs Glass is half-empty Disabilities Singular reality	Focus on assets and capacities Glass is half-full Abilities Multiple realities
<i>Professionals</i>	
Deliver services Experts See dysfunction Labelling Exclusive knowledge Collect data about problems Informing Reason and rationality	Connect “clients” to assets Networkers See adaptive coping Understanding Shared knowledge Collect data about assets and capacities Connecting Relationships
<i>Services</i>	
Paternalistic Provide support for despondency Cycle of dependence Fragmented services Discipline specific approach	Supportive Provide support for pro-activity Cycle of enablement Collaboration Functional approach
<i>Clients</i>	
Clients Denial and ignorance Have limited power	Experts Essential viewpoints Have optimal power

FIGURE 2.2 Comparison between needs-based approach and asset-based approach
(Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003:12)

According to figure 2.2, the needs-based approach certainly has valuable features, which I regard as informative assets from various sets of pre-knowledge schemes. The needs-based approach instructs us to direct our thoughts towards ascertaining the **needs** of our client-partners. I also agree that we need to understand what our client-partners want from the intervention process. Furthermore, although the needs-based approach trains us in establishing deficits and does not really acknowledge the abilities or resources that client-partners acquire throughout their life-span, we need to accept the reality of the existence of deficits *and* strengths. This reality states that the glass is *both* half-full *and* half-empty (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). In this regard, Wright and Lopez (2002) state that it is vital to highlight both positives and negatives in the person and environment as it provides the framework for individualised intervention whereby human potential is discovered.

Thus, forgetting that persons might not feel comfortable in certain occupational settings, due to a lack of ability, is equally as dangerous as not remembering that people have other excellent abilities with which they can excel in other occupational settings. It is a matter of *reorganising* the way in which the helping professional applies intervention skills. In this regard, I agree with the four-quadrant model of Ebersöhn and Eloff (forthcoming) in which they exemplify a diversified emphasis in approach. They write that the stance of helping professionals regarding

their approach and intervention emphasis may shift, expanding some quadrants, while shrinking others. In terms of career facilitation, the career facilitator can focus on the qualities the client-partner needs (and does not possess), as well as highlight the lack of resources, and give *expert* advice in terms of eliminating career options based on such deficiencies, possibly leaving the client powerless. On the other hand, the facilitator could focus on the client's signature strengths, assets and capacities. The facilitator could facilitate relationships and networking to explore career options that emphasise the gifts and talents of the client-partner, leaving the client-partner with a possible sense of ownership and sustainable skills. The implication could be that, once a client-partner mobilises existing strengths, talents, capabilities or gifts effectively, more challenging areas can be addressed with greater enthusiasm.

Helping nowadays means moving away from singular expertise, where career counsellors are expected to know all there is to know about any career, thus entitling them to decide for the client. The asset-based approach suggests that helping can be a pluralistic effort where career counselling becomes a process of facilitation. Career facilitators can make use of their counselling expertise to facilitate career development. The contexts surrounding the career facilitator and the client-partner are wide and wealthy with regard to information and resources. An example of how the different levels of the bio-ecological model can contribute to mental health is seen through the studies of psychosocial resilience. Such studies often report the most common potential protective factors against developmental hazards (Masten & Reed, 2002). In figure 2.3 I relate the *bio-ecological model* (referred to as the eco-systemic perspective in Swart & Pettipher (2005) and Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana (2002)) to an account of some of these *protective factors* as they are presented by Masten and Reed (2002). I propose the protective factors' relevance to an *asset-based career facilitation process*.

BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL	PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL RESILIENCE	RELEVANCE TO CAREER FACILITATION
Biosphere		Being resilient during career facilitation
MICROSYSTEM Patterns of daily face-to-face contact, activities, roles and relationships. Active participation by the individual.	<i>Within the child</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good cognitive abilities (problem solving and attention skills) • Adaptable personality • Positive self-perception • Faith and sense of meaning in life • A positive outlook on life • Good self-regulation of emotional awareness • Talents valued by self and society • Good sense of humour • General appeal to others 	<i>Assets of the client-partner</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on responsible career choice and attention to becoming career mature • A belief in own ability to cope with career choice demands and overall positive outlook on future career goals • Emotionally aware of career requirements • Well-established interpersonal intelligence will assist with contact with the workforce through, for example, job analysis and job shadowing
MESOSYSTEM Relationships that develop and exist between micro-systems such as family, peer-group and school, associated with one another	<i>Within the family</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close relationships with care-giving adults • Authoritative parenting • Positive family climate • Organised home environment • Parents involved in child's education • Socio-economic advantages 	<i>Family assets</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable careers of parents constitute a positive stance towards a career • Positive relationships within the family ease mobilisation of career knowledge between family members • Socio-economic advantages within the family benefit client-partner in terms of possible career exploration sources (internet, library, magazines)
	<i>Within family or other relationships</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close relationships to competent, pro-social and supportive adults • Connections to pro-social and rule-abiding peers 	<i>Peer group assets & closer community assets</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within an encouraging and supportive peer group environment, setting realistic and pro-active career goals is more evident • Connections to adults in various career settings become a potential source of exploration and support
EXOSYSTEM (client-partner may not be directly involved as active participant but may influence or may be influenced by what happens in settings and relationships that directly influence the client-partner) & MACROSYSTEM (dominant social attitudes, structures, beliefs, values and ideologies inherent in the systems of a particular society and culture)	<i>Within the community</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective schools • Ties to pro-social organisations such as club • Neighbourhoods with high "collective efficacy" • High levels of public safety • Good emergency social services • Good public health and health care availability 	<i>Assets of citizens' associations, local institutions and wider social system</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there exists an implicit positive outlook within the wider social system, that is, one of proactive principles towards career exploration and efficient productivity within career settings, chances are that prospective workers' attitudes will constitute the selfsame proactive stance. This means that prospective workers will value career exploration.

FIGURE 2.3 Relationship between psychosocial resilience, asset-based approach, career facilitation and the bio-ecological model.

As figure 2.3 indicates, Bronfenbrenner (Swart & Pettipher 2005; Donald, *et al.*, 2002) has established that key proximal interactions or processes (interactions that occur in face-to-face, long-term relationships) occur within the micro-system. These interactions might contribute in a

meaningful manner to client-partners' perceptions of themselves in the world of work, because of the social feedback that they receive from significant others. Thus, the behaviour and set of values that parents adhere to or the attitudes and role-play of significant friends can, for example, promote an environment in which career awareness is a priority. This is true for a cultural value of creating work opportunities and encouragement of entrepreneurship. Therefore, all the systems that Bronfenbrenner identified might play an important role in client-partners' career development, with regard to possessing potential assets.

In addition to the aspects dealt with in the previous paragraphs, I consider the other constructs used in the asset-based approach, such as the family, school and peers, to be potential role-players during the process of career facilitation. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003:19) declare that an understanding of these constructs of the asset-based approach requires a '*paradigm shift in our thinking*'. Although these constructs are familiar, there is a need to think of them in terms of their inherent capacities, gifts and skills. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003) guide the reader through each of the constructs in terms of their potential assets. In figure 2.4 I present a summary of these constructs, in conjunction with a list of areas that might offer possible contributions to the career facilitation process. In short, an analysis of the role-players' assets renders a guide with which to explore different avenues in career facilitation. Each construct can be placed within the bio-ecological model.

ASSET-BASED CONSTRUCT AND POTENTIAL ROLE-PLAYER		AREAS OF POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO A CAREER FACILITATION PROCESS
The Individual	The client-partner in need of career facilitation <i>and</i> owner of the challenge to make a career decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and knowledge information • Personal characteristics (cognitive, emotional, behavioural, learning and life-skills) • Interests, values and experience • Background information
The School	The school system in which the client-partner is situated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and management • The human resources • Technical assets • Assets in structures and procedures • Assets in the identity and the strategies of the school
The Classroom	The classroom in which the client-partner is situated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources • Career information (books, video's, pamphlets) • Teaching styles • Continuous assessment practices • Peer group support • Learning styles
The Family	The particular family in which the individual finds him-/herself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal relations • Vocation of the parents, caregivers, grandparents, uncles and aunts, siblings • Physical assets in the family such as a house, internet, reading material (books, magazines) and television • Geographical area of the family house (can be near a library, university or businesses)
The Peer Group	Friends of the client-partner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional, functional and learning support • Motivation • Exemplary behaviour • Sharing and communication • Technological interests • Responsibility and trust • Caring and coping
Citizens' associations	The social space surrounding the client-partner where the client-partner can find citizens' associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural groups • Faith-based organisations • Non-governmental organisations • Extra-curricular activities
Local institutions	The local institutions in the living area of the client-partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses • Parks • Hospitals • Clinics • Community projects • Libraries
The whole social system	The broader social community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic infrastructure • Political freedom • A climate of social change • Cultural tendencies • Legislative support for proactive initiatives • Technological advances • Mental health • Social development • Social welfare

FIGURE 2.4 Constructs used in the asset-based approach

Figure 2.4 indicates possible partners that might contribute to the career facilitation process. Investigating these partners in order to establish possible resources can be regarded as an

intervention strategy and is referred to as '*mapping of sources*' by Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003:323). With reference to the mapping of sources or asset-mapping, Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003) conclude that existing knowledge, skills and talents of households, associations and institutions are inventoried. In this regard, I concur with Bouwer (2005:52) who warns against pointless listing of inaccessible assets and refers to '*asset access mapping*' whereby the exploration of fewer assets is recommended to achieve a more comprehensive '*picture of the degree and conditions of accessibility of each*' asset.

2.2.3 SITUATING THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH WITHIN POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

The following question can be asked: How does the asset-based approach fit into the Positive Psychology movement? The purpose of Positive Psychology as explained by Seligman (2002) is to facilitate change in psychology. This change signifies a movement away from the medical model where there seems to be a preoccupation with *repairing* the worst things in life. Positive Psychology and the asset-based approach focus on building the best qualities in people's lives (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Seligman, 2002). Furthermore, Seligman (2002:3) argues that '*exclusive attention to pathology neglected the idea of a fulfilled individual and thriving community, and neglected the possibility that building strength is the most potent weapon in the arsenal of therapy*'.

If the career facilitator chooses to view clients from an asset-based approach, it is still essential to identify problems and needs (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). However, the asset-based career facilitator will focus on creating and rebuilding relationships to solve problems, as all people have something to contribute and there are resources available in any context or ecosystem (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Thus, Positive Psychology becomes the scaffold on which the asset-based approach can assemble healthy partnerships. **As such the asset-based approach is a tool with which the aim of Positive Psychology can be pursued.** Both the asset-based approach and Positive Psychology advocate a shift in perception with regard to client-partners, that is, building on the best qualities and using these qualities to address challenges. In addition, both the asset-based approach and Positive Psychology support the notion of building a healthy community.

The surfacing of Positive Psychology and its emphasis on *intrinsic* strengths and resources as well as the promotion of mental health and well-being, '*provided a forum to broaden the understanding of individual assets within the asset-based approach*' (Ebersöhn & Eloff, forthcoming). As a consequence, the acknowledgement of a myriad of positive characteristics

such as humour, motivation, hope and compassion is added to the recognition of skills, strengths, talents and abilities within each individual. Incorporating Positive Psychology practices into asset-based approach practices not only provides a tool with which to explore positive aspects within individuals, it also lays the foundation for individuals to believe in themselves. This self-belief constitutes a sense of *I am able* and helps with breaking through the '*impasse of their perceived weaknesses*' (Bouwer, 2005:52). Furthermore, this feeling of enablement is closely related to people's motivation to succeed as people persevere in the face of challenges when they believe in their capabilities to generate needed actions (Maddux, 2002).

Learners are taught reading, writing and arithmetic in the hope of them becoming responsible adults and reliable citizens. These skills, reading, writing and arithmetic, are considered the three R's of education and are meant to be a survival kit. '*In the educational context Kelly refers to the fourth "R" in education [as] that of human relations education and the development of interpersonal skills*' (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001:147). I propose a fifth and sixth "R" that career facilitators require, namely resourcefulness and resilience. In this regard Masten and Reed (2002:76) describe a **resource** as '*referring to the human, social, or material capital utilised in adaptive processes*'. During asset-based career facilitation, resourcefulness would imply educating client-partners with the focus on existing skills and resources, and established strengths and talents, in order to make a responsible career choice.

Resilience, according to Masten and Reed (2002:76), means '*good adaptation under extenuating circumstances*'. Therefore, resilience in asset-based career facilitation can focus on establishing a culture of constructive thought. The consequence is that despite overwhelming accounts of joblessness and potential lack of sufficient income, resilient career facilitators and client-partners still acknowledge a need for career facilitation. In this regard, resilience is related to what Patton (2001) observes with regard to individual suppleness in the world of work. She explains personal flexibility or resilience as the perseverance of individuals in the face of change and unplanned occurrences. In accordance with Patton (2001), Savickas (1999) points out how important it is for individuals and communities to join forces through co-operation in order to contribute to each other, despite work related changes. In my view, according to the asset-based approach and within the framework of Positive Psychology, *effective living* requires an interpretation of life and career choice from a constructive point of view where you work with capacities being used, abilities being expressed and gifts being shared.

2.3 CAREER FACILITATION

In this section I shall present a conceptualisation of the term *career facilitation* and enlighten the process of career facilitation, with emphasis on career exploration practices. The section will end with an attempt to *functionalise* the asset-based approach within career facilitation.

Following an argument put forward by Prinsloo (1999), I support her conclusion that the changing world of work has put the more traditional concepts used for career counselling out of date. These concepts were formulated during an alternative paradigm according to which the expert counsellor *treats* the client to rid him of the problem of being deficient. According to Patton (2001:5), '*the changing nature of the world of work and of career has led to a changed focus in the practice of guidance which traditionally emphasised the expert guiding, or **matching** individuals to jobs*'. Figure 2.5 summarises the various concepts that authors and theorists use to express the process of assisting clients on their career paths. These concepts offer different views about the same kind of career counselling process (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002; Gothard, Mignot, Offer & Ruff, 2001; Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalk, 2000; Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999; Malan, 1999; Zunker, 1998; Herr & Cramer, 1996; Tolbert, 1974).

CONCEPT	DESCRIPTION
Career education	An umbrella term for a variety of different experiences, which contribute to the expansion of the learner's knowledge of the world of work. Career education is concerned with preparing the person for the choices and transitions which life presents. One of the facets of career education is to provide information on the whole spectrum of possible occupations. Educators need to prepare learners for the working world and educating learners stays the primary responsibility of the school through infusing career-related concepts into the academic curriculum.
Career guidance	Career guidance is essentially information giving and advising. It is a systematic programme of counsellor-coordinated information designed to assist an individual to assimilate and integrate knowledge. Career guidance encompasses all components of services and activities in educational institutions, agencies, and other organisations that offer counselling and career-related educational programmes.
Career counselling	A largely verbal process in which a counsellor and counselee(s) are in a dynamic and collaborative relationship, focused on identifying and acting on the counselees' goals, in which the counsellor employs a repertoire of diverse techniques or processes, to help bring about self-understanding, understanding of behavioural options available, and informed decision making by counselees, who have the responsibility for their own actions. Career counselling involves a formal relationship in which a professional counsellor assists a client with career concerns, developing and testing an adequate picture of the self of the client in relation to reality.
Career intervention	Any activity (treatment or effort) designed to enhance a person's career development or to enable that person to make more effective career decisions. Broadly, these interventions involve any activities that empower people to cope effectively with career development tasks. The interventions need to be controlled with carefully defined client concerns.
Career helping	In the context of career helping, practitioners accumulate and apply professional knowledge. This includes knowledge of national and local education, training and labour markets.
Career management	An ongoing process in which individuals gather relevant information about themselves and the world of work; develop accurate pictures of their talents, interests, values, and preferred lifestyle as well as alternative occupations, jobs and organisations; develop realistic career goals based on this information; develop and implement strategies designed to achieve the goals; and obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the strategies and the relevance of the goals.

FIGURE 2.5 Concepts used to define the process of helping clients with their career paths

The following questions will now be addressed: How has the world of work changed? Why do the above-mentioned concepts fall short? According to Patton (2001:2) the world of worked changed as a result of *'the diversity in occupational structures at the beginning of the industrial era [which] is being replaced by a globalised work force [and] is characterised by considerable flux and turbulence'*. Many authors have discussed the changes that influence the world of work

(Patton & McMahon, 1999; Prinsloo, 1999; Rayman, 1999; Zunker, 1998; Herr, 1997; Feller & Walz, 1996; Hall, 1996; Watts, 1996). Among others they comment on:

- Career choice – The privilege to choose a career decreases due to rising unemployment. Workers are forced to choose employment that is available to them and not necessarily congruent with their interests, personalities or aptitudes. Also, career choice is not a once-off decision anymore. Career choice is now considered to be a lifelong process in which individuals constantly appraise their career paths. In this regard, it is essential to understand that individuals are subject to a lifelong career development path with many career choices along the way.
- Organisational transformation – Job descriptions have become more elastic. The existence of a fixed set of work tasks and expectations for a certain occupation is no more relevant, and instead, workers are expected to be flexible and possess a combination of skills and knowledge. Another revolution taking place is that employment has become unstable. The new millennium employer is one that has several different appointments at the same time, a contract worker of sorts. The implication is that employers do not stay at companies for a lifetime (as in the past) and organisations value knowledge and skills over loyalty.
- Psychometric assessment – Career practitioners tend to move away from psychometric assessments that assisted with the fitting of clients' career interests, personality styles, and aptitude level with career environments and career requirements. As mentioned above, lifelong career development and a different description of careers make the use of Parson's (1909) trait-factor fit impractical. Individuals need to possess sustainable skills with which they can make career decisions independently, throughout their career development paths, and be flexible enough to survive and make a contribution in the ever-changing workforce.
- Relationship between client and counsellor – In the past it was common practice for the counsellor to provide information and advice to the client, steering the client in a career direction. The client passively received the counsellor's expert guidance. This created a distance between the client and the counsellor, thus impacting negatively on the therapeutic relationship, as the client became dependent on the counsellor. If clients are to enter into lifelong commitments with their careers, it is necessary for them to have the ability to employ skills and dexterity, to be self-sufficient and not rely on counsellors. The counselling process is also expanding from the counsellor's office to working in harmony with '*other organisations, agencies, and constituencies with similar interests*' (Rayman, 1999:179).

These changes constitute a reframing of how career counselling is addressed and how support is phrased. Previously, counsellors' services comprised of expert '*guiding the way*' while the client

followed, counsellors helped and provided solutions to clients' problems, counsellors made clients more effective, and counsellors had the objective truth about clients (Prinsloo, 1999:53). Consequently, the concepts to describe career counselling were formulated with the above stated services in mind. Fortunately, as the world of work changes, so do career practitioners' services change, and this demands a reconstructing of the definition of the concept *career counselling*.

