

**EXPLORING GRADE 12 KAYAMANDI ADOLESCENTS' CAREER  
INFLUENCES USING THE SYSTEMS THEORY FRAMEWORK OF CAREER  
DEVELOPMENT**

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## **DECLARATION**

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*“When the heart weeps for what it has lost, the spirit laughs at what it has found.”*

*Sufi wisdom*

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## ABSTRACT

Major gaps exist in the understanding of career development across diverse population groups and cultures, a lacuna that postmodern career counselling approaches aim to address. Career choices have been historically constrained for many South Africans by the Apartheid system, indicating the prescribing effects that socio-political and economic factors exert on the field of career psychology. Because disadvantaged adolescents are such an under-researched group, research is needed to provide cogent accounts of their experiences.

The Systems Theory Framework of career development (STF) was chosen to contextualise the multitude of career influences present in facing a key life transition in Makupula High School learners in the Kayamandi township. The present research examined the complex interplay of contextual influences that impacts this sample of Grade 12 learners in making career decisions, to provide insight into perceived career opportunities, enablers and unique contextual constraints. The research aimed to identify individual, social and environmental-societal level influences present in career decision-making, using the qualitative career measure *My Systems of Career Influences (MSCI)* as well as individual interviews and a focus group.

Respondents' accounts of self-awareness, surrounding environmental resources, influences of significant others (parents, teachers and peers), and past, present and future effects were analysed. At an individual level, a scarcity of opportunities for self-reflection and critical thinking was observed, which culminated in limited insight into personal abilities and poor integration of personal information in occupational choices. High self-efficacy beliefs and expectations were noted, with a sense of responsibility assumed for constructing successful career paths. However, high order cognitive processes, such as future planning, were absent, showing the need for career counselling to build career adaptability and resilience.

Social level influences were the most prominent influences, indicating the importance attached to family support, although a lack of parental involvement in career planning was voiced due to the low occupational status of parents. The school context provided examples of subject mastery and career information from teachers; in contrast, friends were described as dual entities, being supportive and providing negative influences. A lack of visible local role models and success pathways resulted in career choices being based on media depictions of careers as well as media role models, in the absence of additional accessible career information. The theme of career myths illustrated the need for accurate career information,

and the theme of cultural identity emerged. Africentric narratives of overcoming suffering formed resilient mechanisms that were linked to a black racial identity, yet constrained movements away from extended family structures and the township.

The reconciliation of “western” career aspirations with rural roots in forming a coherent self-concept may be the greatest challenge in vocational identity development for disadvantaged adolescents. At the environmental-societal level, Kayamandi was discussed as an enabling and disadvantageous environment, and reference was made to the resources and language barriers that were inherent in Stellenbosch town. Lastly, *MSCI* feedback indicated the necessity of reflection processes, and criticisms were also discussed. Themes that emerged from the learners’ career stories can assist in providing insight that would aid future career development, counselling processes and the creation of context-specific interventions.

## OPSOMMING

Daar bestaan groot leemtes in die verstaan van loopbaan-ontwikkeling by verskillende bevolkingsgroepe en kulture, 'n gaping wat postmoderne beroepsberaders poog om aan te spreek. In die verlede is beroepskeuses vir vele Suid-Afrikaners beperk deur die Apartheidstelsel, wat dui op die voorskrytelike impak van sosio-politiese en ekonomiese faktore op die gebied van beroepsielkunde. Gegewe dat daar min navorsing gedoen is aangaande benadeelde adolessente, is navorsing nodig om koherente weergawes van hul ervarings te verskaf.

Die Sisteemteorieraamwerk van loopbaan-ontwikkeling (Systems Theory Framework, STF) is gebruik om die menigte van beroeps-invloede te kontekstualiseer wat gepaard gaan met 'n belangrike lewensverandering by leerders verbonde aan die Hoërskool Makupula in die Kayamandi-dorpsgebied. Die huidige navorsing het die komplekse wisselwerking van kontekstuele invloede ondersoek wat hierdie steekproef van graad 12-leerders beïnvloed het rakende loopbaankeuses, en poog om die nodige insig te verskaf van waargenome loopbaangeleenthede, ondersteuningsnetwerke (“enablers”) en spesifieke kontekstuele beperkings. Die navorsingsdoelwitte behels die identifisering van individuele-, sosiale- asook omgewings-en-samelewingsvlakke wat loopbaankeuses beïnvloed. Die kwalitatiewe loopbaanmeetinstrument “*My Systems of Career Influences*” (MSCI), individuele onderhoude en 'n fokusgroep is gebruik.

Die respondente se weergawes van “self,” beskikbare omgewings-hulpbronne, invloede van betekenisvolle ander (ouers, opvoeders en portuurgroepe) asook die impak van die verlede, hede en die toekoms is ontleed. Die individuele vlak van ontleding het gebreke rakende self-refleksie en kritiese denke aangedui, wat gelei het tot die beperkte insig van persoonlike vermoëns en die gebrekkige integrasie van persoonlike inligting aangaande loopbaankeuses. Die respondente het sterk oortuigings van self-doeltreffendheid getoon, en 'n sin van die nodige verantwoordelikheid vir die daarstelling van suksesvolle loopbaanrigtings. Hierteenoor egter het hoë-orde kognitiewe prosesse, soos toekomsbeplanning ontbreek, wat die behoefte aan loopbaanberading getoon het sodat loopbaan aanpasbaarheid en veerkragtigheid ontwikkel kan word.

Die sosiale vlak van ontleding het die mees prominente invloede getoon wat die belangrikheid van familie-ondersteuning aandui, alhoewel die gebrekkige betrokkenheid van ouers rakende loopbaanbeplanning geblyk het as gevolg van die lae beroepstatus van die

ouers. Die skoolkonteks het voorbeelde gebied van die vakke wat die respondente bemeester het asook loopbaan-inligting soos verskaf deur die onderwysers; hierteenoor is die vriende beskryf as tweevoudige entiteite wat aan die eenkant ondersteuning bied, maar aan die anderkant ook die negatiewe invloede. 'n Gebrek aan sigbare plaaslike rolmodelle en suksesvolle loopbaanrigtings het gelei tot loopbaankeuses wat gebaseer word op die voorstellings van beroepe soos in die media, asook media-rolmodelle in die afwesigheid van aanvullende en toeganklike loopbaan-inligting. The tema van loopbaan-mites het die behoefte aan akkurate loopbaan-inligting ge-illustreer; en die tema rakende kulturele-identiteit het na vore gekom. Afri-sentriese narratiewe van die oorkoming van swaarkry wat gelei het tot veerkragtige hanteringsmeganismes, is gekoppel aan 'n swart rasse-identiteit, alhoewel dit ook die bewegings weg van die uitgebreide familie-strukture en die dorpsgebied belemmer.

Die versoening van "westerse" loopbaan-verwagtings met die landelike verbondenheit om 'n koherente selfkonsep te vorm, kan die grootste uitdaging wees in die ontwikkeling van 'n loopbaan-identiteit vir benadeelde adolessente. Op die omgewings-samelewingsvlak van ontleding is die volgende bespreek: Kayamandi as 'n bemagtigende én 'n nadelige omgewing; die hulpbronne; en probleme aangaande taalkwessies wat deel is van die Stellenbosse gemeenskap. Ten slotte, die *MSCI* terugvoering het die behoefte aan refleksie-prosesse aangedui en kritiekpunte is ook bespreek. Temas wat geïdentifiseer is in die leerders se loopbaan-stories kan bydra tot die verkryging van insig vir toekomstige loopbaan-ontwikkeling, beradingsprosesse, en vir die ontwikkeling van konteks-spesifieke intervensies.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Africentricism:** A set of cultural values and beliefs that is associated with a black racial identity that epitomises a collective value of *ubuntu* as ‘being people through other people’ (Theron & Theron, 2012).

**Career:** A developmental process of creating patterns in decision-making across various domains such as education, work, family and other life roles in a meaningful way. Career will be used interchangeably with the term vocation throughout this research.

**Counselling:** Respect and empathy are communicated in a mutual relationship between a counsellor and a client, where goals are clarified and individuals are assisted in decision-making processes through active listening to elicited narratives (UNESCO, 2002).

**Career counselling:** A largely verbal process in which a collaborative relationship is maintained between a client and a counsellor, focused on identifying and acting on the goals presented by the client. The aim is to bring about self-understanding, recognising available options and letting the client assume responsibility for meaningful, informed decision-making processes (UNESCO, 2002).