As a result, Prinsloo (1999) suggests the term *career facilitation* as a more comprehensive alternative. She (Prinsloo, 1999) states that career facilitation is more than education, as the client is viewed in totality and the facilitator is conscious of the client's other life roles. Even though the concepts used previously to describe career counselling currently fall short, they can be linked to the process of career facilitation and offer some contribution as discussed below. I believe that existing theories should never be disregarded as they are derived from past experiences and knowledge, which can be seen as a handbook that enlightens present behaviour and knowledge. Consequently, from the description of *career education* I value the importance of career preparation. I agree with what is proposed during *career guidance*: that the individual should assimilate and integrate knowledge. From the description of *career counselling*, I incorporate the notions of collaboration, informed decision and self-understanding. I share the notion of empowering people to cope effectively with career development tasks as explained in *career intervention*. It is important for career facilitators to be knowledgeable as the term *career helping* suggests. The term *career management* encompasses many of the important elements that I especially relate to a career facilitation process, such as the fact that career facilitation is a lifelong process and the attention given to the individual's talents and goal setting practices. In accordance with this notion of career as a lifelong development course, Patton (2001) regards individuals' resumés as lists of transferable skills and adaptive strengths with which individuals need to learn to deal with their own careers.

A closer look at facilitation of careers shows a significant resemblance to the asset-based approach. To facilitate is a '*process of supportive 'drawing out', i.e. helping people look at their own issues and come to their own decisions about how to deal with them*' (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002:29). The *Oxford Mini-dictionary* (Hawkins, 1991) describes *facilitate* as making something easy or easier. The *New Webster's Dictionary* (1981) defines *facilitation* as the *act of aiding*. Rooth (1995:3) argues that facilitation is '*not teaching, not telling, not lecturing, not preaching and not directing*' but rather that facilitation is the provision of resources for client-partners to explore and develop, whilst Moore and Rapmund (2002) discuss facilitation skills for

the helping professional. From these sources, I deduct the following as fundamentals of facilitation:

- Facilitation is a belief that knowledge is gained through participation.
- Facilitation is a belief that knowledge is not a product presented by an expert.
- Facilitation is non-directive.
- Facilitation provides opportunity for client-partners to participate in their own growth and move towards greater involvement in their communities.
- Facilitation is generating activities that generate learning.
- Facilitation helps to discover existing skills *and* aspects of skills needing development.
- Facilitation entails helping people to solve a problem by themselves and for themselves.
- Facilitation advocates a notion of mutual respect between the client-partner and facilitator.
- Facilitation promotes a bottom-up management approach and a participatory society.
- Facilitation is set to enable rather than to instruct.
- Facilitation supports client-partners to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Facilitation supports client-partners to think independently.
- Facilitation means to create a safe place where client-partners can feel free to express their own ideas and opinions.

In conclusion, Moore and Rapmund (2002:106) qualify the role of a facilitator as '*[connecting] people with the strengths within themselves and [guiding] them to make their own informed decisions, based on these strengths*'. I share Moore and Rapmund's (2002) opinion that the process of facilitation supports the career facilitator to move away from the deficit model, where the career facilitator believes helping client-partners means that they need to be *fixed*. Consequently, I deduct that the fundamentals of career facilitation are similar to the essential characteristics of the asset-based approach. The asset-based approach and the process of career facilitation share a common goal, which is to enable people to help themselves and to '*manage their own careers*' (Savickas, 1997:256). This objective of self-enablement and sustainability of skills should increase client-partners' existing abilities and prepare them for the next career (Patton, 2001). In contrast to what was previously perceived as helping, the notion of enablement is not expressed by concepts such as career counselling, career guidance or career education.

According to arguments put forward by various authors (refer to Patton, 2001; Perrone, Sedlacek & Alexander, 2001; Savickas, 1997), it seems that the concept *career facilitation* can be used as a form of describing the *action* of helping individuals to cope with career issues. Consequently, I regard career facilitation as **functionalising** the theory of help and support. If the question was

asked: How do I counsel? Or: How do I guide? Or: How do I intervene? One answer could be: Through *facilitation*.

To summarise, career facilitation forms an integral part of the asset-based approach in that it serves as a functional concept. I view career facilitation as a compound for other terms describing the career helping process, but with the distinct difference that it incorporates assets from the client-partner as well as the environment, and includes such principles as client-partner ownership, shared responsibility, enablement, recognition of sustainable skills and collaborative views. In my view, the essence of the asset-based approach lies in the accumulation and utilisation of assets and resources. As a result, an investigation of how this accumulation and utilisation proceeds is of importance. Therefore, in this study my interest lies especially with the development of exploration within the career facilitation process. As such, attention is given to exploration practices within career facilitation in the next section.

2.3.1 EXPLORATION WITHIN CAREER FACILITATION

Career exploration is recognised as part of the career counselling process (Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalk, 2000; Betz & Vuyten, 1997; Blustein, 1997; Ketterson & Blustein, 1997; Kracke, 1997; Nevill, 1997; Sharf, 1997). Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk (2000:26) describe career exploration as the '*collection and analysis of information regarding career-related issues*'. Furthermore, Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk (2000) maintain that active exploration of the environment will induce knowledge of different occupations, organisations, and career opportunities. Consequently, *career exploration* motivates people to use resources and activities that foster self-knowledge and environmental knowledge in order to progress in career development (Blustein, 1997; Sharf, 1997). For the purpose of this study and through application of the asset-based approach, I propose to broaden the term *career exploration* in order to relate it to the career facilitation process. Therefore I prefer to use the concept *exploration within the career facilitation process*.

To give an idea of how exploration forms part of the career facilitation process, I combined some of the constructs of the asset-based approach (Ebersöhn & Eloff, forthcoming), with a guide to career exploration, as proposed by Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk (2000). Figure 2.6 summarises my suggestions with regard to situating career exploration in career facilitation.

EXPLORATION WITHIN CAREER FACILITATION					
	INTERNAL ASSETS; DEFICIENCIES; SIGNATURE STRENGTHS		EXTERNAL RESOURCES; BARRIERS; SYSTEMIC STRENGTHS		
INFORMATION	COLLECTION & ANALYSIS	SELF EXPLORATION (Positive qualities)	ENVIRONMENTAL EXPLORATION (Positive environment)	ANALYSIS & COLLECTION	INFORMATION
		INTERESTS, VALUES	OCCUPATIONAL TASKS		
		EXPERIENCE, BACKGROUND	JOB ANALYSIS		
		TALENTS, SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE	ORGANISATIONS, SCHOOLS, LIBRARIES		
		PERSONALITY	FAMILIES		
DESIRED LIFESTYLE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are my significant life values? 2. What kinds of activities do I like/dislike? 3. What are my talents, and which ones are significant and personally meaningful? 4. Which of my values, interests, and talents (VIT) are best accommodated in the world of work? 5. Which of my VIT's are best accommodated outside of work? 6. How can I achieve a balance of work and non-work involvements to find expression for my most significant VIT's? 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How much freedom and independence do I want in my work? 2. What type of working relationship would I prefer with other people? 3. What talents do I wish to use in my work? 4. What is the role of money and security in my life? 5. What type of activities and tasks interest me? 6. What type of physical work setting do I desire? 7. How important is work to my whole life? 8. What types of occupations and industries best fit my VIT's and preferred lifestyle? 		PREFERRED WORK ENVIRONMENT
	RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF- AND ENVIRONMENTAL EXPLORATION				
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One particular activity can provide information about the self and the environment. 2. Self-awareness can and should influence awareness of the environment and <i>vice versa</i>. 				

FIGURE 2.6 A guide to exploration within career facilitation (adapted from Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk, 2000)

As Figure 2.6 illustrates, Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk (2000) explain that *career exploration* entails the gathering and in-depth examination of information of individuals, as well as the world of work. Self-exploration focuses on individuals' unique values, interests, talents and personality types. Exploring the environment involves looking at different occupational activities that persons might find stimulating, discovering certain job-related skills that different careers require, understanding the needs of the career-giving organisations in the workforce and being aware of emotional needs with regard to people's family lives. I apply the asset-based approach in order to broaden *career exploration* and formulate a method to *explore* not only

relevant information as suggested by Greenhaus, *et al.* (2000), but also to *explore* accessible assets.

As people are exploring their identities and potential assets, they become more aware of their abilities, interests, and possible partners. This awareness will have an effect on how the person approaches and evaluates the relevancy of certain career environments. The reverse is also true in that the more people understand about their preferred occupations, the more people think about the relevancy of their characters and assets. The process of describing what people consider to be their preferred styles of living, and how these lifestyles fit with favoured occupational environments, is of value. The dynamics of this reciprocal relationship (the relationship between people and environments) should be investigated by means of exploration activities.

The importance of exploration as part of career facilitation is noticeable and agreed upon by a myriad of authors (Patton, 2001; Greenhaus, *et al.*, 2000; Blustein, 1997; Sharf, 1997). Exploration is important for decision-making counselling in order to elicit reasonable and meaningful career goals. Career selection can only be effective if clients are motivated to gather career related information, which in turn can prepare them for the unknown (Greenhaus, *et al.*, 2000; Blustein, 1997; Sharf, 1997). In this regard Patton (2001:14) states that '*exploring the world of work increases self-knowledge as well as an awareness of suitable educational and occupational options...and leads to better career decisions*'.

I conclude that the benefits of exploration within career facilitation include the following:

- Retrieving knowledge on the basis of which to make an *informed* decision.
- Preparing and equipping the client-partner with necessary skills before career selection.
- Enabling client-partners to establish skills and knowledge with which they can manage any future unforeseen events, thus facilitating a sustainable array of proficiencies.
- Gaining self-knowledge and career knowledge through establishing an exploratory attitude in order to assist client-partners in feeling in control by setting reachable goals.

2.4 LOCATING THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH WITHIN EXISTING CAREER THEORY

The utilisation of the asset-based approach as strategy during career facilitation is an unmarked way of understanding the context of the client. Figure 2.7 indicates my comparison between the

medical model and the asset-based approach to career facilitation, in terms of the 11 career developmental tasks of Langley (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; De Bruin, 1999).

Career Developmental Task	Medical Model	Asset-Based Approach
<i>Ontology</i>		
Identify needs Evaluate life roles	Focus on deficits and needs Singular reality	Focus on assets and capacities Multiple realities
<i>Professionals</i>		
Investigate other relevant factors such as personality, ability, socio-cultural factors Identify values Identify interests	Deliver a service Experts Labelling Exclusive knowledge Informing Reason & Rationality	Connect clients to assets Networkers Understanding Shared knowledge Connecting Relationships
<i>Services</i>		
Evaluate career maturity Evaluate decision-making ability	Paternalistic Provide support for despondency Cycle of dependence Fragmented services Discipline specific approach	Supportive Provide support for pro-activity Cycle of enablement Collaboration Functional approach
<i>Client-partners</i>		
Obtain career information Integrate self-information with career information Make a career choice Plan a career	Limited power Receive knowledge Are perceived as being in denial and being ignorant	Optimal power Experts Are perceived as having essential viewpoints

FIGURE 2.7 A comparison of the medical model with the asset-based approach in terms of career development tasks

Langley (De Bruin, 1999) presents her model of career development tasks as a guideline in the career facilitation process. In order to understand the difference between the medical model and the asset-based approach to career facilitation practices, the career developmental tasks have been divided into four categories. The first category relates to the core subject of interest and study within the career facilitation process, whilst the second category describes the role of the career facilitator as professional. The third category illustrates the rendered career facilitation service and the fourth category views the client-partner in terms of the career facilitation process. These categories will now be explained.

Firstly, Langley (De Bruin, 1999) recommends that the career counsellor should understand what it is that client-partners want from work, as well as what client-partners expect from the counselling process. This view accentuates the expectation that a singular career reality exists for an individual and results in a deficit-focused career facilitation process. I regard the aim of the asset-based approach as to create a shift away from viewing client-partners in terms of what their needs are, and facilitate a focus on what they have to *offer* for their own career journeys. The

importance lies in the fact that a shift in emphasis should occur, which implies that the needs are not ignored *per se*, but also not focused on as much as in the medical model. The implication of such a shift is that when client-partners evaluate their life roles (roles of student, worker, community worker, home and family, and leisure) they are able to focus on constructive cognitive, emotive and behavioural characteristics within themselves, which constitute life skills. These life skills can be recognised as assets and capacities with which they maintain their career lives. In this regard I support Young and Valach (1996:364) who describe a *career* as a process where ‘*people intentionally engage [with] to acquire social meaning within the framework of their lives*’.

Secondly, De Bruin (1999) discusses a variety of instruments that may be used to identify and assess client-partners’ values, interests, personality traits and specific abilities. I also acknowledge the assistance standardised tests and assessment instruments provide to professionals in creating a better understanding of the client-partner. In this regard De Bruin (1999:144) writes ‘*if clients know what their most important values are, they can try to identify work that corresponds with these values*’. Furthermore, Brown and Srebalus (1996:101) regard career interest as a ‘*key factor in career planning*’. Other relevant factors that can be investigated during assessment are personality and aptitude, which can be utilised to encourage self-knowledge (De Bruin, 1999). In addition, it is generally believed that the results of assessments may predict career performance (Zunker, 1998). However, my concern is that such test results might provide a false sense of security to professionals upon which they might revert to labelling. Within the asset-based approach, the professional’s task should not be that of an objective assessor who is expected to diagnose, make infallible recommendations and provide absolute answers with regard to describing client-partners’ profiles, anymore. The asset-based career facilitator should aim at understanding client-partners’ potential and assets, thus facilitating self-discovery and self-knowledge with regard to client-partners’ personal abilities and special qualities. The implication is that standardised measurement instruments are still valuable, but should be interpreted with cognisance of client-partners’ unique contexts.

Thirdly, career maturity and career decision making refer to client-partners’ *readiness* to deal with career developmental tasks (De Bruin, 1999; Herr, 1996). The medical model implies the danger of a one-stop service and career counsellors providing paternalistic decisions, whether client-partners are ready or not. As such, it is expected of career counsellors to decide on the career fate of their client-partners. Even though this preconception has been changing over the last decade or so, the discourse still strongly remains rooted in client-partners. Professionals need

to facilitate client-partners' decision-making abilities, therefore asset-based career facilitation suggests that a more enabling service be available. Consequently, career facilitators who apply the asset-based approach would collaborate with their client-partners in order to ascertain how career maturity can be obtained. If clients show maturity in other aspects of their lives, such as taking responsibility for siblings, this might serve as a positive indication in terms of applying such maturity as an asset during career choice.

Lastly, the asset-based approach signifies the importance of client-partners as the ultimate experts and owners of their career development process. The medical model often leaves client-partners powerless in many ways. Client-partners react to what career counsellors suggest, thus preventing full ownership of client-partners and discarding the essential contributions of clients in making and planning their careers. Colin and Watts (1996:395) highlight the following with regard to career facilitation: career facilitators need to apply constructivist approaches in order to help client-partners develop '*subjective career narratives*'. They also recommend '*career guidance services [that] support individuals in regular recording of achievement and action planning*'. A great responsibility rests on career facilitators to acknowledge their client-partners' abilities to be the experts of their own lives. However, career facilitators might not be ready to perceive client-partners as having essential viewpoints and should therefore take cognisance of the messages they communicate to client-partners.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I offered a conceptual framework that will direct my planning for career facilitation sessions. Additionally, the conceptual framework will serve as a guide during literature control and data interpretation. The conceptual framework consisted of a detailed description of the *asset-based approach* and clarification of the concept *career facilitation*. The description of the asset-based approach consisted of an explanation of the origins, as well as the fundamental underpinnings of the asset-based approach. Furthermore, I attempted to align the asset-based approach to career facilitation and situated the asset-based approach within Positive Psychology. In addition, I discussed the conceptualisation of the term *career facilitation* and enlightened the process of career facilitation with an emphasis on career exploration practices. I attempted to show how one can alter one's career facilitation practices, making use of the asset-based approach as function. A deconstruction of Langley's model of career development tasks (De Bruin, 1999) was used as background in which the medical model and asset-based approach were compared.

Chapter 3 will illustrate the meta-theoretical assumptions, theoretical assumptions and methodological assumptions of this study. Furthermore, the research design of the study, including data collection methods and data analysis techniques, will be discussed. The measures to ensure a rigorous and ethical study will be described.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I shall describe the aim of this study and provide the framework for my research methodology. The proposed significance of this study is the application of a paradigm shift in career facilitation and recording a detailed description of this process. These recordings can possibly broaden the theoretical stance of the career facilitator in terms of approach and emphasis. The reason why I have chosen phenomenology as my meta-theoretical paradigm and a qualitative research methodology is to create a synergistic milieu. This means that working qualitatively complements my phenomenological stance as I am interested in the experiences of my client-partners. I selected an instrumental case study as research design, since it might facilitate an intense investigation by means of which I could answer the research question, namely: *How can the asset-based approach be applied in career facilitation practice?*

3.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study is explorative *and* descriptive by nature. Firstly, this study is explorative by nature as I aim at gaining new insights with regard to the asset-based approach and expanding on career counselling as central construct (Mouton, Marais, Prinsloo & Rhodie, 1990). In addition, I chose an exploratory study by means of which I can conduct an open and flexible investigation of the application of the asset-based approach during the career facilitation process (Durrheim, 2002).

Secondly, this study is descriptive by nature, as I aim at describing the application of the asset-based approach. I aim at describing the application through attempting to make accurate observations (Durrheim, 2002). Furthermore, I aim at establishing a functional description of the concept *career facilitation* within the framework of the asset-based approach. A functional description implies that theory be established and put into practice. Figure 3.1 illustrates the aim of this study. As figure 3.1 indicates, I aim at gaining new insight with regard to applying an alternative approach or perspective to career counselling practices, and possibly at expanding on the process of career counselling. Instead of viewing career counselling from a medical model perspective, according to which the function of the counsellor is to produce answers to passive clients, the aim and function of the asset-based career facilitator is to facilitate sustainable career decision-making activity within client-partners.

<i>The application of an alternative approach to career counselling implies a different:</i>			
Perspective	Medical model (needs-based approach)	—————→	Asset-based approach
Process (view of)	Career counselling	—————→	Career facilitation
Professional (view of)	Career counsellor as expert	—————→	Career facilitator as collaborative partner
Person (view of)	Client as passive receiver of service where career counsellor makes the career choice for the client	—————→	Client-partner as active collaborator, sharing the responsibility of making a career choice

FIGURE 3.1 The aim of this study

This study intends to describe the course of self-exploration and career exploration in the career facilitation process. As such, the application of the asset-based approach could call for:

- *Exploring and describing* possible internal and external assets and establishing their accessibility.
- *Exploring and describing* possible resources in the environment and establishing their usefulness.
- *Exploring and describing* possible partners within bio-ecological spheres and establishing their willingness to collaborate.

On the basis of the discussion of figure 3.1, a formal research question will now be formulated. The fundamental question that directs this study, is: ***How can the asset-based approach be applied in career facilitation practices?***

Research answers the questions that emerge from practice and theory. Considering the practice and theory of career development as presented in the context of the investigation discussed in chapter 2, as well as the aim of the study and the research question formulated above, this study also focuses on the following secondary questions:

- What is career facilitation?
- What are the principles underlying the asset-based approach?
- How can the principles of the asset-based approach be implemented during career facilitation?
- How can client-partners apply asset-based principles during career facilitation?

- How can the career facilitator apply asset-based principles during career facilitation?
- What are the possible benefits of applying asset-based principles in career facilitation?

The aims of the study therefore entail a detailed investigation and description of the concept *career facilitation*; a clear and concise account of the underlying principles of the asset-based approach; a comprehensive report on the implementation of asset-based principles in career facilitation, including a description of how the facilitator and client-partners applied asset-based principles; and, lastly, an in-depth discussion in order to indicate possible contributions made through applying the asset-based approach.