**Disadvantaged adolescent:** A learner between 13 and 18 years old who lives and goes to school in an informal, low resource settlement such as Kayamandi. This term will be used to describe the research participants.

**Participants:** The Makupula High School Grade 12 learners involved in the research process; this term will be used interchangeably with respondents.

**Race:** Any distinctions that are made in this research between black, coloured, Indian and white participants. Race is a superficial classification of diverse ethnical and cultural groups used by the present and previous South African government, with no other meanings attached to these legal labels (De Bruin & Bernard-Phera, 2002; Maree & Beck, 2004). In this research black and African will be used interchangeably for descriptive purposes. The use of these terms does not indicate endorsement of these classifications.

**Resilience:** The ability to maintain competence or good outcomes despite adversity or serious threats to development that occurs within a cultural context (Masten, cited in Swartz, 2011).

**Rural:** Although the Kayamandi township is in fact situated on the outskirts of Stellenbosch town (i.e., peri-urban), a rural image is accepted due to the surrounding farmlands and causes an additional pejorative connotation (Cubizolles, 2011).



**Township:** An informal settlement that houses disadvantaged population groups. This settlement is characterised by a lack of formal housing structures, municipal services such as water and electricity, and high rates of poverty and crime.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

The 21<sup>st</sup> century poses complex challenges to previous career counselling theories and practices that informed South African career counselling (Maree, Ebersöhn, & Biagione-Cerone, 2010). Traditional vocational approaches have over a century of theory development, research and professional application and were based on objective and positivistic values (McIlveen & Patton, 2006; McMahon, 2005). Individuals were expected to stay in one career and career paths were relatively stable, which created the context for past career development theories (Stead & Watson, 1998). The advent of technology and globalisation has drastically changed the world of work, resulting in a wider and more diverse range of career issues and clientele that challenge traditional career conceptions (Maree & Beck, 2004; Savickas, 2007).

The underlying assumption guiding career practices is that an individual has choices to make. However, in the South African context, these choices were historically constrained and prescribed by broader socio-political and economic factors (Nicholas, Naidoo, & Pretorius, 2006; Watson & Stead, 2002). Currently post-Apartheid discrimination and inequities are being addressed. These socio-political changes have highlighted the interaction between contextual factors and the career development of adolescents, which has often resulted in trial-and-error career decisions (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Stead & Watson, 1998).

Additional challenging contextual factors such as crime, unemployment, low literacy, HIV/AIDS and a weak national economy impact career choices of South African adolescents (Stead & Watson, 2006). The disconcertingly high number of disadvantaged youth in South Africa, not in school and unemployed, calls for an examination of career challenges faced by these adolescents (Stead, 1996). The array of influences involved in career planning in disadvantaged contexts, such as that of Kayamandi, needs to be analysed in order to enable effective school-to-work planning and transitions (Janeiro, 2009).

Disadvantaged adolescents' career development is made more problematic through a lack of career information, unrealistic/distorted career aspirations, various environmental constraints and career-related barriers (Stead & Watson, 1998; Watson, Foxcroft, Horn, & Stead, 1997). Although critical career decisions may have already been affected by perceptions of barriers, research has shown that youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds have previously been empowered through narrative approaches to develop

realistic occupational aspirations and positive self-concepts (Alexander, Seabi, & Bischoff, 2010; Janeiro, 2009; Skorikov, 2007a). Clarification is needed of the career choices and realities that disadvantaged adolescents, such as the learners at Makupula High School, face in navigating career paths. In addition the evaluation of self-knowledge, occupational ideas and constraining contextual influences in career decision-making is necessary (Ladany, Melincoff, Constantine, & Love, 1997).

## **1.2. Definitions surrounding career choice**

In this research study the term *career* is used colloquially by the researcher and participants to signify occupational and professional roles, although a career is not limited to occupational activities (Kuit, 2006). Previously elitist, economic and occupational connotations have been associated with the word career (Young & Valach, 2004). Instead, a career is conceptualised as a personal framing and negotiation of suitable occupations, which varies for each individual (Severy, 2008). A career encompasses the ever-shifting meanings that an individual attaches to work in relation to life roles, relationships and self-development and is used interchangeably with *vocation* (Stead & Watson, 2006).

*Career choice* here is defined as a life-long process that needs continual reflection processes in order to help individuals review priorities or influences that may have changed (McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2005a). There are three vital dimensions acknowledged in career choices: (1) how well the individual knows him- or herself; (2) the level of acquaintance with the world of work; and (3) the fit between his or her characteristics and the world of work (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). Ideally, these dimensions should be addressed by career education strategies that allow access to world-of-work information, role models that learners can identify with, field trips, guest speakers and job-shadowing opportunities (Cilliers, 1993; Leonard & Vriend, 1975).

Occupationally oriented experiences could help with the continual revision, planning and developmental aspects of career knowledge, aspiration and choice in ethnic minority, low-income and non-college-bound youth (Leonard & Vriend, 1975). Vocational exploration is believed to form the basis of *career commitment*. A crystallisation of the career process can occur when all career alternatives are not considered and/or a strong tendency to foreclose exists (Blustein, Ellis, & Devenis, 1989). In comparison, *career maturity* is defined as a readiness to cope with developmental tasks of an individual's life stage and involves theoretical variables of career planning, decision-making and exploration (Super, 1990).

Variables such as gender, culture, socio-economic circumstances and literacy form the context in which career maturity is attained (Naicker, 1994a).

**Career decision-making** refers specifically to the process of performing a series of tasks relevant to making career decisions. A lack of self-efficacy or career decision-making skills can result in career indecision, unclear vocational identity and numerous changes in career direction (Betz, 2000; Betz & Luzzo, 1996). Constructs, such as career maturity and career decision-making, need to be examined to determine their relevance for disadvantaged youth. Thus adolescents can be helped to find an occupational niche that transcends historically disadvantaged circumstances (Stead, 1996).

The collection and processing of relevant personal information has been cited as one of the most important behaviours associated with career choice. A **career consciousness** or awareness results from adolescents' personal insight into their abilities and identification of associated occupations (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). Previous studies on disadvantaged youth have determined the necessity for compensatory counselling and career guidance in aiding the emergence of a self-concept and a vocational identity (Leonard & Vriend, 1975).

The construct **career/vocational identity** describes self-awareness that allows greater understanding of realistic career options, instead of harbouring opposing or distorted career ideas (Nelson, 2002; Stead & Watson, 2006). Previous studies have reported findings that learners' beliefs about their educational and occupational capabilities were significantly related to the nature and range of career options they considered (Betz & Hackett, 1981). Adolescents with a strong self-concept were seen to engage in intentional and meaningful career exploration, resulting in more career curiosity (Usinger & Smith, 2010). Favourable career planning and exploration attitudes are theorised to result in positive attitudes towards the future, more internal attributions for success and higher levels of self-esteem (Janeiro, 2009).

**Self-efficacy** refers to the beliefs that an individual has about his/her capabilities in performing specific tasks (Bandura, 1986). Career self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in career decision-making processes that lead to career goals and activities being pursued (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). The development of self-efficacy in exploring interests and the world-of-work could be aided in disadvantaged adolescents by increasing self-confidence in career-related tasks (Gushue, Clarke, Pantzer, & Scanlan, 2006). The resulting commitment to career choice, based on the self-awareness of skills, interests and

abilities, is a core developmental task of late adolescence and early adulthood (Blustein et al., 1989).

In the present research the term *adolescent* is used to refer to ages 13-18 years. Many critical career activities, such as career exploration and preparation, take place at high school level (Skorikov, 2007a). Studies have hypothesised that it is developmentally appropriate for adolescents to have blurred vocational identities, to be temporarily uncertain about and uncommitted to their career (Ladany et al., 1997). Further occupational information is believed to resolve this ambiguous developmental stage and results in a personalised career identity (Maree & Beck, 2004).

### **1.3. Contextual landscape of career decisions**

In exploring the contextual landscape of career decisions, the researcher would like to invite the reader to reflect on the career path that was followed until now. The following questions have been adapted from Kuit (2006) for introspection: Are you still aspiring towards a particular occupation, life role, personal project or purpose? How would you describe what this aspiration is and what this endeavour entails? Is this different from your current career description? If there is a considerable difference, how can you account for these changes? Could you describe the place where you stand in relation to your past and future career plans? How would you tell someone your career story? Which events would you select from personal experiences, relationships and influences that have resulted in your answers to the previous questions?