The intention of the study is to investigate the application of the asset-based approach, in order to ultimately determine whether or not this approach could foster the needed change and development of career facilitation practices. As such, value might be added to career theory and practice. The reason for the possibility of added value to career theory and practice is that the asset-based approach incorporates strategies and ways of thinking that might address career related challenges. My suggestion is that, by applying the asset-based approach, sustainable career development skills could be facilitated by using existing resources, including technology, utilising co-operative relationships and placing emphasis on the client-partner as expert.

3.3 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

A paradigm guides a researcher's thinking in terms of how the researcher views reality, how the researcher perceives knowledge and which research methods the researcher prefers (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). The following section will indicate the reasons why I chose to view people and reality from a phenomenological perspective. It shall illustrate why I wanted to work qualitatively and what my theoretical assumptions are. This section also includes indications of the advantages and disadvantages of my specific choices.

3.3.1 META-THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS (EPISTEMOLOGY)

In order to understand and give meaning to this study, I have chosen the phenomenological thinking approach, which will guide my investigation. Phenomenology advocates a naturalistic method whereby I shall place myself in the situation of my client-partners in order to understand the meaning they give to their career paths (De Vos & Fouché, 1998). I believe that individuals possess the privilege to create their own realities (De Vos & Fouché, 1998; Schurink, 1998a). These realities are constructed through meanings that individuals attach to certain events (Kelly, 2002a; Schurink, 1998a). These meanings form a quality of life for individuals that is uniquely and exclusively the property of each individual, and can only be understood from the meanings

that they themselves construct (Kelly, 2002b; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). In essence, this reflects a sense that multiple realities exist (Denscombe, 2003; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

According to De Vos and Fouché (1998), the aim of phenomenology is to comprehend the meaning that people give to their lives, every day. In this regard Denscombe (2003:98) writes:

A phenomenological approach to research... concentrates its efforts on the kind of human experiences that are pure, basic and raw in the sense that they have not (yet) been subjected to processes of analysis and theorising...phenomenology prefers to concentrate its efforts on getting a clear picture of the 'things in themselves' – the things as directly experienced by people.

The phenomenological perspective therefore implies a dedication to use terms and categories familiar to people's contexts, in order to describe people's experiences from their perspectives (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). According to McKenna (2000), phenomenology finds its roots in the philosophy of existentialism. Existentialism is characterised by the notion that humans have rights and responsibilities – they are able to make choices for themselves. With this freedom to choose comes the responsibility for whatever consequences such choices imply (McKenna, 2000). As such, phenomenology offers me a dual purpose in this study: As researcher, I am able to let the voices of my client-partners be heard, and as career facilitator, I shall attempt to facilitate career exploration activities from within the client-partners' contexts.

Working within a descriptive study and from a phenomenological standpoint I intend to describe, in detail, authentic career facilitation sessions, concern myself with *how* client-partners interpret the asset-based career facilitation process, and be prepared to recognise and include aspects of my own experience and the experiences of the client-partners that appear self-contradictory and irrational (Denscombe, 2003). As such, the advantages of phenomenology include (Denscombe, 2003):

- *The prospect of authentic accounts of complex phenomena.* As mentioned earlier, I am interested in the experiences and reflections of client-partners in order to describe the application of asset-based principles.
- *A humanistic style of research.* No control or manipulation techniques are used in this research because the study aims at capturing the authentic experiences of the client-partners.
- *Suited to small-scale research.* I intend to use three cases, which could enable a meticulous investigation.
- *The description of experiences can tell an interesting story.* The descriptions of my own experiences and those of the client-partners are exactly what I am interested in.

Besides these advantages, phenomenology also implies the following challenges, according to Denscombe (2003), which might be countered by certain measures:

- *Lacks scientific rigour.* Descombe (2003:106) writes: ‘*The emphasis of phenomenology on subjectivity, description and interpretation contrasts with the scientific emphasis on objectivity, analysis and measurement*’. The aim of this study is not an objective account of the researcher’s findings (referred to as an etic perspective). This study is qualitative and follows an ‘*emic perspective of inquiry*’, where the views of the client-partners (also seen as research-partners) are studied and reality is regarded as subjective (Henning, *et al.*, 2004:20; Schurink, 1998a). As a qualitative researcher, I view the role of *science* as different from my fellow quantitative researchers. I agree with Henning *et al.* (2004:20) who state ‘*scientific methods can only give us an approximation of the truth, ...no one scientist can objectively capture the world*’. As a measure to counter the disadvantage of lacking scientific rigour, I state that the aim of this study is not to prove an objective and single truth. Instead, the goal is to describe different perspectives as accurately as possible. In this regard I refer you to section 3.6 of this chapter, where detailed descriptions of measures are provided with regard to ensuring a rigorous study.
- *Associated with description and no analysis.* The primary focus on descriptions of events and experiences may be criticised for not giving enough attention to analysis (Descombe, 2003). This study aims to deepen and expand on existing career counselling knowledge. After a detailed description has been provided, I attempt to develop explanations and make inferences from the descriptive texts (Descombe, 2003). I refer you to section 3.4.4 of this chapter, where you will find a description of the processes of data analysis and data interpretation.
- *Generalisations from phenomenological studies.* The data are not representative and cannot justify generalisations due to the small number of cases being studied (Descombe, 2003). This concern is also often raised with regard to the decision to use a case-study design, and is relevant to other career facilitation practitioners because of an apparent need for dictated action. I acknowledge the need for prescriptive models, as I know this offers a sense of security based on generalised evidence. However, the aim of qualitative research and this study is not to generalise but to understand a specific phenomenon. In addition, I assume that practitioners may find the results of this study useful in similar incidences if they consider the *process* of facilitation within an asset-based framework.
- *Attention to the mundane features of life.* Research with regard to the facilitation of career-related issues is by no means ‘*mundane, trivial or unimportant*’ (Descombe, 2003:107). In

this regard, I refer you to chapter 2 where the importance and need for new research with regard to career psychology was illustrated. In conclusion, the following argument, put forward by Collin and Young (2000:293), emphasises the potential importance of this type of study:

To be responsive to the needs of a changing world, psychology should recognise the global dimensions and scale of our lives; limit the ethnocentric bias in theories, methods, and interventions; develop indigenous psychologies; emphasise the cultural determinants of behaviour; use systems, contextual and non-linear conceptualisations of behaviour; and adopt qualitative, naturalistic, and contextual research methods (emphasis by me).

- *Feasibility of suspending common sense.* According to Denscombe (2003:107), socialisation and the use of language make it doubtful, even impossible, to rid oneself of presuppositions about the way things work, with the disadvantage that personal views might be unclear. To counter this potential disadvantage, I needed to be ‘*reflective and self-conscious about the way perceptions are shaped by things like common sense and then try to moderate their impact*’ (Denscombe, 2003:107). In this regard, I kept a research diary with three types of reflections: process notes, personal reflections and research reflections. I also compared my reflections with the reflections of my client-partners.

3.3.2 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

According to Henning *et al.* (2004:14), ‘*theories are created by developing sets of presuppositions or generalisations which establish relationships between things in a systematic way*’. The presuppositions and generalisations I hold about my client-partners and career psychology in this study are derived from the asset-based approach, bio-ecological model of human development, Positive Psychology, and the career facilitation process.

In chapter 2, the fundamental underpinnings and relationships between these theoretical viewpoints were discussed in detail and compared to previous models of thinking. *Positive Psychology* renders the opportunity to focus on strengths, talents and the mental health of client-partners. The *bio-ecological model* provides a tool for recognising systems inside and outside the client-partner that might contribute to the career facilitation process. Through the lenses of the *asset-based approach* it is possible to capitalise on strengths and talents of client-partners and the career facilitator, and optimise systemic collaboration. A *facilitation* process encapsulates the above mentioned theories whereby prevention, development and sustainable skills in terms of career choice might be rendered.

3.3.3 METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

According to Henning *et al.* (2004:36), '*methodology refers to the coherent group of methods that...deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the research purpose*'. The aim of this research is to study the application of the asset-based approach (a certain phenomenon) as it unfolds in career facilitation (a real-world situation) without manipulation of predetermined variables (Durrheim, 2002). I selected to conduct my study from a qualitative approach. On the basis of a qualitative emphasis, I aim at describing, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing social interaction in terms of the subjective meanings of client-partners (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Creswell (2005) asserts that qualitative research is of use to answer research problems that have the following characteristics: where the research entails an exploration in which little is known about the problem and/or where the research intends to present a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon. The research question and secondary questions listed in section 3.2 of this chapter elucidate my choice for a qualitative approach, the reason being that little is known about the application of the asset-based approach in the process of career facilitation, and that my intention is to attempt a detailed description of such an application.

According to qualitative research and the context of this study, reality is regarded as subjective to each individual and each social phenomenon is regarded as context-dependent. This study is therefore qualitative by nature as I aimed at identifying and understanding the perspectives of the client-partners, as well as describing the career facilitation process, in-depth (Henning *et al.*, 2004; Schurink, 1998a). Consequently, data were collected in the form of words (Durrheim, 2002; Schurink, 1998a). According to Creswell (2005), qualitative research is chosen when the outcome of the proposed study is not controlled and learning takes place through exploration with participants. As a result, I approached the research question without any hypothesis. I analysed all information cognisant of the client-partners' experiences and meanings they themselves attached, and attempted to give the client-partners a voice. As a result, I took on an investigative attitude towards the data by attempting time-bound and situation-bound descriptions of meaning.

I aimed at discovering my client-partners' worlds and interpreting their worlds by means of *qualitative methods* (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). *Qualitative methods* include the use of a flexible design that evolves throughout the research process. As such, no fixed steps are evident, thus making the study unique and difficult to replicate exactly (De Vos & Fouché, 1998). A flexible

design gave me the freedom to explore several ways of applying the asset-based approach during the career facilitation process, since no fixed guidelines exist at present. I was also interested in possible themes that might emerge from the relationship between myself as an asset-based career facilitator and the client-partners as asset-based collaborators in the career facilitation process, eliminating the need for standardised statistical procedures (De Vos & Fouché, 1998).

In choosing a qualitative approach, I compromised the following in my study: an opportunity to objectively measure the social world, whereby I could have predicted and/or controlled human behaviour; the chance to employ a fixed procedure that could easily be replicated; and the prospect of using standardised procedures to analyse data, whereby I could have done precise measurements (Schurink, 1998a). The aim of the study, namely, to provide an in-depth description of how the asset-based approach might be applied in a setting where career facilitation takes place, influenced my choice of working qualitatively (Henning *et al.*, 2004). Seeing that I aimed at in-depth knowledge, I rationalise the compromises mentioned earlier, as it was not the aim of the study to elicit *quantity of understanding* (Henning *et al.*, 2004).

3.4 METHODOLOGY

De Vos and Fouché (1998:6) write that methodology '*specifies how the researcher may go about practically studying whatever he or she believes can be known*'. In this section I shall argue that the data collection methods and data analysis techniques are coherent and compatible with the research design (Henning *et al.*, 2004). A case study design offered a means whereby I could undertake an in-depth and thorough investigation. An instrumental case study design, in particular, assisted in focusing on the relevant data. Selection of cases was done according to set criteria. Data were collected through observation, documented in field notes and a research diary, as well as in written participant reflections. I selected thematic analysis and integrated the steps of Tesch's data analysis model (1990) into the data analysis approach of Morse and Field (1994). Measures to ensure rigour included strategies to warrant trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability and crystallisation. With regard to ethical considerations, informed consent, deception of participants, violation of privacy and competence of the researcher will be discussed. Figure 3.2 provides a flow diagram of the research process.

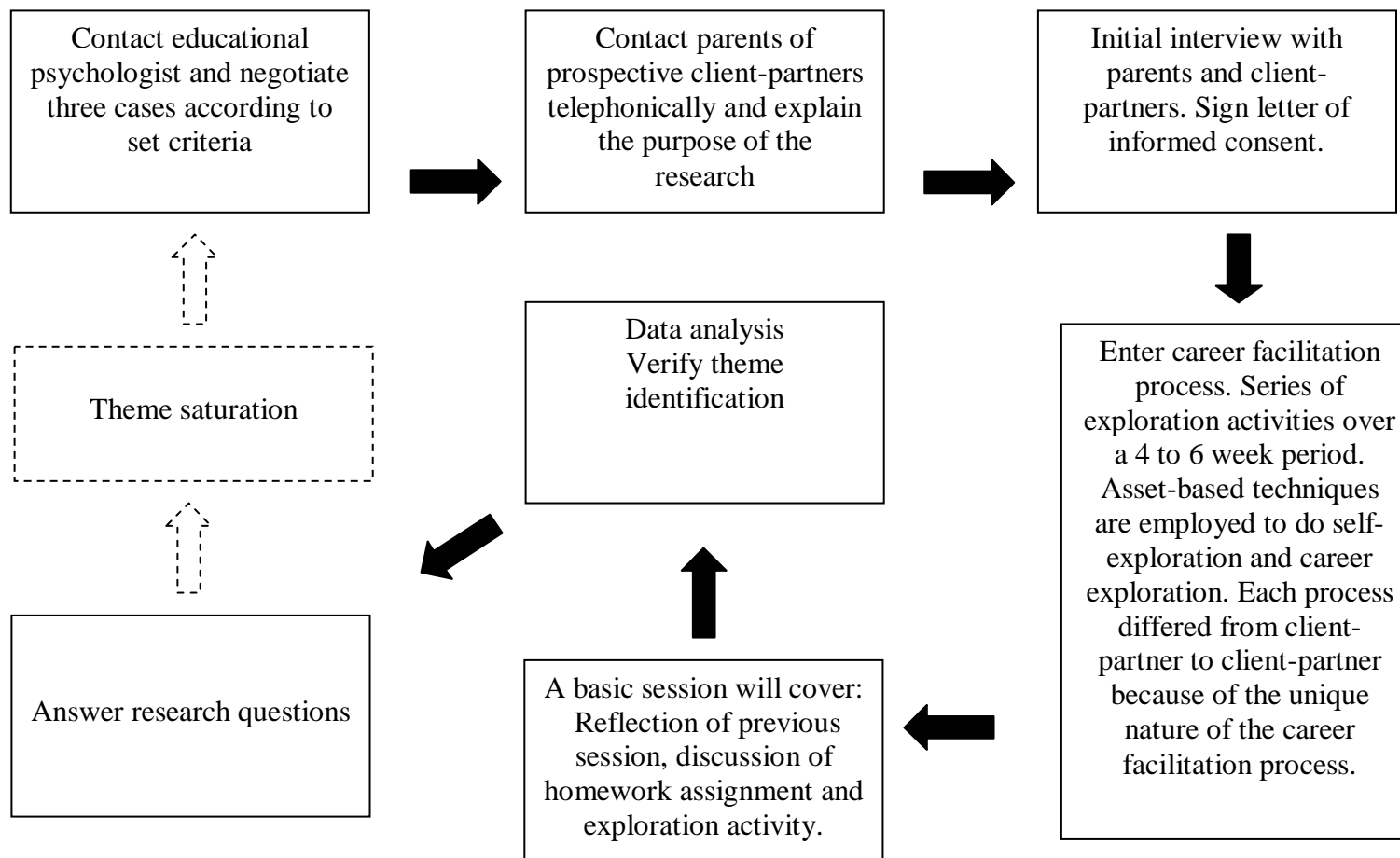


FIGURE 3.2 A flow diagram of the research process

As illustrated in figure 3.2, I started the research process by contacting an educational psychologist and negotiating *three* cases according to set criteria. Thereafter the client-partners and their parents were contacted and informed about the research process. Initial interviews (also called historicity interviews) were followed by an intensive career facilitation process, which consisted of four to six sessions. Each session was unique and accommodated the needs of the client-partner (refer to Appendix C). Through data analysis and theme verification it was determined that more cases were needed to answer the research questions. As a result, an additional two cases were chosen to ensure theme saturation, thus totalling the number of cases to five.

3.4.1 A CASE STUDY DESIGN

3.4.1.1 AN INSTRUMENTAL CASE STUDY

Lindegger (2002:255) states that '*case studies are intensive investigations of particular individuals*'. Therefore, I chose a case study design because I had aimed at investigating the application of the asset-based approach. In particular, this study involved an **instrumental case study**, which is used to provide insight into an issue (Cresswell, 2005; Stake, 2000a). In an instrumental case study, the case plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of another phenomenon (Stake, 2000a). In this study, the investigation of the asset-based approach was supported by the career facilitation process as the process provided a framework to apply asset-based principles.

Advantages of implementing a case study design include that, I as researcher, might possibly contribute to the knowledge base of career facilitation theory, because through vigilant and thorough observation I could describe the application of asset-based principles and strategies and create alternative ideas with regard to career facilitation (Lindegger, 2002). Stake (2000b:24) regards the main advantage of following a case study design as '*adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding*'. In this regard, Mouton (2001) identifies the strengths of a case study design as high construct validity, in-depth insights and the opportunity to establish rapport with the client-partners.

With no hypothesis and inductive reasoning directing my study, **challenges** might include the lack of generalisability of results, problems with the validity of information, difficulty in testing causal links, non-standardisation of measurement and time-consuming analysis (Lindegger, 2002; Mouton, 2001). Furthermore, other sources of error in a case study design include potential bias of the researcher and lack of rigour in analysis (Mouton, 2001). In an attempt to

account for these challenges, various strengths of a case study design are indicated and described in the paragraphs that follow. Please note that some of the limitations are also addressed through measures taken to ensure rigour in the study. In this regard, I refer you to section 3.6.

- *Lack of generalisability of results.* Lincoln and Guba (2000) view generalisations as ‘assertions of enduring value that are context-free [and] their value lies in their ability to modulate efforts at prediction and control’. In this study, the cases are regarded as context-bound and I aim at describing the context-bound nature of each case in order to elicit understanding of an asset-based career facilitation process. Consequently, I do not aim at generalising findings as I am more interested in how the asset-based career facilitation process unfolded in each case, based on the bio-ecological model. In this regard, I support Donmoyer (2000:46), who explains:

*Research can only function as a heuristic; it can suggest possibilities but never dictate action. It may well be the case that **case study research** (emphasis by me) can fulfil this function as well, or possibly even better, than more traditional approaches to research.*

- *Problems with the validity of information.* The degree to which the findings and conclusions in this study are sound or valid is problematic, due to the qualitative nature of the study (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002). Durrheim and Wassenaar (2002) state that qualitative researchers find it impossible to endorse validity before doing the research and believe that research findings can never be accurate reflections of reality. To authenticate qualitative research it is suggested that the **credibility** of the study be evaluated – where credibility refers to findings being convincing and believable (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 2002). Refer to section 3.6, which describes the measures I selected to enhance the credibility of the study.
- *Difficulty to test causal links and non-standardisation of measurement.* In this regard Hammersley and Gomm (2000:5-6) state the following:

Case study researchers sometimes claim that by examining one or two cases it is possible to identify causal processes in a way that is not feasible in survey research (Connolly, 1998). This is because the case(s) are studied in depth, and over time rather than at a single point...case study research can investigate casual processes ‘in the real world’ rather than in artificially created settings.

It will be impossible to recreate the exact study as the idea of finding client-partners with the exact same personality and environmental factors is impracticable and nonsensical. However, the aim of this study was to report on the application of the asset-based approach in career facilitation. I believe that when the approach is applied in other settings, the outcome can never be replicated exactly, because of a unique interaction between client-partner context and career facilitator context. In this regard, Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003:80) reflect that ‘clients are unpredictable; because they are individuals they may sometimes choose not to do what you had planned for the session.’ They go on to advise career practitioners to be

adaptable, flexible and creative in their application of principles underlying the asset-based approach. What can be replicated from client-partner to client-partner within the career facilitation process are the asset-based approach *techniques, attitudes and insights* that might be utilised.

3.4.2 SELECTION OF CASES

The research question guided my selection of cases. Durrheim (2002) explains that it is better to focus the research question in such a manner that a detailed exploration of a small case can be given. In this regard, Stake (2000a) emphasises that, in order to conduct an *instrumental case study*, the researcher must choose specific cases with care, to be able to understand the phenomena under investigation. Figure 3.3 summarises the criteria identified for case selection. A brief description follows.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The potential of learning from client-partners• Availability and accessibility of client-partners<ul style="list-style-type: none">- ability to commit to the research process- ability to reflect and express thoughts and feelings regarding the research process• Client-partners that need career facilitation support |
|---|

FIGURE 3.3 Criteria for case selection (Stake, 2000)

Selecting client-partners from which I can learn, that is *potential for learning*, is more important to me than selecting a representative sample (Stake, 2000a). In this regard, Stake (2000a) states that case selection should always cater for the *opportunity and potential to learn*, which also signifies accessibility of client-partners. As such, I had to choose client-partners with whom I could spend quality time, and client-partners that were willing to share their thoughts and feelings about the career facilitation process.

To select specific client-partners from whom I could learn the most, I chose client-partners that were in the life stage of career exploration and able to contribute to the research process in a meaningful manner (Stake, 2000a; Langley, 1999). Super (Langley, 1999) identifies persons between the ages of 14 and 24 as being in a life stage where they need to make a career choice. Super (Langley, 1999) further states that development through the life stages can be guided by facilitating the maturation of abilities, interests and coping resources of the client-partner. According to Super's (Langley, 1999) career development theory the following career developmental tasks are appropriate during this life stage: gaining appropriate self-information; displaying effective decision-making skills; gaining appropriate career information; integrating self- and career information; and planning a career. These career developmental tasks differ by nature, depending on each life stage.

Originally, three client-partners were purposefully selected from a collection of clients at the private practice of an educational psychologist in Pretoria, according to the criteria stated in figure 3.3. The criteria were, as mentioned above, accessibility, potential for learning, and the need to be part of a career facilitation process. Later, it was necessary to select two more cases from another educational psychologist to saturate themes. Theme saturation or data saturation refers to the point where all the major themes have been identified and new information will not add more themes or expand on existing ones (Cresswell, 2005; Durrheim, 2002).

3.4.3 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Mouton (2001) identifies participant observation, documentary sources and semi-structured interviewing as possible sources of data for case studies. Consequently, I relied on the following forms of data collection: observation-as-context, writing *field notes* and keeping a *research diary* of session activities, homework assignments, as well as participant reflections of client-partners.

Figure 3.4 illustrates these sources of data.

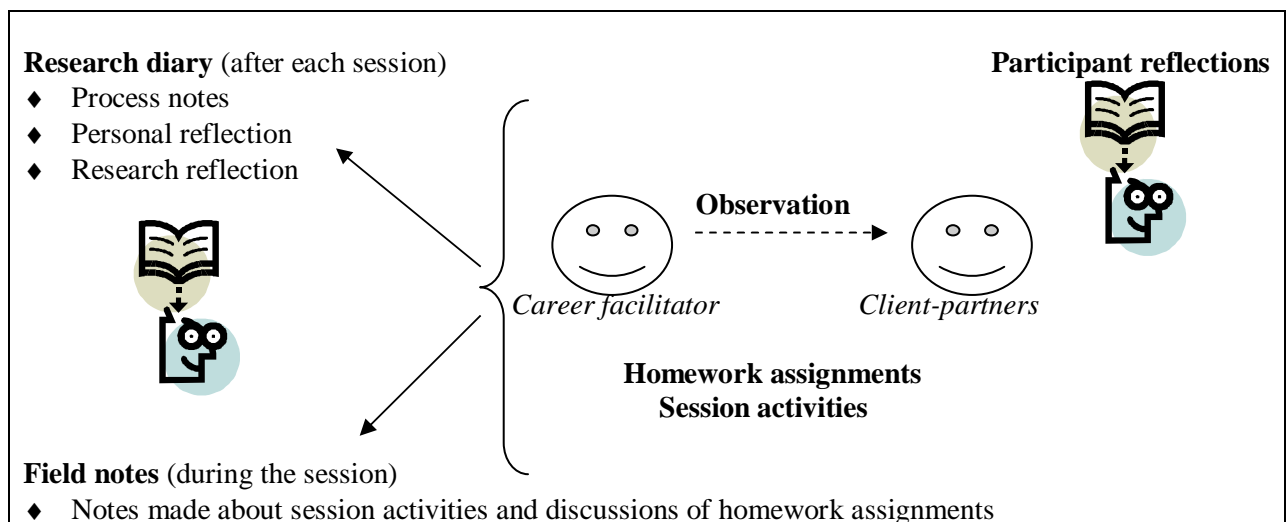


FIGURE 3.4 Methods of data collection

As figure 3.4 illustrates, *data were collected* in the following manner: During each career facilitation session I compiled field notes of my observations. I observed client-partners, discussed homework assignments and participated in session activities as career facilitator. I also acted as researcher during these sessions. This implied that the career facilitation process was paralleled by the research process. The client-partners were aware that the career facilitation process was under investigation. There were opportunities during career facilitation sessions to discuss the career facilitation process. Consequently, an informal and inviting atmosphere was created where participants could reflect about the career facilitation process. After each career facilitation session, I wrote a detailed reflection in my research diary. At completion of the

facilitation process, I asked the participants to write a participant reflection about the career facilitation process. As such, *data were captured* in written form by means of field notes and reflections in a research diary.

Furthermore, figure 3.4 illustrates my intention to **observe** the client-partners. Fox (1998:2) regards *observation* as more than recording data from the environment, and mentions that: ‘*when we observe, we are **active** (emphasis by me), not passive collectors of data...our brains are **engaged** (emphasis by me) as well as our eyes and ears, organising data so we can **make sense** (emphasis by me) of them*’. In this manner, observation becomes more than the traditional ‘*method of collecting data*’, and accentuates a ‘*context for interaction*’ (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000:676). Consequently, I was actively engaged both as facilitator and researcher, observing the *context* of career facilitation sessions. During active engagement I aimed at observing and ultimately understanding the dynamics of the career facilitation process and the application of asset-based techniques and principles.

Fox (1998) raises the issue of *what* to observe and suggests the use of the research question to guide me. In this regard I was guided by my interest in the following: the client-partners’ feelings and experiences with regard to asset-based techniques, as well as my own feelings and experiences with regard to applying asset-based principles. In addition to observation, Cresswell (2005) and Fox (1998) stress the importance of some means to record notes during observation. As illustrated in figure 3.4, I compiled **field notes** and kept a **research diary** in this regard.

Firstly, I compiled **field notes** during each facilitation session and made observations with regard to the client partners’ reactions to the asset-based approach (Cresswell, 2005). As part of the career facilitation process I gave the client-partners **session activities** and **homework assignments** to complete. **Session activities** included activities related to the implementation of specific psychometric media or the use of alternative assessment and/or intervention techniques. The series of assessment or intervention techniques were not fixed, due to my intention to keep the sessions flexible and adaptable. **Homework assignments** required of the client-partners to go and do specific tasks as part of the career facilitation process, for example contacting relevant people or businesses (stakeholders) in order to gather more information on specific career options.

Secondly, due to the difficulty of taking notes while participating, and in order to record both descriptive and reflective field notes (Cresswell, 2005), I kept a **research diary**, where I wrote

three different accounts after each session. Firstly, I described each session as completely as possible, relating what exactly had happened during the session (*process notes*). Secondly, I recorded *research reflections*, which refer to developing ideas that might have contributed to an unfolding analysis (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). Thirdly, I wrote a detailed *personal reflection* after each session, which included my thoughts and feelings with regard to the session and the process of career facilitation (Fox, 1998). The following topics were of interest to me when writing my reflections: possible benefits of the asset-based approach; what I experienced in terms of fulfilling the role of supportive networker; and my experiences with regard to managing the process of asset facilitation.

I participated fully as career facilitator in the career facilitation process, but I also made it clear that I, as researcher, was undertaking a research project (Babbie, 1992). Client-partners were aware that they were to give feedback with regard to the facilitation process. Near the end of the career facilitation process I requested the client-partners to reflect on the career facilitation process. The aim of *participant reflection* was to assist me in understanding the career facilitation process from the client-partners' points of view. Participant reflections included any comments, reflections and insights about the career facilitation process that might have enlightened the application of the asset-based approach. According to Babbie (1992), the danger of choosing an observational role is that the client-partners may focus on the research project instead of participating in the career facilitation process. It is for this reason that I selected client-partners that might have benefited from the career facilitation process. As such I believed that they might remain focused on their need to make a career decision and not shift their attention solely onto the research project, at the expense of their own career development.

The principles of both the asset-based approach and the phenomenological perspective are echoed in observing client-partners and understanding their reflections. This is based on the fact that the understanding and interpretation of the data require observations and reflections of client-partners' perspectives or '*the ways in which people usually make sense of or attach meaning to the world around them*' (Schurink, 1998b:279). As an asset-based and phenomenological researcher I examined the career facilitation context of the client-partners, how they managed interaction between unique systems and attached meaning. I followed an open-ended and naturalistic approach, in order to reflect '*intimate familiarity*' with the client-partners within their own contexts (Schurink, 1998b:282).

Some *challenges* are embedded in gathering data via observation. Relating my own experiences implied an informal approach and the risk of being one-sided, with no possible claims of generalisability (Schurink, 1998b). From the perspective of phenomenology I did not aim at generalising the findings of this study, but instead hoped to benefit from the advantage of generating rich data. According to Mouton (2001), qualitative fieldwork requires keeping extensive field notes of observation in order to capture the context of such observation. Rich data can add to a more comprehensive perspective with which to explore the application of the asset-based approach to career facilitation (Schurink, 1998b). Furthermore, in an attempt to confirm or reject my observations, I compared these observations with the client-partners' reflections (reported in the next chapter).

Other *challenges* of observation include unstructured fieldwork, boredom because of long sessions, and lengthy, time-consuming sessions (Schurink, 1998b). To address these challenges, I refer to the nature of a career facilitation process. Guidelines and goals of career facilitation, according to Prinsloo, (1999) firstly require entering into a collaborative relationship with the client-partner, aiming at shared responsibility and the common goal of career development. Secondly, empowerment of the client-partner should be worked towards, aiming at establishing sustainable career developmental skills. With these common aims in mind, my career facilitation sessions could focus on specific career developmental tasks, semi-structuring the process and making it tolerable in terms of attention and length.

3.4.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Following the advice of Silverman (2000) regarding the analysis of text, I attempted to have a clear analytical approach. The '*toolbox*' I chose with which I analysed the text is thematic analysis (Henning *et al.*, 2004; Silverman, 2000:824). I used various reasoning strategies, including inductive reasoning, analysis, synthesis, and intuiting to extract themes from the data (Poggenpoel, 1998).

In this study the process of analysis was conducted in the following manner. I read the field notes, diary reflections from my research diary and personal reflections from the client-partners to familiarise myself with the content. I worked inductively to delineate emergent themes from the content and segregated themes into two main segments (indicators and contra-indicators) (Creswell, 2005). From there, I clustered the most frequent themes into core categories using a phenomenological stance. This means that I compiled the major themes with no preconceived hypothesis in mind.

Furthermore, to direct my thoughts during the process of analysis and interpretation, I specifically chose to follow the eight step model of Tesch (Tesch, 1990) in conjunction with the data analysis approach of Morse and Field (Morse, 1994). Morse and Field's (1994) data analysis approach is a process whereby data can be combined, during which the invisible is made obvious and characteristic consequences can be linked. This approach enabled me to be aware of and use the following cognitive processes: comprehending, synthesising, theorising, and re-contextualising (Poggenpoel, 1998). In figure 3.5 a summary of analysing activities based on Morse and Field (1994) and the corresponding data analysis steps of Tesch (1990) during each cognitive process is presented (Poggenpoel, 1998).

<i>Morse and Field's approach to data analysis</i>		<i>Tesch's 8-step model</i>
<i>Cognitive process according to Morse and Field (1994)</i>	<i>Activities during each cognitive process</i>	<i>Steps according to Tesch(1990)</i>
<i>Comprehending</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sense of setting (learn what is going on) • Write a complete, detailed, coherent and rich description • Sort the data • Uncover underlying meanings • Identify stories or patterns of experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read through all the data carefully • Select one case and write thoughts in margin • List all the topics
<i>Synthesising</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide descriptions of phenomena • Interpret, link, and see relationships to verify findings • Compare descriptions from several respondents • Analyse categories, sorted by commonalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code the topics and return to data to determine new categories
<i>Theorising</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct alternative explanations • Create links to established theory • Examine similar concepts • Develop substantive theory from the data • Identify characteristics to verify deductions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show interrelationships between categories • Assemble data material for each category
<i>Re-contextualising</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop emerging theory so that the theory is applicable to other settings or populations • Do literature control • Place the results in the context of established knowledge • Identify results that support literature • Claim unique contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recode if necessary

FIGURE 3.5 Structured activities based on Morse and Field's (1994) approach to data analysis, corresponding with the steps of Tesch (1990) (Poggenpoel, 1998:340-342)

Silverman (2000) recommends recognising that successful analysis goes beyond compiling a list. I needed to utilise my theoretical resources, in other words show how the theoretically defined

elements (for example principles of the asset-based approach and the process of career facilitation) were assembled within the data. Consequently I had to authenticate the themes I extracted from the data against the backdrop of my theoretical assumptions, as the cognitive process of re-contextualising advocates.

Another suggestion that Silverman (2000) makes is to limit the data. This implies that I had to work in-depth with selected texts rather than have countless texts and no depth. Silverman (2000) suggests that it can be useful to explore different kinds of data to establish the kind of data I could work with most effectively. In accordance with this, my chosen data set was that of field notes, my research diary and participant reflections from client-partners. From these data collection sources I further limited the material to the intense analysis of *my research diary* and the *client-partners' reflections*, which I assume possibly contained the most valuable information (Silverman, 2000). Themes, meanings, and knowledge deducted from the research diary were compared with themes, meanings and knowledge deducted from client-partners' experiences (reported on in the next chapter).

Denscombe (2003) describes the *advantages* of doing qualitative data analysis, yet cautions against certain *challenges*. A summary of his arguments for and against qualitative analysis, as well as measures to attend to the challenges are reflected in figure 3.6.

<i>The use of qualitative data analysis</i>		
<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Addressing the challenge</i>
Data and analysis are grounded in reality and have their roots in the conditions of social existence.	The data may be less representative.	The aim of the study is not to make generalisations.
There is a richness and detail in the data, therefore enabling the researcher to better describe the intricacies of a situation and do justice to the subtleties of social life.	Interpretation is closely related to the 'self' of the researcher. Findings are a creation of the researcher rather than a discovery of the truth.	The interpretation of data will be done from a phenomenological perspective, where the voices of the client-partners are more important than the findings of the researcher.
Tolerance of ambiguity and contradictions because social existence involves uncertainty.	A possibility of de-contextualising the meaning. The danger exists that the meaning of the data will be lost or transformed through categorising and coding.	The meaning of data will be derived in conjunction with the theoretical assumptions of the study. Consequently, meanings of data are looked at from within the client-partner's unique set of bio-ecological spheres.
The prospect of alternative explanations.	The danger of oversimplifying the explanation. Data can be underplayed or possibly be disregarded because they "do not fit".	The aim of the study is to do a thorough investigation. Results can amount to in-depth and rich explanations that describe what fits and what does not fit.

FIGURE 3.6 Advantages and challenges of using qualitative data analysis, and measures to address such challenges (Descombe, 2003)

As figure 3.6 suggests, the advantages pertaining to this study are that I investigated a real-life phenomenon, namely career facilitation, and I aimed at providing a rich and detailed description of a small number of cases (Mouton, 2001). Also, working from a qualitative perspective I was able to accept ambiguity in the data and consider alternative explanations. I regard the challenge of interpretation and meaning of the data addressed by means of employing a phenomenological perspective as I aimed at explaining data from client-partners' points of view. To enhance the credibility of the study and avoid errors associated with the interaction between myself as the researcher and the client-partners, I confirmed the content of my observations and reflections on the basis of those available from the client-partners (Mouton, 2001). As such, I compared my observations with the client-partners' reflections because, as phenomenological researcher, I was interested in the subjective experiences and interpretations of the client-partners. Furthermore, to avoid oversimplification, I assume that a thorough description of each of the five cases enabled me to develop insights, ideas and questions for further study (Fouche & De Vos, 1998).

3.5 THE RESEARCHER AS INSTRUMENT

One of my methodological assumptions was that it might be useful if I became a full participant in the research process (Schurink, 1998c). This means that I had to conduct this research both as researcher and as career facilitator, thus involving myself in the central activities of the research.

Due to the nature of my studies, I have acquired the ability to understand the process of career facilitation and appreciate the paradigm shift I propose. My understanding and appreciation of the asset-based approach sensitised me in terms of how I observed and gave meaning to this parallel process, both facilitating career choice and conducting research. I realised that this double role could have been difficult and therefore interacted with the client-partners keeping the following guidelines in mind (Schurink, 1998c):

- I answered all questions from client-partners as honestly as possible.
- I did not give unnecessary, technical information that could confuse client-partners with regard to the research.
- I was sure about the aims of my research and how I intended achieving them.

A key question was whether my role as researcher was to judge the merit of applying the asset-based approach in career facilitation or whether such judgements would materialise from the process of information sharing (Potter, 2002). In this regard Potter (2002:217) writes, '*another issue is how the process of negotiation, interpretation and discussion can be reconciled with criteria of scientific rigour*'. My theoretical assumptions, meta-theoretical assumptions and research question could have made me cognisant of the above-mentioned issues. The aim of the study was not to evaluate the asset-based approach, but rather to describe its application and collect information with regard to how it was applied. I dedicate the next section to a description of how I attempted to ensure a rigorous study.

3.6 MEASURES TO ENSURE RIGOUR IN THE STUDY (QUALITY CRITERIA)

3.6.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS STRATEGIES

Poggenpoel (1998) describes Guba's model of trustworthiness by referring to four criteria: truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. According to a naturalistic inquiry and phenomenological perspective these criteria can be interpreted as, respectively: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* (Seale, 1999). From a post-modernistic perspective, another measure to validate this study is to apply the concept of *crystallisation*. These measures will now be discussed:

3.6.1.1 CREDIBILITY

Credibility refers to how confident the researcher is about the truth of the findings, based on the research design, client-partners and context (Poggenpoel, 1998). The following strategies were employed to establish credibility (Seale, 1999):

- *Prolonged engagement in the field.* I engaged in career facilitation activities with five (5) client-partners for at least a 60 to 90 minute session every week for approximately six weeks. Each of the six sessions included an activity that gave the opportunity to me, as researcher and career facilitator, to observe and be part of a collaborative partnership. Furthermore, each session activity resulted in a homework assignment during which the asset-based principle of shared responsibility was applied. Homework assignments were discussed during the following sessions.
- *Persistent observation.* Continual observations were made possible by keeping a research diary and compiling field notes during career facilitation sessions. In addition, writing three (3) different reflective accounts after each session assisted in directing my observations during each session. These reflective accounts were process notes, personal reflections and research reflections. *Process notes* helped me to plan for the next session as I was able to refer back to previous sessions in order to ascertain what had been done and what needed to be done. *Personal reflections* sensitised me as career facilitator and allowed me to describe my experience of applying the asset-based principles during the facilitation process. *Research reflections* facilitated my thoughts with regard to answering the research question.
- *Searching for negative instances to challenge hypotheses.* An extensive literature review with regard to the asset-based approach and career facilitation ensured that my understanding of the principles underlying each concept was true to what the literature suggests. Understanding each concept and strategy used in the asset-based approach was central to extracting themes and interpreting data. The advantage of qualitative analysis (refer to figure 3.6), as suggested by Descombe (2003), was the prospect of alternative explanations. Thus, as a measure for building credibility I challenged the outcome of my interpretations, searched for contradictory examples and offered different explanations of themes.