Meaningful career choices rely on engaging with challenging probes, such as the questions above, that highlight the subjectivity attached to career stories (McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2004; McMahon & Watson, 2008). The challenge in constructing a career story is to provide a comprehensive account of complex relationships and diverse activities within a web of past, present and potential influences and barriers. This exact challenge is faced by Kayamandi adolescents as they construct their careers within the plural and diverse world-of-work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Savickas, 1993).

### **1.4. Research problem and objectives**

The lack of existing research on career influences in disadvantaged adolescents forms the research problem being addressed (Maree, 2010a; Seabi, Alexander, & Maite, 2010). In this research the Systems Theory Framework (STF) was used as a conceptual guide for exploring the career influences and factors impacting the career development of Grade 12 Makupula

High School learners in Kayamandi. An in-depth qualitative analysis of participants' perceptions was undertaken using the *My Systems of Career Influences (MSCI)*. It was envisaged that insight could be gained into the content and process influences in respondents' career ideation construction (Usinger & Smith, 2010).

Specific aims and objectives of the present study were to:

- Elicit a thick description of respondents' career influences using the *MSCI* as an assessment process.
- Examine respondents' descriptions of their self-awareness and career exploration.
- Examine respondents' descriptions of the influence of significant others in their mesosystems (parents, teachers and peers).
- Examine respondents' descriptions of surrounding environmental resources.
- Examine respondents' descriptions of the effects of past, present and future influences.
- Evaluate how participants experienced the *MSCI* as a career development process.

### **1.5. Rationale**

Disadvantaged adolescents' main challenges in career development have been cited as limited self-awareness and a lack of available career information (Ebersöhn & Mbestse, 2003). Additionally, career choices are compromised through limited access to career education services, little exposure to the world-of-work and a scarcity of knowledge regarding tertiary institutions (Stead & Nqwani, 2006). Adolescents' parents still have the post-Apartheid status of unskilled or semi-skilled workers (Stead, 1996). As a result, further barriers, such as limited financial resources and insufficient career planning support, are experienced (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Seabi et al., 2010).

Research is needed to examine the complex interplay of contextual influences in under-researched groups, such as Kayamandi adolescents (McMahon, Watson, Foxcroft, & Dullabh, 2008). Therefore insight can be gained into local facilitative and risk factors that shape on-going chapters in adolescents' career development (Maree, Ebersöhn, & Molepo, 2006). As part of the STF, a narrative approach was utilised to identify career needs and barriers inherent in these adolescents' career stories (McMahon et al., 2008; McMahon & Watson, 2008). The STF framework reduces the traditional gap between research and practice and involves respondents in a research process beneficial to them (McMahon et al., 2008). The present research could contribute to the development of tailor-made career interventions that enable disadvantaged adolescents to recognise a realistic range of opportunities. Thus anticipated future career outcomes could be brought about within socio-political and

economic climates (Stead, 1996; Stead & Watson, 2006). Also, effective career orientation and career preparation have been linked to the prevention of problem behaviour, promotion of well-being and positive youth development (Hirschi, 2009; Skorikov, 2007b).

## **1.6. Overview of Chapters**

*Chapter 1* introduces career counselling processes within the socio-political constraints that still exist in South Africa, as accentuated by disadvantaged contexts such as that of Kayamandi. The core career development constructs of the study are described. The research problem, objectives and rationale of this study are elucidated. The Systems Theory Framework of career development (STF), as the theoretical orientation of the study, is introduced as a means of effectively representing the multitude of influences and barriers involved in career planning.

*Chapter 2* provides the broader systemic context of the research. The texture of life in the Kayamandi township is described by including demographics, history, infrastructure, initiatives and educational structures in the community. Disadvantaged learners' career needs and barriers are discussed in order to portray constraints on career choices.

In *Chapter 3* a discussion of reviewed literature and relevant career constructs is presented. The traditional perspective, developmental theory and the constructivist approach are described. Theoretical attempts to incorporate cultural and individual diversity into career development processes are discussed. A critical exploration of the STF and narrative career counselling as a recent constructivistic approach to career counselling is provided.