Furthermore, the issue of credibility is substantiated by positivist claims that there exists an absolute truth (Denzin, 2000). Juxtaposing the idea of triangulation, Janesick (2000:873) explains that the suggestion of *crystallisation*, offers ‘*a better lens through which to view qualitative research designs and their components*’. Making use of crystallisation helps to recognise *various sides* from which to approach the world and rejects the idea that there is one single or triangulated truth (Richardson, 2000). According to Janesick (2000:392), ‘*crystallisation recognises the many facets of any given approach to the social world as a fact of life*’. Through crystallisation I aimed at providing a deep and complex understanding of the application of the asset-based approach in career facilitation (Richardson, 2000). I accept the facts that there is always more to know, that there is no single truth, and that what I ultimately

found through interpretation largely depends on myself and the client-partners' *'angle of repose'* (Richardson, 2000:934). Therefore, to answer the question of how confident I am about the truth of the findings, I answer that there exist multiple *truths*, each truth reflecting differently, depending on the context of the client-partner. To conclude, I employed crystallisation as it supported my phenomenological position.

3.6.1.2 DEPENDABILITY

Dependability verifies that the findings of a study would be the same if the study was replicated with the same participants or in a similar context (Poggenpoel, 1998). Seale (1999) emphasises the importance of an *audit trail* whereby dependability can be confirmed. Leaving an audit trail consists of keeping track of the documentation of data, methods and decisions made during the research project. In this regard, I used a file to collect all the relevant data. In this file I kept the following documents for easy access: my research diary with three reflections after each session, dated field notes, dated descriptions of session activities, copies of homework assignments where applicable, and personal reflections of the client-partners.

Furthermore, the aim of this study was to investigate the application of an approach in an enclosed case. I worked in a *collaborative* manner with each client-partner. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003) define *collaboration* as the process of sharing and working towards a common goal. In this study there were two common goals, firstly, the research goal, which was to describe reactions to the asset-based approach; and secondly, the career facilitation goal, which was to explore possible careers.

Collaboration represents an example of a principle of the asset-based approach which can be replicated in other studies. As such, the idea that the findings of this study could be fairly consistent and could possibly be compared to findings with regard to other groups of people and situations is strengthened. Collaboration is characterised by client-partner and career facilitator interaction, where it is possible to share interpersonal assets such as passion, observation and reflection (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). Working in a partnership towards career development can be more effective than individual effort, with the added advantage of client-partners taking responsibility for their own career choices. Both the career facilitator and the client-partner bring equal, although different, levels of expertise to the career facilitation process (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). The level of expertise that both the client-partner and career facilitator bring are *different* as client-partners know themselves the best and career facilitators can offer professional career

facilitation. On the other hand, *equal* expertise is evident in both the client-partner and career facilitator who are able to contribute to the career facilitation process.

3.6.1.3 TRANSFERABILITY

Closely related to *dependability* is the concept of *transferability*. Transferability refers to the ability to generalise to larger populations (Seale, 1999). In order to transfer the findings of this study to other populations, a detailed, rich description of each career facilitation session was provided by keeping a research diary and compiling field notes (Seale, 1999). Such detailed description could offer sufficient information to readers with which they themselves could judge the applicability of the findings to known settings.

3.6.1.4 CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability implies that the research procedures and results are free from bias (Poggenpoel, 1998). Seale (1999) emphasises the usefulness of auditing in order to establish confirmability. In this regard, I depended on my research diary to provide a '*methodological self-critical account*' of the research process (Seale, 1999:45). The research diary assisted me in speculating about the application of the asset-based approach during the research process and might have helped me to reflect on the interaction of data and theory. Thus, with the help of the research diary, I could monitor my own evolving thoughts regarding the application of the asset-based approach.

Furthermore, I worked from a phenomenological perspective that aims at understanding the personal meanings of client-partners. The individual perceptions of the client-partners were of greater value to the findings than an unbiased account of the researcher. For this reason I asked client-partners to reflect about the career facilitation process. With subjective understanding in mind, it is foreseeable that there might be instances where my own beliefs and bias might have influenced the manner in which I related to information and constructed my own meaning. However, I believe that impartiality is not important. I rather aimed at describing the application of the asset-based approach in terms of personal significance. My competencies as phenomenological researcher, I trust, might ensure that such influences will rather enhance the findings of the study and provide more detailed descriptions in terms of different perspectives. In conjunction with my research diary, the personal reflections of the client-partners might assist in scrutinising the meanings, knowledge and themes derived from my observations and field notes.

3.6.1.5 AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is demonstrated when a range of different realities has been represented (Seale, 1999). To authenticate this study, I paid attention to the following aspects:

- *Ontological authenticity (members should develop more sophisticated understandings)*. The career facilitation process might add to the career development skills of the client-partners. The application of the asset-based principle of collaboration whereby client-partners were expected to employ strategies to determine available assets might assist in later career development issues. For example, when faced with career decisions when people are later employed, they might use the skill of determining available assets in that instance.
- *Educative authenticity (members should appreciate the viewpoints of others)*. In an attempt to adhere to this criterion, client-partners welcomed each other's viewpoints.
- *Catalytic authenticity (some form of action has been stimulated)*. Client-partners were expected to draw their own asset-maps and suggest answers with regard to their career questions. This indicates action on their part in terms of mobilising their assets.
- *Tactical authenticity (to empower members to act)*. The empowerment of client-partners is first and foremost the goal of the asset-based approach. With the employment of asset-based strategies it can be expected that client-partners may feel enabled and in control of their career paths.

I believe that, as far as possible, these criteria were satisfied. I am confident that the method of investigation, client-partners and context was of such a nature that the findings of this study can be deemed truthful, consistent and applicable in most other similar settings.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations described by Strydom (1998) and relevant to this study are discussed next.

3.7.1 INFORMED CONSENT

The privacy of the client-partners was not jeopardised, as confidentiality was maintained throughout. Written informed consent was obtained from the client-partners and their legal guardians (refer to Appendix A). During the first interview the whole research process was explained to each client-partner in the company of one or both of their parents. They also received a written document that explains the research in full, including the aims and methods that I employed (refer to Appendix A). This document also contained all the necessary contact information. It was explained that the client-partner could withdraw from the process at any time.

3.7.2 DECEPTION OF PARTICIPANTS

By means of informed consent and documentation that describes the nature and purpose of this study, deception of the client-partners could be avoided. As career facilitator and researcher I informed client-partners during the historicity interview of the nature of the career facilitation process. They also received information regarding the implications of applying asset-based principles, which include collaborative responsibility and systemic assessment. It was explained to client-partners that they might need to contact businesses or employers in order to obtain information. Client-partners were made aware that they might have to do career exploration and self-exploration. They had to indicate their consent to the process (refer to Appendix A).

3.7.3 VIOLATION OF PRIVACY

The right to self-determination and confidentiality is synonymous with the right to privacy. Confidentiality was not violated, based on informed consent obtained. Privacy was achieved by ensuring that the names of the client-partners are not released. Personal reflections of the client-partners were handled in a confidential manner as they were kept anonymous at all times.

3.7.4 ACTION AND COMPETENCE OF RESEARCHER

I consider myself to be well-informed with regard to asset-based principles and career facilitation activities, due to experience in both undergoing undergraduate and postgraduate studies relating to these aspects, as well as lecturing undergraduate and postgraduate students in this regard. As far as my competency with regard to investigating a phenomenon is concerned, I feel capable of understanding themes and issues from the client-partners' perspectives in interpreting the results of the study, as acquiring this skill was part of my training as an educational psychologist and asset-based approach practitioner. To monitor the research process in terms of my own research actions and activities, as well as evolving assumptions, I kept a research diary.

3.8 CONCLUSION

I stated in the introduction of this chapter that the qualitative nature of this study, together with the phenomenological outlook and the instrumental case study as design, could possibly form a synergistic milieu in which the principles of the asset-based approach could be applied in career facilitation. Choosing a phenomenological perspective could have assisted me in understanding the specific context of a client-partner within the broader framework of technological and economic changes. Using an instrumental case study possibly supported the aim of the study which is to investigate and formulate a detailed description of how the asset-based approach is

applied in career facilitation. Working from a qualitative viewpoint allowed me to collect, analyse and interpret data from the experiences of the client-partners and add to their skills. I applied criteria to ensure a *credible, transferable, and dependable* study. Furthermore, I employed ethical strategies to protect the rights and identities of client-partners.

Chapter 4 follows with a description of the data analysis and data interpretation processes. In addition, the results of the research study are discussed against the background of current research studies in career psychology.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion of results and Literature control

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a description is offered of how the case study design was conducted (specifically, an account of how the study has realised). Next, a discussion is presented reflecting the themes that emerged. An illustration of the major themes and sub-themes, with corresponding examples from the data, is given. In conjunction with the discussion of the results I shall argue with regard to the reliability of major themes and sub-themes against the background of existing theoretical evidence. This then constitutes literature control in order to substantiate or refute the emerged themes. Brief descriptions of each of the client-partners are provided in Appendix D. These descriptions include relevant biographic information, accounts of previous exposure to career counselling, summaries of client-partners' perceived signature strengths and indications of assets available in their environments, and descriptions of the client-partners' preferred work environments, according to the Myers Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI).

4.2 SELECTION REALISATION

I contacted an educational psychologist and negotiated three (3) cases according to selected criteria (see figure 3.3). I selected the following cases:

<i>Case</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Sessions (hours)</i>
Client-partner A / The Thinker	17	12	M	Afrikaans	4 (6 hours)
Client-partner B / The Golfer	17	11	M	Afrikaans	5 (7,5 hours)
Client-partner C / The Undecided	16	10	F	Afrikaans	8 (12 hours)

FIGURE 4.1 Selected cases

I contacted the parents telephonically and explained the research process to them. Thereafter, I made an appointment with each of the client-partners and their parents to explain the asset-based career facilitation process. During these sessions, I acquired written consent from the parents (see Appendix A for an example). Individual sessions (approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length) were scheduled and implemented during times that suited the career facilitator and each client-partner (see Appendix B for scheduled appointments with client-partners). In addition, I selected the following two cases for the purpose of theme saturation (refer to section 3.4.2):

<i>Case</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Sessions (hours)</i>
Client-partner D / The Architect	17	11	F	Afrikaans	6 (9 hours)
Client-partner E / The Decided	18	12	F	Afrikaans	6 (2 hours)

FIGURE 4.2 Selected cases for theme saturation

4.2.1 ASSET-BASED CAREER FACILITATION PLANNING

The asset-based career facilitation process was implemented on the basis of a framework of theoretical assumptions, as displayed in figure 2.1 of chapter 2. According to fundamental underpinnings of the asset-based approach, my assumption was that client-partners are able to adapt and cope, and to make their own career decisions, therefore that they are able to assume responsibility for their own career development. I further assumed that client-partners possess assets and experience barriers with regard to their career development paths. I assumed that client-partners may possess assets that they might not recognise or mobilise at a particular moment in time, that client-partners know their likes and dislikes regarding career interests best, that client-partners are part of a broader community and that the broader community consists of individuals, local associations and local institutions that might contribute to the career facilitation process.

In chapter 2 a discussion was offered of the career development tasks in career counselling as proposed by Langley (1999). Her guidelines were discussed in conjunction with the current medical model and asset-based approach, in order to appreciate the difference between the two approaches (refer to figure 2.7). Career facilitation sessions were conducted according to asset-based principles (refer to intervention strategies in figure 2.1). The focal point of each session included the following goals:

- *A focus on assets and capacities of client-partners.*
- *Identification of values, interests and other relevant factors (such as personality and aptitude) through shared knowledge and connecting relationships.*
- *Asset-based career facilitation as a service, aimed at inspiring a cycle of enablement.*
- *Regarding client-partners as experts and respecting their essential viewpoints.*

To reach the above mentioned goals, I applied the following media: (see examples in Appendix L)

- Personal asset-maps.
- Collages.
- Reports from friends and family.
- Post-modern projection activities that foster self-knowledge, for example the three-animal technique.
- Descriptions of strengths and assets according to the results of the MBTI (Myers Briggs Type Indicator®).

Furthermore, the client-partners and I considered information obtained from previous career counselling sessions. See Appendix C for an outline of each individual process as it unfolded with each client-partner.

Seeing that each client-partner constitutes a unique combination of assets and barriers (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003), individual asset-based career facilitation sessions were adjusted according to the specific needs and assets of individual client-partners. In this regard I offer a concise biographical description of each of the client-partners (refer to Appendix D).

4.2.2 DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected by means of the following methods: observation-as-context, and participant reflections. My observations were documented in a research diary and field notes (see examples in Appendix E). During each session I also compiled field notes of observations and client-partners' discussions regarding the asset-based career facilitation process (see examples in Appendix F). After client-partners had completed the asset-based career facilitation process they wrote a reflective report of the process (see examples in Appendix F).

4.2.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

As stated in chapter 3, my data analysis was based on the advice of Silverman (2000), and I specifically incorporated the eight step model of Tesch (1990) in conjunction with the data analysis approach of Morse and Field (Morse, 1994). Themes were extracted from written journal reflections in my research diary, field notes compiled during each session, and participant reflections written by client-partners toward the end of the career facilitation process. Themes and sub-themes were extracted in the following manner: firstly, I read through all the data carefully to make sense of the information. I started with *The Thinker's* research diary reflections and field notes and listed all the topics taken from the descriptions with reference to where the specific topic emerged (that is, from the research diary or participant reflection and their dates). Thereafter, I analysed *The Golfer, The Undecided, The Architect and The Decided's* data and followed the same process. As my research aim is to explore the application of asset-based principles in career facilitation, I then sorted topics according to factors that indicate the application of asset-based principles (indicators) as well as factors that do not indicate the application of asset-based principles (contra-indicators). The data analysis process can be summarised in the following manner:

Step 1: A list of indicators and contra-indicators taken from the raw data was compiled with regard to each client-partner (see examples in Appendix G).

Step 2: A list of other topics that did not fit in with the indicators or contra-indicators was compiled on a separate page (see examples in Appendix H).

Step 3: From the list of indicators and contra-indicators I extracted compound themes, still indicating indicators and contra-indicators (see examples in Appendix I).

Step 4: I frequently returned to the data to ensure that I did not miss any major topic.

Step 5: From the list of compound themes I compiled a mind map of major themes with corresponding sub-themes (See examples in Appendix J).

The major themes and corresponding sub-themes are illustrated in figure 4.3:

MAJOR THEMES AND SUB-THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM THE STUDY						
Major theme	1	The impact of <i>individual client-partner profiles</i> on the use of asset-based principles	2	The <i>impact of applying asset-based principles and strategies in career facilitation sessions</i>	3	The impact of the <i>old paradigm</i> on the use of asset-based principles
Sub-themes	A	The influence of personality traits of the client-partner on the use of asset-based strategies in career facilitation.	F	The challenging role of the asset-based career facilitator in career facilitation sessions	H	Client-partner's expectation that career facilitator is an expert
	B	The age of client-partners	G	The good and the bad and the ugly of applying asset-based strategies in career facilitation	I	Resistance of the client-partner to be part of partnership
	C	Unique family dynamics				
	D	Career interest profile of client-partner				
	E	Previous career assessment experience of client-partner				

FIGURE 4.3 Summary of major themes and corresponding sub-themes that emerged from the study

Thirdly, in order to cross-check myself and determine whether I had extracted all the relevant themes, I went back to the raw data and assembled evidence for each theme and sub-theme (see examples of source listings in Appendix G).

4.3 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In this section I discuss the themes and sub-themes mentioned in figure 4.3.

4.3.1 MAJOR THEME 1: THE IMPACT OF *INDIVIDUAL CLIENT-PARTNER PROFILES* ON THE USE OF ASSET-BASED PRINCIPLES

A major theme that materialised in the data was the impact of *individual client-partner profiles* on the use of asset-based principles. As I conducted the sessions, I found that the age of the client-partners, their specific personality traits, their unique family dynamics, their career interests and previous exposure to career counselling all influenced the manner in which the sessions developed. Some sub-themes indicated the use of the asset-based approach in career facilitation, whilst others indicated that certain client-partners preferred the more traditional approach to career counselling.

4.3.1.1 SUB-THEME A: THE INFLUENCE OF CERTAIN *PERSONALITY TRAITS* OF THE CLIENT-PARTNER ON THE USE OF ASSET-BASED STRATEGIES

Many authors agree about the importance of assessing personality traits in career counselling practices. As an example, Coetzee and Schreuder (2002:53) comment: *'a career counselling framework that facilitates self-insight in personal motives and personality preferences seems to enable individuals to develop the inner sense of direction and identity required to view career patterns as challenges for personal growth'*. Career psychology practices originated from the trait-factor theory of Frank Parson (Nicholas, Pretorius & Naidoo, 1999). According to Nicholas, *et al.* (1999) Parson proposed that a clear understanding of one's own qualities is the first step in making a responsible career choice. Thereafter, other career theorists could not disregard the significant relationship between personality and career choice (Hogan & Blake, 1999; Katz, Joyner & Seaman, 1999; Gottfredson, Jones & Holland, 1993).

In addition, Kjos (1995:592) writes: *'the personality of the client also has an effect on the counselling relationship and plays an important role in the ultimate outcome of counselling'*. In the study that I conducted, certain personality traits of the client-partners seemed to hinder the flow of the career facilitation process. I experienced *The Thinker* as an intelligent and talkative person, because he scrutinised the post-modern media that we used and explained in detail his opinions about matters such as his diagnosis of obsessive compulsiveness. It appeared as if his conversational style delayed the career facilitation process in such a manner that time was wasted on peripheral issues. He repeatedly reasoned about the difficulty he experienced in using specific post-modern media. In this regard I reflected his feelings of frustration in the research diary:

"the collages were not easy because you do not always find a picture or a word that is perfect...the post-modern stuff was not easy because for every animal or object there are equally good and bad points to argue...the process of discussion took 2 hours and we did not manage to compile an asset map".¹

I experienced *The Golfer* as a dedicated and motivated person, as his heart is set on one ideal, namely to become a professional golfer. Although I recognised and understood his dedication and motivation, he seemed stubborn and inflexible with regard to other options. These traits, namely stubbornness and inflexibility, appeared to restrict the asset-based goal of the career facilitation process, because he was determined not to pursue any other alternatives. In this regard, I would, for example, prompt several career options within the field of golf, such as manager of a golf course or being a golf coach, but he would state that he is not interested and he:

"...wants nothing to do with anything related to golf such as sports manager or coach - he wants to play golf...there is no plan B - he would never give up his dream to play golf professionally".

It appeared that *The Undecided* sought structure and wanted to know what she would be doing in each session. For example, in the beginning she enquired about the content of each session. This hindered the flow of the asset-based career facilitation process because I did not plan the process ahead. The reason for not planning ahead was to apply a non-linear process (Bloch, 2005; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). According to Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003) a non-linear process is a process that is different for every individual, not restrictive and allows for creativity. The plan was that client-partners' various sessions could and should dictate the next. I reflected in my research diary that it is *"difficult to put the process into sessions"* and, to offer an explanation to *The Undecided*, I referred to career facilitation as the *"process of becoming knowledgeable [that] helps with gaining maturity for making a career decision"*.

In chapter 2, I compiled a guide to exploration within career facilitation (refer to figure 2.6). According to this guide, one of the pillars of asset-based career facilitation is exploring the signature strengths of the self. As part of self-exploration I chose the MBTI as a tool with which the client-partners could have easy access to their personal strengths and abilities (Coetzee &

¹ I will use a different font type in order to signal my reflections written in my research diary.

Schreuder, 2002; Healy & Woodward, 1998). I assumed that by utilising the results of the MBTI the client-partners would gain insight into their preferences and compile personal assets from these preferences. During the emergence of this theme (influence of personality traits) I compared some client-partners' personality profiles with each other and my own. These comparisons are reflected in figure 4.4:

Personality Profiles according to the Myers Briggs Type Indicator ®						
Profile Scale	<i>The Thinker</i>	<i>The Golfer</i>	<i>The Undecided</i>	<i>The Architect</i>	<i>The Decided</i>	<i>The Facilitator</i>
Direction of energy	I	E	I	E	E	I/E
Information gathering	S	N	S	N	N	N
Decision making	T	T	T	T	F	F
Lifestyle	J	P	J	P	P	P

FIGURE 4.4 Comparison of personality profiles of client-partners

In my view, these signature MBTI differences contribute to an understanding of this theme. A discussion of the differences found in the study will be presented next.

Introverts '*are not as likely to build social networks as are extroverts and they may be less inclined to elicit support from others for their career plans*' (Healy & Woodward, 1998:76). Being introverts, both *The Thinker* and *The Undecided* presented with the obstacle of not being comfortable with collaborating with other stakeholders in their environment. *The Undecided* preferred to search for information on the internet and *The Thinker* quit the process before we could mobilise the support from his environmental asset-map. In this regard, *The Golfer*, *The Architect* and *The Decided* (who preferred to be more social and communicative) seemingly had no trouble contacting stakeholders, such as businesses and universities. Even more so, *The Architect* and *The Decided*, who are both Feeling-orientated clients, participated in contact with other stakeholders possibly because '*feeling clients tend to be more attuned to the values of others so that they may be more inclined to connect with people and form networks*' (Healy & Woodward, 1998:78).

By applying Van Rooyen, De Beer and Proctor's (2001) typology, *The Thinker* and *The Undecided*, as Sensing-orientated clients, would prefer to gather information using known facts and data. Research done by Coetzee and Schreuder (2002) supports the fact-seeking attitude of Sensing-orientated clients. Both *The Thinker* and *The Undecided* seemed eager at the foresight of utilising existing resources. I reflected in my diary about *The Thinker*: "*He seems pleased*

with the process of exploration using people and institutions around him". In this regard, I wrote the following during a session with *The Undecided*: "*she has not done research on the above interests ... and seems eager to participate in the exploration*". The possibility of using existing resources might have been compelling to them, as they prefer to gather information through working with the known.

Unfortunately for the process of asset utilisation, Sensing-orientated clients '*prefer to rely on immediate sensation to define reality and on experience to master the world. They may distrust unsubstantiated imagination and vague possibilities*' (Healy & Woodward, 1998:77). Even though it seemed as if the foresight of using existing assets *sounded* appealing to them, they appeared not to be at ease with the asset-based strategy of collaboration. However, the asset-based approach strongly relies on collaborative efforts and seeks partnerships with which to solve problems (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003).

Healy and Woodward (1998) found that Intuitive clients show a greater interest in possibilities than their Sensing counterparts, therefore increasing the likelihood that they may entertain unrealistic aspirations. It could not be said for certain that *The Architect*, who believes she found her ideal career, and *The Decided*, who has made her final choice, or *The Golfer* who believes he will live his dream, are boasting impractical ambitions. Their talents and achievements seem to prove otherwise. *The Architect's* passion and determination, together with her aptitude, indicates a great possibility to succeed in her ideal career. Research has established the positive influence of self-efficacy on career choice (Betz, 2004; Paulsen & Betz, 2004). According to the social-cognitive career theory of Lent, Brown and Hackett (1996), *The Architect's* positive attitude and self-efficacy expectations² are a drive-force on the basis of which she believes in her own future success. *The Decided's* enthusiasm and imagination, in conjunction with a high technical ability, supports her choice. *The Golfer's* devotion and dedication seem to be a good driving force to ultimately live his life's dream. Through being part of a career facilitation process whereby these clients could participate in voicing their dreams and viewing some part of reality in terms of career, it can be said that they took one step closer to their dreams. *The Decided* wrote in her reflection: '*I wish for anyone...to make contact with reality*'.

The more analytical Thinking-orientated client weighs information and solutions more critically (Healy & Woodward, 1998). According to their preferences, both *The Thinker* and *The*

² Self-efficacy expectations refer to individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to perform a particular task (Bandura, 1997).

Undecided expected the career facilitation process to lead them to closure with regard to their career choices (Van Rooyen *et al.*, 2001; Healy & Woodward, 1998). In this regard, *The Undecided* wrote the following in her participant reflection: *'I feel that the sessions did not determine which other careers would be suitable for me'*. As Thinking-orientated clients, *The Thinker* and *The Undecided* did not expect a flexible and non-linear process such as asset-based career facilitation (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). Instead, as with most traditional approaches to career counselling, they possibly favoured a test that would tell them what to do (Krumboltz, 1996). Even though Krumboltz (1996) regards this expectation as idealistic, Holland (1996) comments that clients do not seek a way to become mature, but rather want to know from the career counsellor what kind of work will bring them happiness. The implication is that what they possibly preferred the outcome of the asset-based career facilitation process to be, differed from what was offered, resulting in them experiencing frustration and hindering their process of becoming knowledgeable. *The Undecided's* preference for logical and non-personal judgments was clear when she said *"she feels like we are getting nowhere"* and *"more time could have been spent on aptitude tests"*. Another example is the way in which *The Thinker* wanted to reason through activities in order to reach logical conclusions. In this regard I wrote at the start of one of the sessions with him: *"before we started the session he wanted to discuss a matter"*. His need to reflect logically about events seemingly hampered the flow of the asset-based career facilitation process, since a lot of time was spent on reasoning about the choice of media. *The Golfer* came to his own logical conclusion that he will not excel in any other career except playing golf professionally. This conclusion is substantiated by the fact that he does not want to consider any other career option. Therefore, the process of exploring different options was not viable for him.

According to Van Rooyen *et al.* (2001), Perceiving-orientated clients are flexible, spontaneous and open to possibilities. In this regard, *The Golfer* shares such a preference for flexibility, as was illustrated during one session where he forgot his homework assignment but was flexible enough to *"compile an asset-map anyway, using the information from his memory"*. *The Architect* was flexible enough to accommodate me in their living room, seeing that there was not an office space available to conduct the career facilitation sessions with her. *The Decided* showed her flexibility by being comfortable enough to conduct the asset-based career facilitation process via the telephone.

I agree with Thompson, Brossart, Carlozzi and Miville (2002:561) who write '*empirical studies of the influence of a counsellor's personality on the counselling process, or its outcome, are limited*'. Similarly, my views resonate with those of Kjos (1995), who states that career counselling can be more effective if the counsellor recognises particular traits that may inhibit or enhance career development. This study showed the significance of differing personality traits and how these traits impacted on using asset-based strategies in career facilitation.

4.3.1.2 **SUB-THEME B: THE AGE OF THE CLIENT-PARTNER**

I experienced that the ages of the client-partners played a role during the application of asset-based principles. The client-partners ranged in ages from 16 years to 18 years. I chose client-partners in this specific age-group because I assumed the following: persons between 16 and 18 years are expected by society and parents to make a career decision; persons in this age group are focused on career exploration according to Super's lifespan life-space approach (refer to section 3.4.2 in chapter 3); and conducting this research with persons in late adolescence could be meaningful as I assumed that they would be able to express themselves.

According to the lifespan life-space approach to career development, persons between the ages of 14 and 24 are in the exploration phase of career development (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996). Super explains the exploration phase in career development as a phase during which persons focus on their own needs and identity, learn new skills, test dreams in the real world and verify career choice (Super *et al.*, 1996). Therefore, the exploration phase indicates a focus on young adults becoming mature enough to make career decisions. In this regard, research indicates that the sustainability of skills or continuity in career development from adolescence to middle adulthood might be the result of early developmental task-coping activities (Jepsen & Dickson, 2003).

Here, the asset-based emphasis is placed on the process of becoming mature and not on receiving an answer from the career facilitator. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003) explain that through the asset-based approach career facilitators view clients as the experts of their own lives. As such, they know their career interests the best. The asset-based approach advocates ownership, shared responsibility and mobilising assets (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). Consequently, client-partners were expected to take responsibility for their career development within an asset-based career facilitation process. In this regard, Parmer and Rush (2003:26) write: '*opportunities exist for the profession to assist clients in redefining their careers on the basis of ownership...*'.

The Thinker, who is 17 years old, is at an age where he presumably feels comfortable to voice his opinions, feelings and ideas. **The Thinker** seemed able to relate his fears and concerns about his own exam-anxieties, he shared his disappointment with regard to the fact that it has become easier to get selected for certain difficult courses at the university, and he spoke about how he controls his obsessive-compulsiveness. Besides his age seemingly assisting him in feeling comfortable raising his opinions, he is in a late-adolescent phase (Thom, Louw, Van Ede, & Ferns, 1998). Seeking emancipation on many levels is characteristic of late-adolescence, for example economic independence, as well as independence from parents and other adults (Thom *et al.*, 1998). The developmental task of emancipation seems to support the asset-based approach's goal of the client-partner taking responsibility and is illustrated in the next reflection I wrote in the research diary: *"he wants to be in control - which means he does not like people telling him what to do"*.

The Undecided is 16 years old and the youngest client-partner. She is in the middle-adolescent developmental stage. In the middle-adolescent stage individuals are expected to *develop* many aspects such as self-identity, independence from parents and socially accepted behaviour (Thom *et al.*, 1998). It could be said that **The Undecided**, who appeared to struggle with committing to the process of taking ownership and mobilising her assets, was still *developing* her sense of self. She cancelled many appointments (refer to Appendix B) and wanted me to give her a career choice answer. She chose the internet as her asset and had to find information on her career interests as a homework assignment. During the feedback session I reflected that *"I got the idea she just did this in half an hour because it seemed that she had not read through the information"*.

Making a career choice is one of the most important developmental tasks the adolescent needs to accomplish (Thom *et al.*, 1998). **The Thinker** (17 years and in Grade 12), **The Decided** (18 years and in Grade 12), **The Golfer** (17 years and in Grade 11), and **The Architect** (17 years and in Grade 11) find themselves in the adolescent stage. The importance of their career choices is evident in them testing their career dreams in reality (Super *et al.*, 1996). Following a telephone consultation, I reflected that **The Decided** *"already made a career decision but needed to make sure"*. **The Architect** reflected about the career facilitation sessions that she *"feels like a puppy dog who received a big bone for a present."*

This sub-theme is supported by research findings that indicate that *age* is a relevant demographic variable that suggests career exploration in persons (Ketterson & Blustein, 1997). Therefore, the age of a client-partner plays a role during asset-based career facilitation, as the client-partner should be of an age where career decision is important to motivate a commitment to the asset-based career facilitation process.

4.3.1.3 SUB-THEME C: UNIQUE FAMILY DYNAMICS

According to the viewpoint of the asset-based theory, I believe that client-partners are part of their bio-ecological system (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The interaction between individuals and their bio-spheres is regarded as pivotal in creating solutions (Betz, 2002; Donald *et al.*, 2002). Client-partners function within family systems. It could be expected that family values and parental expectations might influence the realisation of asset-based principles applied during asset-based career facilitation. The influence of family dynamics seems to have received much attention in previous research. In this regard Bärbel (1997:348) found *'with respect to the influence of parental behaviors on adolescent career exploration, the results indicate that more child-centered, supportive, and reciprocal parent-adolescent relationships relate to more active exploration'*. Ketterson and Blustein (1997) established similar results during their research and state that secure relations between parents and siblings are associated with career exploration. More recent research confirms these results (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002; Turner & Lapan, 2002).

As indicated by Bärbel (1997), as well as Ketterson and Blustein (1997), it appeared in this study that parents who support their children to make independent choices are helpful to the asset-based approach, implying that such client-partners are predisposed toward being comfortable as part of a collaboration team. Evidence of this resides with *The Architect's* parents who said that they *"raised their daughter to be able to look after herself one day. They feel strong about her working hard for her money"*. Furthermore, it seems as if families that utilise assets naturally might be valuable resources for client-partners. Examples to demonstrate this are: *The Thinker* *"has got many people (friends of his father etc.) lined up to speak with"*; *The Architect* *"already spoke with her mother's uncle about fashion design"*; and *The Undecided's* *"mother went to a dietician whom she can also visit to find out what a dietician does"*. Research findings indicate that open, communicative relationships between client-partners and their families are a good indicator for application of asset-based principles as the family can be a system of assets to the client-partner. Thom *et al.*

(1998) are in agreement with this as they proclaim that parents do play an important role during their children's career development. In this regard, it is stated that parents who value high career aspirations for their young, motivate their children and acknowledge their achievements (Thom *et al.*, 1998). The influence of parents on career development is well documented by the theoretical approach of Roe (Maree, 2002). Roe (Roe & Lunneborg, 1990) states that parental behaviours, such as emotional support and acceptance of the child, shape the child's orientation towards careers.

Another factor related to family dynamics that impacted on the career facilitation process, was that of parental expectations. In this regard, *The Golfer's* mother related that she had her own ideas but trusted her son's judgment, even though she expressed her concern with regard to her son having only one career goal and not considering any other options. I reflected "*even mom said, near the end of the session, she didn't want to sound negative but she would have liked to know if we will only focus on the golf or will we investigate other routes as well*". I experienced her expectation as conflicting with what the goal of the career facilitation process should have been for *The Golfer*. The following question arises: Should we focus on the client-partner's need to stick to a plan that he really wants to achieve, or should we also consider the parent's need to investigate alternative career options? In this regard, Young and Valach (1996) hold that parents see the choice of an occupation as their child's right, and that successful parental interaction with regard to career choice should be intentional and planned. In accordance with this, Isaacson and Brown (2000:259) reflect that '*parental ambition for a youngster may affect how he or she looks at the world and at occupations specifically*'. Consequently, when applying the asset-based principle of collaboration, the parents are regarded as one of the stakeholders. As such, their expectations and ambitions are of great importance, and significantly influence the asset-based career facilitation process, because of its collaborative nature. The process needs to be facilitated accordingly.

4.3.1.4 **SUB-THEME D: CAREER INTERESTS OF THE CLIENT-PARTNER**

Making a career decision is complex (Gati & Asher, 2001). It would seem that the more career interests a client-partner fosters, the more difficult it is to facilitate asset-based career exploration. In this regard, Herr and Cramer (1996:627) write '*increasing occupational information per se has been found not to lead to an increase in vocational differentiation*'. Baker (2002) highlights the importance of career exploration to reduce career indecision. According to Holland's career choice theory, a differentiated individual is someone with a clear interest in

three of the six career categories³ (Nel, 1999; Herr & Cramer, 1996). Moreover, in an undifferentiated individual all six categories are represented in more or less the same strength (Nel, 1999; Herr & Cramer, 1996). In my study, this phenomenon also presented itself: It seems that both differentiated and undifferentiated career interest profiles influence the asset-based career facilitation process. Examples include the following: As an undifferentiated individual, *The Thinker* was told by a career counsellor that *"he can do anything and everything"*. For this reason he seemed to be a good candidate for asset-based career facilitation, because of the self-knowledge and career knowledge that can be obtained through exploration (refer to figure 2.6). In addition, it seemed that the process appealed to him because *"he seemed pleased with the process of exploration using people and institutions around him"*. Likewise, *The Undecided* is another undifferentiated individual, who *"is interested in becoming the following: a dietician, or auditor, or radiologist, or a psychologist"*. She has not made a decision yet and is confused as to which career to pursue. *"She seems eager to participate in the exploration"* because *"they want to be able to make a decision"*. The career facilitation process could assist *The Undecided* in deliberating which of the interests she most likely would choose.

The Architect started with an undifferentiated profile, as she was interested in architecture, jewellery design and fashion design. Even though the careers are related, she was not sure which one will be the best for her. It seems that through asset-based career facilitation she recognised that she is interested in fashion design and jewellery design, but soon realised she *"has a dream to become an architect"*. In this regard she reflected the following *"we were at the architect and I heard very interesting things. This is my ideal work, no other work for me, thank you! The work is mine!"* Thus, through asset-based career facilitation the client-partner can narrow down career interests in order to commit to a career choice.

The Golfer is differentiated in terms of his career interest as he has made his choice to become a professional golfer. *The Golfer* related that *"Plan A is to become a golfer; he does not want to think about a Plan B. If there is a Plan B then the motivation to give up Plan A is bigger, because of the opportunity to fall into the safety of a Plan B."*

³ The six career categories according to John Holland are: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Entrepreneurial, and Conventional (Nel, 1999).

Therefore, he'd rather work harder at Plan A than fall into the safety of a Plan B".

This viewpoint of *The Golfer* changed the focus of the career facilitation process from exploring different careers to exploring different ways to reach his dream. As such, the asset-based career facilitation process can be used as a flexible framework within which a client-partner's career development path can be improved, in addition to committing to a career choice.

In addition, *The Decided* appeared to be differentiated as well, as she made her career choice before she took part in this study. She agreed to participate in the study to confirm her choice. After the process she reflected *"for a learner like me who has not made contact with an architect, it was a very informative event."* She found confirmation and commented that she *"now has a picture in mind to work for."*

Therefore, in terms of asset-based career facilitation, this sub-theme seems to underscore the views of Nel (1999:55) who writes *'the implication... is that the undifferentiated person will have greater difficulty in deciding on a career, while it is easier for the differentiated person to make a choice'*. In addition, both undifferentiated and differentiated client-partners can benefit from an asset-based career facilitation process. In this regard, Isaacson and Brown (2000) state that the need for career development stems from career challenges such as undecidedness. Consequently, an asset-based career facilitation process could benefit both the client-partner that is faced with the challenge of having too many career options, as well as the one who feels threatened by the challenge of having one choice and no career development path.

4.3.1.5 SUB-THEME E: *PREVIOUS CAREER ASSESSMENT EXPERIENCE OF THE CLIENT-PARTNER*

Client-partners that partook in career assessments prior to this study seemed to have differing perceptions about the asset-based career facilitation process. These perceptions did not necessarily hinder the asset-based career facilitation process because the process seemingly addressed some needs that arose from previous assessments. A few examples will now be presented.