*Chapter 4* describes the research methodology of the study. The qualitative research design is discussed, as well as the utilisation of content thematic analysis. The qualitative instrument informed by the STF, the *My Systems of Career Influences (MSCI)*, is examined. Demographic details of the sample are presented and reflexive comments conclude the chapter.

*Chapter 5* presents the qualitative content thematic analysis findings of the narrative exercise and the *MSCI*. Themes, subthemes and tables are structured according to the STF to portray participants' systems of career influences and gain insight into career decision-making processes.

In *Chapter 6* the individual and focus group interview findings are examined. The consolidation and expansion of identified themes are structured according to the STF to



contextualise career development processes. Challenges encountered during the research process are elucidated.

**Chapter 7** presents a summary of the research findings. The limitations as well as the recommendations of the study are presented for future career research in marginalised population groups. Career intervention applications of the *MSCI* for disadvantaged adolescents, specifically in the Kayamandi community, are reviewed, and general conclusions are drawn to close the chapter.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONTEXTUALISATION OF STUDY

#### 2.1. Introduction

Previous career counselling paradigms have excluded the needs of non-white, non-Western, non-‘standard’ populations (McMahon & Patton, 2002). Career development was adversely affected by multiple oppressions resulting from the co-occurrence of cultural variables such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation and/or abilities (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). A call has been made for unique career techniques that are applicable to specific locations, times and spaces, such as that of Kayamandi, to address subjective and personal meanings ascribed to career choices (Maree, 2010a).

In the Kayamandi context, career counselling approaches need to be useful in scenarios that include: orphans living with foster families after being abandoned; pregnant adolescents and/or rape victims with HIV; Methamphetamine (Tik) addicts; unwilling gang members and learners who support their siblings by selling sweets and working night shifts at McDonalds (Winslade, 2007). Appropriate career counselling methods need to be designed to address these diverse realities, both efficiently and respectfully, to facilitate career development processes (Maree, 2010a).

#### 2.2. Challenging South African conditions

Social contexts form the platforms from which youth formulate their future plans. This highlights the role that state politics and domestic affairs have on the provision of developmental infrastructures and opportunity structures for adolescents (Larson, 2002; Naicker, 1994a). Currently, South African adolescents are negotiating the development of their own identities and adapting to post-Apartheid social changes. As a result, greater career challenges are faced than counterparts in more stable societies (Finshilescu & Dawes, 2001; Smith & Stones, cited in Steyn, Badenhorst, & Kamper, 2010).

Kamper (2001) reported that 40% of the South African population lived below the poverty line, and 72% of the South African population lived in rural areas (Statistics South Africa, 2008). Adolescents are at risk of dropping out of school to become economic providers for families, raise siblings or participate in criminal activities (Booi, 2011). In addition, limited safe and violence-free spaces reduce learning and future opportunities (Leoschut, 2009). Future prospects are restricted by disappointing matriculation results that question the

adequacy of the South African education system (Sparks, cited in Steyn et al., 2010). An increase in local unemployment and limited internship opportunities further prevent successful career transitions for South African youth (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003; Stead, 1996). Therefore “experience-near” accounts are needed to portray South African adolescents’ specific social, environmental and societal contexts in order to overcome prohibiting constructions of career development (Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005; Kuit, 2006).

### **2.3. Description of Kayamandi**

Kayamandi means “Sweet Home” in isiXhosa and is an informal settlement (i.e., an unplanned township). It is situated on the slopes of the Papegaaiberg, on the northern outskirts of the Stellenbosch Cape Winelands district, about 50 km from Cape Town (Skinner, 2000). Although Kayamandi is next to one of the major arterial roads leading into the town of Stellenbosch, it is physically separated from the town by a bridge and railway line (Kiangi, 1998). The Group Areas Act of 1941, formulated under Apartheid in South Africa, designated Kayamandi as a residential ‘black area’ (Fuchs, 2010). Kayamandi Town Council (Kayad) governed the area during Apartheid. Since 1994 Kayamandi has been recognised as a suburb and incorporated into the Stellenbosch Municipality (Kiangi, 1998).