The first need I identified was the need to explore the possible careers that had been suggested during the career assessment. In this regard, I reflected about *The Undecided: "a psychologist named a couple of careers and these seemed interesting to her."* Following this comment I explained how traditional career counselling differed from the alternative perspective

and *"they seemed pleased"* with the process. After completion of the career facilitation process she reflected that she *"discovered which of the three careers she likes...and knows now which universities she can go to, and how many years she will need to study"*.

Secondly, it seemed that client-partners needed confirmation of guidance done previously. An example of this need became evident when *The Decided* agreed to be part of the asset-based career facilitation process in order to verify a suggestion made by a previous career counsellor. The same applies to *The Undecided*, who was given three or four career options by her career counsellor, prior to the asset-based career facilitation process. I assume that these client-partners would not have taken part in this study if they had been certain about their choices.

Thirdly, some client-partners seemed dissatisfied with the explanation of results during previous career assessments. For example, *The Architect's* aptitude was assessed, but according to her the results were not explained, resulting in her not understanding what the different scores meant. She wanted to know whether or not her profile fitted into a profile for an architect. During the facilitation sessions we compared her new-found knowledge of architecture with her existing knowledge (aptitude profile) and she reflected: *"it made me think and it was quite nice! It is my ideal work!"* In addition, *The Thinker* expected more from his career counsellor, who had advised him that he could choose any career he wanted to.

Fourthly, when seemingly vague recommendations are made, client-partners need more guidance from the career facilitator in terms of facilitating career development. For example, *The Thinker* said he *"has had a previous experience with regard to career counselling at school. He was not very happy with the process, in fact, he is angry because they told him he can do everything"*. After I had explained the exploration activities within the career facilitation process, and how the use of personal and environmental assets are core factors with which self-knowledge and career-knowledge can be obtained, *"he seemed pleased."* I experienced his willingness to explore as a positive indicator for acquiring self-knowledge and career knowledge.

Consequently, from my study it seems that an asset-based career facilitation process could work well with client-partners that had undergone formal career assessment. Regarding the needs that emerged from the client-partners' previous experiences with career assessments, I concur with

Prinsloo (1999) who recommends that the career facilitator be aware of factors such as the client-partner in context; indecisiveness and unrealistic career choices; general skills that contribute to total life management. She concludes that such factors are seen as imperative to the changing world of work (Prinsloo, 1999). Thus, an asset-based career facilitation process should be characterised by flexibility and client-centeredness. I also agree with Herr and Carmer's (1996) suggestion that a client-centred approach in career counselling could provide a safe and accepting environment in which career planning might be explored.

4.3.2 MAJOR THEME 2: THE IMPACT OF APPLYING ASSET-BASED PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES IN CAREER FACILITATION SESSIONS

A second major theme that emerged from this study was the impact of asset-based principles, such as collaboration between the client-partner and the career facilitator. Linked to the impact of asset-based principles is the impact of asset-based strategies such as implementing asset-mapping as a tool during career facilitation sessions. The application of asset-based principles and strategies impacted on the role of the career facilitator and generated advantages and disadvantages relevant to the use of the asset-based approach in career facilitation.

4.3.2.1 SUB-THEME F: THE CHALLENGING ROLE OF THE ASSET-BASED CAREER FACILITATOR IN CAREER FACILITATION SESSIONS

The asset-based approach advocates a partnership between the facilitator and the client-partner (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Mokwena, 1997; Page-Adams & Sherraden, 1997). In some instances this partnership resulted in beneficial outcomes. The partnership between myself and *The Architect* and *The Decided* resulted in them visiting an architect and experiencing corroboration for their career choices.

The Architect and *The Decided* were both interested in becoming architects. None of them had an architect as an asset to visit. At the time, my husband and I were busy designing our new house and we consulted an architect-friend of ours. I identified and mobilised the architect-friend as an asset and arranged a meeting for the two clients to visit him. They reflected: "*I heard and saw very interesting stuff today!*" and "*I would recommend any one to make contact with the real life*". According to their reactions it seems that making direct contact with a person in a certain career can be a very helpful tool in gathering authentic career knowledge. Isaacson and Brown (2000) report that a benefit of interviews with career representatives is that it is interactive and inexpensive, although accessibility to career representatives is limited.

Greenhaus *et al.* (2000) agree with Isaacson and Brown (2000), and emphasise the importance of contact with employees when gathering career information.

I decided to join them during the visit. The reason for joining them was to thank the architect in person for the opportunity of visiting him. Joining the client-partners was both rewarding and challenging. It was rewarding as I learnt many things about architecture during the session and I was able to facilitate career knowledge through paraphrasing information and asking the questions the client-partners seemingly missed. In addition, the following challenging question with regard to the possible practical strain of accompanying client-partners on such visits was formulated in my mind: How practical will it be for a career facilitator in practice to accompany client-partners on visits?

During our visit I observed the following: "*We asked the architect's assistant to tell us about being an architect. I saw the architect's assistant being a bit nervous because she had a dry mouth and flashed red as she seemingly struggled to put her life's work into words. Immediately I wondered about the way in which people experience being part of a collaborative effort for the first time. It seemed that the client-partners listened with great attention and asked many questions. I experienced my role in the situation also as facilitator because I reflected what the architect said and asked questions that I thought the client-partners missed. Another thought came to mind: I now have first hand information which I can share with another client-partner who has the same interest.*" Thus, although the visit seemed a fruitful one because of valuable career information gained, more questions arose regarding the experience of stakeholders in the process of asset-mobilising, as well as the practical implications for the career facilitator. In this regard, Lapan, Osana, Tucker and Kosciulek (2002:173) write '*community career partnerships have the potential to draw into working alignment the critical aspects of career development and the key social contexts that can either promote or inhibit growth*'.

Asset mapping entails the identification of assets where the client-partner is situated, and graphically presenting these assets in order to initiate asset mobilisation (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003) (Refer to Appendix K for examples of asset-maps that client-partners created). It was challenging for me to explain the process of asset mapping and asset mobilisation to the client-

partners without the luxury of first lecturing them on the theory of the asset-based approach, as I do with university students. Therefore, as the facilitator I needed to backtrack many times. In this regard I reflected about my thinking during a session with *The Golfer*: *"I realised I was too quick for the process. I could see the links between the assets and the information he needed. I found it very difficult to backtrack and explain my thinking (alternative approach) to him in order for him to see where we are going. When he realised what the process was about - that in order to have as much info on a career as possible, you can use your assets (self and environment) to obtain it, the session went a lot smoother - then he added golfing magazines and the internet to his asset-map. In addition we found that he knew two professional golfers with whom he had already established a relationship and he could contact them! We realised he actually knows a lot about his dream career already."*

Notwithstanding the challenge of explaining the asset-based approach I experienced the use of the asset-map as a crucial part of the career facilitation process. The reason for asset-mapping being crucial is to list possible familiar sources of career information. As such, I experienced the application of the asset-map technique as a helpful tool to focus on reference points for gathering career information, under the condition that the client-partner fully understands the reason for and use of creating an asset-map.

4.3.2.2 **SUB-THEME G: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY OF APPLYING ASSET-BASED STRATEGIES IN CAREER FACILITATION**

It would appear that an open and relaxed atmosphere creates the opportunity for the partnership between the career facilitator and the client-partner to be strengthened. Lubbe and Eloff (2004:36) write *'an atmosphere of mutual respect and support, trust, and open communication enhances [the process of collaboration] to enable all stakeholders involved'*. To indicate the advantage of a trusting atmosphere, for example, *The Thinker* related information (not relevant to career development) in confidence to me that was seemingly important to him and appeared to make him more comfortable to continue the sessions. Therefore, applying the principle of collaboration might create a supporting atmosphere that could set the scene for successful asset mobilisation. It could be said that such a supportive atmosphere constitutes a person-centred approach to asset-based career facilitation, because of the respect for initiative and freedom the client-partner enjoys (Gothard *et al.*, 2001; Meyer & Van Ede, 1998). Egan (1998:41)

emphasises the importance of collaboration in the helping relationship and writes: *'helping is not something that helpers do to clients; rather, it is a process that helpers and clients work through together'*.

Furthermore, it appears that the use of standardised tests can be a practical tool in the asset-based career facilitation process. For example, I discussed the results of the MBTI and gave the client-partners the opportunity to confirm or reject the results. In this regard, the administration of the MBTI initiated certain remarks. I reflected, during a session with *The Thinker*, *"we did manage to discuss the MBTI-results and he enjoyed it. Especially when we got into details like the number of questions he chose that indicated that he preferred the Introversion-option as opposed to the Extraversion-option"* and *The Golfer* reflected *"the test was very accurate and made me realise characteristics that I never thought I had... I feel more positive about my personality and I understand more"* and *The Architect* said *"it made me think about who and what I am and how I am put together."*

Contradicting literature exists regarding the use of psychometric testing in career guidance. Herr and Cramer (1996) are of the opinion that criticism against the use of psychometric testing in career counselling is based on counsellors' premise to suggest an immediate career choice. This sub-theme would suggest that Prediger's (1994) assertion holds, namely that psychometric testing can be valuable to clients if they are not used in a mechanical, ritualistic fashion.

It seems that the asset-based career facilitation process can be a very lengthy process and could add to frustration and even possibly impair the outcome of the career facilitation process. As mentioned earlier, *The Undecided* felt frustrated with the amount of time the process took. Furthermore, with the client-partners having busy schedules, it became difficult to keep to a strict six-week process. Sessions were cancelled and moved to fit into the programmes of the client-partners. *The Undecided* cancelled many times, leaving the facilitation process fragmented and adding to the frustration. She reflected *"because time is a factor for everyone I feel that many of the sessions were unnecessary"*. *The Thinker* quit the sessions because he reportedly became too busy with his preparation for his final exam. *The Decided* never had the opportunity to attend a session and we had to converse over the telephone. Consequently, it appeared as if the length of the career facilitation process hindered the practical

application thereof. In this regard, Isaacson and Brown (2000:389) explain the structure of career counselling, referring to the fact that *'most career counsellors find that it takes longer [than 3 weeks]'* to select a career. Thus, another possibility could be that the course of the asset-based career facilitation process was hindered by the schedules of the client-partners, rather than the process taking too long.

As a result, an **advantage** of using the asset-based approach during career facilitation seems to be the non-threatening atmosphere and qualitative use of psychometric tests, whereby client-partners might feel more in control of their career development. A **disadvantage** of using the asset-based approach could be the amount of time considered necessary to do thorough exploration.

4.3.3 MAJOR THEME 3: THE IMPACT OF THE OLD PARADIGM ON THE USE OF ASSET-BASED PRINCIPLES

The last major theme deducted from the study is the impact of the old paradigm on the use of the alternative asset-based approach. The impact is recognised through the observed expectations of client-partners that the career facilitator should remain in the expert-role. Another impact is seen through the apparent resistance of client-partners to be part of the partnership.

4.3.3.1 SUB-THEME H: CLIENT-PARTNERS' EXPECTATIONS THAT THE CAREER FACILITATOR IS THE EXPERT

Previously, the role of the career counsellor was defined as *'the provision of career information which distinguishes career counsellors from other forms of counselling'* (Akhurst, Jassat & Adendorf, 1999:189). My research goal was to apply and explore a new paradigm to career counselling. I wanted to explore a new paradigm and implement a different career counselling role. This new career counselling role is described by Prinsloo (1999) as the joining of personal and career counselling, where the career counsellor becomes a facilitator of career development rather than the giver of advice and expert solutions. This was not an easy task, because of the entrenched nature of the medical paradigm (Lubbe & Eloff, 2004; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003) and the fact that *'clients enter counselling with varying expectations about the roles they and the counsellor will play'* (Whitaker, Phillips & Tokar, 2004:309). I asked myself during one session: *"was I still busy with old career exploration and assessment..."* Constant reflection and setting session goals helped me to focus on the facilitation part (Lubbe & Eloff, 2004; Baldwin, 2002). This study shows that career facilitators should be alert to client's counselling goals and supports Niles, Anderson and Cover's (2000:142) finding that career counsellors should

'sensitise their clients to the fact that their career counselling goals may need to be revised as the counselling process unfolds'.

To focus on facilitation became difficult when *The Undecided* appeared to expect something different from what was offered through facilitation. *The Undecided* reflected later "*I feel that the sessions did not determine any other careers that would suit my specific aptitude*". I experienced her attitude as also expecting of me to be an 'old paradigm career counsellor' who can offer solutions to her career path questions. In addition, she felt frustrated with the lengthy process and commented that "*it could rather be one whole morning or day than one day per week for a month.*" This is an old paradigm prospect, because when you apply the medical model in practice, clients are given paper-based psychometric tests on the basis of which the counsellor makes career suggestions and rarely follows through with assisting the clients in exploring their self-knowledge and career knowledge (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Patton & McMahon, 1999; Prinsloo, 1999; Rayman, 1999; Herr, 1997).

The importance of exploration in career facilitation is made clear with the following statement of Isaacson and Brown (2000:388): *'career counselling involves much more than matching a person to an occupation'*. In this regard, Gothard *et al.* (2001:41) criticise the medical model of intervention because it places *'professional knowledge and diagnosis [at] centre stage [and provides] advice and information [with] one possible implication...that the client ultimately has limited access to support in the formulation and development of career ideas and the reconciliation of career decision'*. Gothard *et al.* (2001:42-43) argue the importance of *'the nature of the relationship between the participants in the career helping process, i.e. that the Rogerian core values of respect, genuineness and empathy need to be present...'*, while Weinrach (2003) believes that the person-centred perspective can contribute to career counselling in modern times. In this regard, Multon, Ellis-Kalton, Heppner and Gysbers (2003) stress the significance of a working alliance between the counsellor and client. As such, this study supports the significance of a changing role for the career facilitator, but also shows the difficulty of opposing the traditional approach and the implied client expectations.

4.3.3.2 **SUB-THEME I: RESISTANCE OF THE CLIENT-PARTNER TO BE PART OF A PARTNERSHIP**

Lubbe and Eloff (2004:36) write *'collaboration means the sharing of ideas in a joint decision-making and problem-solving process directed toward a common goal'*. Ebersöhn and Eloff

(2003:16) describe *partnership* as ‘*individuals joining together*’. Tang (2003) advocates collaboration as part of future career counselling. It seems that ***The Undecided*** was reluctant to form a partnership in the asset-based career facilitation process, because as client-partner and career facilitator we did not share a common goal. My asset-based career facilitation goal for ***The Undecided*** was for her to explore the career options she experienced at the time of career facilitation. Seemingly, her goal was for me to advise her on new careers. She expected of me to be the expert and to fit her personal profile to a suitable career environment. In this regard, I experienced ***The Undecided*** as resisting participation in the career facilitation process, as she seemingly expected me to make the career choice on her behalf. Furthermore, she gave the impression that she was hesitant to contact other stakeholders because she listed a dietician and explained how accessible this asset is, but never got around to contact the dietician. I felt that ***The Architect***, on the other hand, did not resist being a partner because she acted on our common goal (which was to find career information) and she phoned several universities to enquire about admission regulations. The same could be said about ***The Golfer***, who contacted his professional golfer friends to enquire about golfing bursaries.

4.4 CONCLUSION

I conducted asset-based career facilitation processes with five (5) client-partners in order to investigate the application of the asset-based approach as alternative to the medical model. A major theme that emerged from this study relates to *the impact of individual factors* such as the age of the client-partner, personality traits, career interests, exposure to previous career assessments and unique family dynamics. Two other major themes that materialised were *the challenging role of the asset-based career facilitator* and *the impact of the old paradigm on the use of asset-based principles*. In this chapter, I discussed the themes by giving examples and argued the reliability of the themes against the backdrop of existing theory. The themes that emerged elicited more questions and directed ideas with regard to implications for career facilitation training as well as recommendations for further research (refer to chapter 5).

Themes were discussed against the backdrop of existing and available literature from two separate fields. The first body of literature is with regard to *career facilitation*, located in the broader framework of *career psychology*. The other body of literature is that on the *asset-based approach*, located in the larger field of *community psychology*. During analysis and discussion of the themes, many questions about my interpretations intrigued me, as the literature that combines these two fields is limited. Such questions continue to perplex me, as I am conscious of the fact that themes could have many different interpretations.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reflections, Challenges and Recommendations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a brief overview of the previous chapters is provided. Thereafter the conclusions of the study are discussed by answering the research questions and elaborating on the conclusions. Next, the way in which the quality criteria were applied to ensure a trustworthy study is illustrated, and I describe how my role, as the researcher, unfolded in the study. The challenges of the study are discussed, followed by recommendations with regard to further research, career development practice and career facilitation training.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One included an introductory orientation and discussion, where the rationale for the study was stated in conjunction with the research question and accompanying research objectives. I briefly sketched the context of the inquiry in terms of two aspects. Firstly, current concerns with regard to career theory on the international front were dealt with, and secondly, the development of career psychology in South Africa. This discussion of changing international career trends and emerging South African career development, forms the theoretical backdrop for my study. The chapter also provided an outline of my paradigmatic perspectives, as well as an overview of the choices made with regard to the research design, research methodology, ethical strategies and quality criteria.

In **Chapter Two** attention was given to the theoretical framework relevant to the study. This chapter included a discussion of the asset-based approach and how this approach reflects tenets of the positive psychology movement found in current psychological thinking. An overview of the development of exploration as part of career facilitation was provided. Relevant literature that relates to the research question was discussed and a proposed link offered between the asset-based approach and career facilitation.

Chapter Three focused on a formulation of the aim of this study, as well as a methodological research framework. I chose phenomenology as my meta-theoretical paradigm and a qualitative research methodology, because I wanted to create a synergistic milieu. Working qualitatively complemented my phenomenological stance as I was interested in the experiences of my client-partners and myself as career facilitator. I selected an instrumental case study as research design, since it might facilitate an intense investigation with which I could answer the question: *How can the asset-based approach be applied in a career facilitation practice?*

Furthermore, attention was given to data collection methods and data analysis and interpretation techniques. The chapter concluded with an in-depth discussion of measures to ensure a rigorous study and of the ethical issues that were taken into consideration.

In **Chapter Four** the analysis and interpretation of data were discussed in conjunction with a presentation of the findings. Major themes were elaborated on, alongside careful deliberation by means of literature control.

A major theme that materialised in the data was the impact of *individual client-partner profiles* on the use of asset-based principles. Individual characteristics or factors such as the age of client-partners, their personality traits, their family dynamics, their career interests, and previous exposure to career counselling seemed to have influenced the asset-based career facilitation sessions.

Secondly, another major theme that surfaced was the *impact of asset-based principles and strategies* on the career facilitation sessions. Such asset-based principles as collaboration and partnerships between the client-partner and the career facilitator influenced the working relationships between them. Asset-based strategies such as asset-mapping and networking played a role in the success of the career facilitation sessions. The role of the career facilitator evolved through applying asset-based principles and strategies, and possible benefits with regard to the application of the asset-based approach in career facilitation became clear.

Another major theme made apparent by means of the study was *the impact of the old paradigm* on the use of an alternative approach. The impact of the medical model surfaced in expectations of client-partners that anticipated that the career facilitator remain the expert during career facilitation. In addition, it appeared as if client-partners resisted being part of the career facilitation partnership.

5.3 REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that guided this study were:

- What is career facilitation?
- What are the principles underlying the asset-based approach?
- How can the strategies of the asset-based approach be implemented during career facilitation?

- How do client-partners apply asset-based principles during career facilitation?
- How does the career facilitator apply asset-based principles during career facilitation?
- What are the possible benefits of applying asset-based principles to career facilitation?

The first two research questions were discussed and answered in detail on the basis of the literature study done in chapter 2. The following section serves as a summary of literature content on career facilitation and the asset-based approach.

5.3.1 WHAT IS CAREER FACILITATION?

Career facilitation is a comprehensive alternative to career counselling as the client is viewed in totality and the facilitator is conscious of the client's other life roles. *Career facilitation* is a compound for other terms describing the career helping process, but with the distinct difference that it incorporates assets from the client-partner as well as the environment, and relies on such principles as client-partner ownership, shared responsibility, enablement, recognition of sustainable skills and collaborative views.

5.3.2 WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH?

A possible contribution of my study lies in my formulation of asset-based principles and relating them to career facilitation. The underlying principles of the asset-based approach are summarised and related to career facilitation in figure 5.1.

<i>The underlying principles of the asset-based approach</i>	<i>Applying the asset-based principle in career facilitation</i>
Client-partner ownership	Client-partners own the right to make career decisions themselves.
Shared responsibility (Supportive relationship)	The client-partner and the career facilitator work together to achieve career developmental tasks, such as exploration of career knowledge and self-knowledge.
Recognise sustainable skills and enablement	The career facilitator focuses on enablement of the client-partner, thus allowing for the client-partner to make informed career decisions later in life.
Collaboration (Relationship driven)	The career facilitator and the client-partner are involved with a network of stakeholders that could help in career knowledge.

FIGURE 5.1 The underlying principles of the asset-based approach and their application in career facilitation

During the study these underlying principles of the asset-based approach were applied in career facilitation sessions.

The rest of the research questions were answered by means of conducting the study. I shall now address these questions.

5.3.3 HOW CAN THE STRATEGIES OF THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH BE IMPLEMENTED DURING CAREER FACILITATION?

I designed asset-based strategies to apply in the career facilitation process. Strategies pertaining to the asset-based approach include: interviews; observation; post-modern exploration strategies; asset mapping; asset mobilisation; and networking. During this study, the following strategies were implemented: post-modern exploration strategies; asset mapping; and asset mobilisation.

I used **post-modern strategies** such as collages (refer to Appendix L) and self-assessment activities (refer to Appendix L), as well as questionnaires completed by family and friends (refer to Appendix L). These activities were either done during the facilitation session or given as homework assignments, depending on the unfolding of each session. The activities facilitated the process of breaking away from non-interactive paper-based testing. The aim of such interactive activities was to create an atmosphere in which the client-partner could feel important and valued. The study revealed the fact that such an atmosphere enhanced the partnership between the client-partner and the career facilitator.

It appeared to me that discussing the MBTI results in conjunction with the self-exploration activities and the opinions of the parents and friends provided an opportunity for the client-partner to experience the collaborative nature of the career facilitation process. It was no longer the counsellor telling the clients who they are, but rather the career facilitator and the client-partners working collaboratively to discover the client-partners' strengths. As such, psychometric testing could be practical in an asset-based career facilitation process, on condition that an opportunity is created to discuss results qualitatively with the client-partner.

Asset-mapping (see Appendix K) seemed to offer a starting point from where to mobilise assets in the client-partners' environments. Initially, I struggled with communicating the vast concept of asset-mapping to the client-partners, possibly because I did not explain the asset-based approach as clearly as I would to university students. In addition, a mind shift was needed to fully comprehend how the approach is different from the traditional approach. To redefine one's thinking is usually a difficult and extensive process. The results of the study indicate that some client-partners might still not be ready for an asset-based approach in career facilitation. This could be seen in them resisting being part of the partnership or still expecting the career

facilitator to act as an expert. Consequently, caution will be needed when any client enters the career facilitation process.

Asset mobilisation occurred when client-partners felt comfortable with the resources and secure enough to engage with stakeholders. It appeared that some of them preferred to search the internet whilst others enjoyed making contact with stakeholders. The availability and accessibility of assets seemed to be very important during asset-mobilisation, as client-partners did not choose to mobilise assets they perceived as inaccessible. This study emphasises how carefully a client-partner must be facilitated towards career maturity. The career facilitator should be aware of different aspects such as age, personality traits and unique family dynamics when choosing facilitation activities.

5.3.4 HOW DO CLIENT-PARTNERS APPLY ASSET-BASED PRINCIPLES DURING CAREER FACILITATION?

Client-partners were informed during initial interviews that they were expected to be partners in the career facilitation process and to not merely act as recipients of information. It seemed that most of the partners agreed to and enjoyed the opportunity to engage actively. On the other hand, it seemed that some of them felt uncomfortable with the process and the lack of an expert counsellor in the lead. In this regard, they resisted being partners and appeared to rather expect answers from the process. Significant variables were personality, age, unique family dynamics, career interests of client-partners and exposure to previous career assessments.

5.3.5 HOW DOES THE CAREER FACILITATOR APPLY ASSET-BASED PRINCIPLES DURING CAREER FACILITATION?

As asset-based career facilitator I was very cautious not to provide conclusive information. The goal of each session was to find information together. I experienced this principle to have worked well with the client-partners who were willing to take on the responsibility of making their own career choices. Contrary to this, I experienced difficulty with facilitating career knowledge with the client-partners who were not ready or willing to take ownership of their career development. Factors impacting on this process include personality type, the age of the client-partner and the influence of the old paradigm.

I focused on search strategies and understanding the self within the context, as sustainable skills. Whether these skills were imprinted is yet to be explored. Sessions centred on problem-solving as opposed to giving answers and information. I frequently asked client-partners how we could

obtain certain information or what we had that could be used to help us with a solution. Again, for those who collaborated fully it seemed to be a valuable session, yet it appeared to frustrate those who wanted more substantial *traditional* career guidance and answers. It seems that suitable personality traits of an asset-based career facilitator could be flexibility, open-mindedness, and a willingness to adapt to the situation and goals of the client-partner.

5.3.6 WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF APPLYING ASSET-BASED PRINCIPLES TO CAREER FACILITATION?

The possible benefits of applying asset-based principles to career facilitation appeared to be:

- Creating an atmosphere where client-partners can be viewed as equal contributors to their own career development.
- Assisting in identifying sustainable skills such as asset-mapping and asset mobilisation.
- Creating a tool with which to engage with people in authentic situations, which in turn can result in the confirmation or contradiction of career choices.
- Considering the personal preferences and personality traits of the client-partner in conjunction with the personal preferences of the career facilitator in applying a flexible process such as facilitation.
- Carefully paying attention to where client-partners find themselves in terms of their career paths as this will ultimately influence the nature of the facilitation process. If client-partners need to make decisions at the end of the process it might be facilitated differently to client-partners that need confirmation for choices they had already made.

5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

5.4.1 INDICATORS AND CONTRA-INDICATORS FOR APPLYING THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH IN CAREER FACILITATION

In an attempt to make sense of the data that were collected during the investigation, I compiled a two-fold list. On the one side I listed the characteristics and settings that appeared to be conducive to asset-based career facilitation. On the other side, I listed characteristics and settings that seemed to hinder the application of the asset-based approach in career facilitation. These lists are presented in figure 5.2.

ASSET-BASED CAREER FACILITATION	
INDICATORS	CONTRA-INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An asset-based career facilitation process can contribute to the refinement of career interests after a more “traditional” career assessment resulted in undifferentiated career interest profiles. ▪ An asset-based career facilitation process seems to work well where there is a trusting, open and collaborative relationship between the career facilitator and the client-partner. ▪ Psychometric tests that allow for the client-partner and the career facilitator to deliberate the results, fit into the asset-based viewing of the client-partner. ▪ The asset-based career facilitation process seems to be favourably influenced by client-partners that seem to be natural asset users. ▪ An asset-based career facilitation process appears to be indicated when the personal preferences of the client-partner constitute flexibility, networking and open-mindedness. ▪ An asset-based career facilitation process seems to be indicated when the client-partner is entering the workforce in the near future. ▪ An asset-based career facilitation process seems to be indicated when the family of the client-partner is recognised as a system of assets of the client-partner. ▪ The profile of an asset-based career facilitator seems to be a person who is flexible, adaptable and open-minded. ▪ The Profile of a client-partner that may benefit from an asset-based career facilitation process appears to be: a client-partner at an age of entering the workforce; a supportive family; and with more or less the same personality preferences as the career facilitator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An asset-based career facilitation process might seem boring and as a repetition of <i>traditional</i> career assessment procedures if the same results are obtained. ▪ An asset-based career facilitation process seems to be hindered if client-partners do not understand or are not able to adhere to the principles of the asset-based approach. ▪ An asset-based career facilitation process appears to be restricted by client-partners that expect “traditional” expert advice from the career facilitator. ▪ If the client-partner resists being part of the asset-based partnership, the asset-based career facilitation process seems to be contra-indicated. ▪ If the client-partner is not able to commit to a lengthy process of exploration and self-growth, the asset-based career facilitation process seems to be contra-indicated. ▪ An asset-based career facilitation process is contra-indicated when the client-partner seeks structure and control during the career facilitation process. ▪ An asset-based career facilitation process appears to be contra-indicated when client-partners expect the career facilitator to inform them with regard to career information. ▪ If the personality profile of the client-partner is in direct contrast with the personality profile of the career facilitator, it appears as if the career facilitation process is hindered.

FIGURE 5.2 Indicators and contra-indicators for an asset-based career facilitation process

This study shows that the asset-based approach could be regarded as an alternative to managing career development. However, some client-partners still prefer the traditional person-environment fit model. As such, the application of a paradigm shift in a helping profession such as career facilitation is hindered by the **expectations** of clients as well as those of the career facilitator. If the client is not ready to fulfil the role required by the paradigm shift, it might be more beneficial to be flexible and apply an approach that makes the client feel more comfortable. Furthermore, this study indicates that the asset-based career facilitator should be sensitive to the specific preferences of the client-partner. The study stresses the importance of a flexible stance

and an openness to adapt to client-partners' choices with regard to the way they prefer to gather career and self-information as well as make career decisions.

5.4.2 COMPARING AN ASSET-BASED CAREER FACILITATION PROCESS TO AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO TRADITIONAL CAREER COUNSELLING

In recent times it would seem that the post-modern perspective of Savickas 'adds a personal flavour to the process of career counselling' (Maree, 2002:25). Maree (2002:25-26) states that 'the [post-modern] approach provides potential protection against inaccurate diagnosis and incorrect application of technology, including tests and inventories'. A post-modern perspective is suggested to be a viable alternative to traditional career theories (Richardson, 1993; Savickas, 1993). The asset-based career facilitation process seems very similar to the post-modern perspective to career development of Savickas (Maree, 2002). The similarities between the post-modern perspective and the asset-based career facilitation process are illustrated in figure 5.3.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN:	
THE ASSET-BASED CAREER FACILITATION PROCESS (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003:11)	POST-MODERN PERSPECTIVE OF SAVICKAS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a cycle of enablement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encouragement and expression of self-development (Maccoby, 1981); enable rather than fit (Lather, 1991).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subjective understanding of the client-partner and shared knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Move towards perspectivity (Maree, 2002).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Person-centred perspective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Person-centred perspective (Maree, 2002)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Networking, collaborative and relationship-based career facilitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teamwork through co-operation and emphasis on relationship (Savickas, 1996; 1993).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Client-partner is the expert. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No more career experts – clients are treated as co-counsellors who interpret their own needs and shape their own lives from a range of possibilities (Lather, 1991).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collect information regarding assets from bio-ecological system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active participation in the community (Savickas, 1996; 1993).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Client-partners have essential viewpoints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Career counselling has shifted from finding an optimal fit to meaning making (Maree, 2002).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustainability of skills in the client-partner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish which skills are needed to write the next chapter of their life stories and acquiring those skills (Savickas, 1993).

FIGURE 5.3 Similarities between the post-modern perspective of Savickas and an asset-based career facilitation process

Figure 5.3 illustrates the common ground found in both the post-modern perspective of Savickas and an asset-based career facilitation process. In this regard, Patton (2005:26) writes 'a post-modern approach to career education adopts very different theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings than approaches based on trait-factor notions of career choice and industrial era

notions of education and work'. The ultimate difference lies in post-modern career approaches focusing on work experience and context, thus moving away from *'finding a good fit between worker and workplace*', and rather *'validating individual's unique career experiences*' (Thrift & Amundson, 2005:10).

It appears that the main difference between the post-modern approach and the asset-based approach is the intervention strategy used. An asset-based career facilitation approach relies on asset-mapping and focuses on capacities, whereas post-modern career counsellors draw strongly from narrative therapy techniques (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003; Maree, 2002). Post-modern narrative approaches emphasise story-telling as assessment and *'restorying*' as intervention technique (Krieshok, Hastings, Ebberwein, Wettersten & Owen, 1999:212). In accordance with this, Maree (2002:27) explains that *'career counselling has become more reliant on autobiographies (life stories) than on results of 'objective testing'; our lives are interpreted as texts and careers as stories*'.

An asset-based career facilitation process is different from the post-modern perspective, because an asset-based career facilitator recognises and focuses on the *giftedness* of the individual (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). Through asset-mapping the individual can be facilitated towards reaching career goals. On the other hand, as the two approaches are very similar (refer to figure 5.3), I believe that the goal of both narrative techniques and asset-mapping can result in self-knowledge in the client-partner. Consequently, asset-mapping could be incorporated as a roadmap for the grand narrative of the client-partner, where sources of information are stipulated.

5.5 ENSURING THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Since this study is a naturalistic inquiry in which I maintained a phenomenological perspective, I took a number of steps to ensure the quality of the study (refer to section 3.6). They are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Seale, 1999). Their implementations are discussed next.

5.5.1 CREDIBILITY

Poggenpoel (1998) describes *credibility* in terms of the confidence that the researcher shows, based on the research design, regarding the accuracy of the findings. As mentioned above, I followed the strategies proposed by Seale (1999) to ensure credibility. In this regard, I engaged in the field of study for approximately 40 hours with five client-partners. I made continual

observations and kept record of these observations in a research journal. In addition I compiled field notes during career facilitation sessions (refer to Appendix F). I undertook an extensive literature review of the asset-based approach and career facilitation in order to ensure that my understanding of the principles underlying each concept is true to what the literature suggests (refer to chapter 2).

5.5.2 DEPENDABILITY

According to Poggenpoel (1998), if a study is *dependable*, the findings of the study would be the same if the study was imitated with the same client-partners or in comparable situations. In this regard, I left an audit trail (Seale, 1999) by keeping a separate file for each client-partner, including the following documents: my research diary, dated field notes, dated descriptions of session activities, copies of homework assignments, and personal reflections of the client-partners (refer to Appendices E, F, K and L).

5.5.3 TRANSFERABILITY

Seale (1999) refers to *transferability* as the ability to generalise to larger populations. To enable other readers to transfer the findings to *their* known settings, a detailed description of each participant and career facilitation session is provided (refer to Appendices D and E).

5.5.4 CONFIRMABILITY

According to Poggenpoel (1998) the research procedures and results need to be free from bias. I worked from a phenomenological perspective to counter bias, therefore aiming at understanding the personal meanings of client-partners. In this regard, I used auditing to establish confirmability of the study (Seale, 1999). My audit trail consisted of my research diary with which I scrutinised my own developing thoughts regarding the application of the asset-based approach in career facilitation (refer to Appendix E).

5.5.5 AUTHENTICITY

This study is authentic if a range of different realities is represented (Seale, 1999). The authenticity of this study is complemented by applying the asset-based approach, as client-partners were regarded as the experts of their own career development paths. This implies that client-partners had to draw their own asset-maps making connections regarding their career issues. In addition, maintaining a phenomenological perspective, I value the importance of different viewpoints and attempted to report not only my own experience, but that of the client-partners as well (refer to Appendices F and K).

5.6 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

I conducted this research both as researcher and as career facilitator, thus involving myself in the central activities of the research. This was useful as I experienced first hand how the application of the asset-based approach unfolded. Due to the nature of my studies, I have acquired the skills to understand the process of asset-based career facilitation and appreciate the paradigm shift I propose. My understanding and appreciation of the asset-based approach sensitised me in terms of how I observed and constructed meaning from this parallel process, both facilitating career choice and conducting research. This dual role was difficult at times because of the intense responsibility of working with clients and focusing attention on research issues. As far as possible I interacted with the client-partners with honesty, refraining from unnecessary, technical information as well as being certain about my research aims. I focused my attention on describing the application of the asset-based approach and collected information with regard to how it was applied.

5.7 CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY

The following are noteworthy challenges resulting from this study:

- 5.7.1 I acknowledge that the absence of session transcriptions presents limitations in terms of data analysis, because the reflections in the research diary are subjective reports.
- 5.7.2 The number of case studies (five case studies) explored and described in the research, limits the depth of conclusion because the five cases cannot be considered a representative sample of the South African population.
- 5.7.3 The type of case that was investigated limits conclusions with regard to other cultures, because the cases are not diverse.
- 5.7.4 The themes that emerged from the study were not verified by inter rater verification.
- 5.7.5 The dual role reflected in the study, where I acted both as researcher and career facilitator, could have limited the accuracy of the findings, due to my twofold focus.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

I make the following recommendations in terms of asset-based career facilitation with regard to further research and training.

5.8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO FURTHER RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

- Research could be done regarding stakeholders in the field, to determine their expectations and experiences as participators in collaborative career facilitation. Stakeholders include parents, businessmen, universities and career facilitators.

- Research with regard to applying asset-based strategies for career facilitation in a group setting might be valuable.
- Another possible enquiry is the use of asset-based career facilitation in schools, as part of the curriculum.
- More research is needed to explore the reciprocal influence of personality traits and personal preferences of career facilitators and client-partners.
- More South African research is needed with regard to the established body of career development knowledge. In this regard, research is needed on asset-based career facilitation as indigenous strategy.

5.8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO ASSET-BASED CAREER FACILITATION TRAINING

- Asset-based strategies can be fitted into and made part of traditional career counselling, because they can be regarded as tools that students and practitioners can use to facilitate career choice.
- Prospective asset-based career facilitators can be trained to consider asset-based strategies and principles as tools to facilitate career development in clients.
- More attention can be given to the skill of asset-mapping during training at universities.
- Career facilitators can be prepared during training to use different career facilitation techniques and to identify facilitation preferences of client-partners.

5.9 CONCLUSION

Findings indicate that the asset-based approach can successfully be applied in career facilitation, using asset-based principles such as collaboration, client-partner ownership, shared responsibility between facilitator and client-partner, and enabling the client-partner through the identification and practice of sustainable career developmental skills. Asset-based strategies such as post-modern exploration strategies, asset mapping, and asset mobilisation prove functional within the career facilitation process.

Furthermore, the possible contribution of applying the asset-based approach in career facilitation lies in viewing client-partners as equal contributors in their own career development processes, cultivating sustainable career development skills and facilitating access to authentic career situations against which career choices of client-partners can be measured.

This study sparked the need for further meaningful research to determine the experiences of stakeholders in collaborative career facilitation. In order to address the vast need for career facilitation in South Africa, research needs to be done on the feasibility of applying asset-based career facilitation in group settings, specifically as part of the curriculum in schools. Research on the reciprocal influence of personality traits and personal preferences of career facilitators and client-partners could favourably influence career facilitation practice and training. The asset-based approach is one way of attempting to address the issue of limited indigenous career development strategies available in South Africa. More research with regard to indigenisation and indigenous career development strategies is needed.

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