**2.3.1. Development of Kayamandi.** In 1942 the Stellenbosch Municipality built 85 housing units above the Plankenberg River for black migrant workers from the Eastern Cape who were living in the Du Toit and Idas Valley regions surrounding Stellenbosch (Perdu, cited in Cain, 2009). By 1971 Kayamandi consisted of 116 houses, 37 for married couples and the rest were “hostels” for workers from the Ciskei and Transkei (Fuchs, 2010). The growth of informal settlements began in the late 1980s, when wives and overflowing house residents became the first squatters (Skinner, 2000). In the 1990s, squatters began filling up all vacant areas, putting pressure on land boundaries, infrastructure and creating conflict within the community (Erhard, 2000). Shebeen and prostitution industries emerged and were supported by hostel dwellers, yet were deemed unacceptable by community elders (Skinner, 2000).

The Kayamandi town council was discredited as a functionary unit of Apartheid in the early 1990s and disbanded. Thereafter, Kayamandi became a significant site for Apartheid resistance (Skinner, 2000). In contrast, Stellenbosch was considered the centre of Afrikanerdom as Stellenbosch University (SU) produced leaders of the Apartheid

government. Currently, municipal officials are viewed as corrupt and non-responsive to the community's needs (Dube, 2011).

### **2.3.2. Demographics.**

**2.3.2.1. Population number.** Kayamandi's inception appeared to occur in an unplanned manner, and the population developed rapidly. According to the Stellenbosch Municipality, Kayamandi grows 10% annually. The population number expanded rapidly from 10 263 in the 1996 census to a 2004 population estimation of 22 000 (Erhard, 2000; Stellenbosch Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP), cited in Darkwa, 2006). The Stellenbosch Municipality official for Economic Development and Tourism, Mr V. Zwelendaba, cited approximate figures of 33 000 people inhabiting Kayamandi in 2009. The 2011 population estimates were between 35 000 and 40 000 (V. Zwelendaba, personal communication, October 13, 2011). Although these figures are estimates, little other data has been documented. The 2011 census was meant to bridge the gap in statistical data of overlooked districts such as Kayamandi (Stellenbosch Municipality Local Economic Development (LED) Strategy, 2008). Currently debates exist around the accuracy of the Census 2011 estimates that were released thus provisional data was not included in this research (De Wet, 2012).

**2.3.2.2. Migration.** A continuous relocation of individuals and families from the Eastern Cape to Kayamandi occurs with the hope of employment and better education (Tlooko, 2011). Municipal officials place the average annual growth due to migration at 4.5 to 5% (V. Zwelendaba, personal communication, October 13, 2011). Due to migration, isiXhosa is the primary language spoken in Kayamandi, but English, Zulu and Sotho also feature in the community. Schools no longer offer Afrikaans which results in migrant learners struggling to acquire Afrikaans. In contrast, Afrikaans is the dominant language in the Stellenbosch town and district.

**2.3.2.3. Social conditions.** Unemployment rates were estimated to be as high as 62% in 2008 (Fuchs, 2010). Kayamandi residents appear to be employed predominantly in the lower paying sectors (e.g., domestic work, gardening, transport and other manual labour) (Darkwa, 2006; Kiangi, 1998). High rates of crime, poverty, substance abuse and malnutrition exist in Kayamandi. Poverty in Kayamandi is associated with homelessness, experiences of deprivation, violence and psychological vulnerability (Ratele, 2007). The high number of shebeens, alcohol and drug abusers (i.e., Tik abusers) has been blamed for the increase in

crime, and kangaroo courts punish perpetrators instead of relying on the law (C. Ndlebe, personal communication, August 2, 2011). Overcrowding and a lack of municipal services are prominent problems causing the rapid transmission of airborne, waterborne and respiratory diseases (i.e., tuberculosis) (Kiangi, 1998).

### **2.3.3. Infrastructure.**

**2.3.3.1. Land parameters.** Kayamandi is estimated to be approximately one square kilometre or 75.06 hectares in size (Darkwa, 2006). However, there is no leeway for expansion as the township is bordered on three sides by a major road, the town of Stellenbosch and valuable farmland respectively (Skinner, 2000).

**2.3.3.2. Housing structures.** Kayamandi consists of private, government-built homes and a significant number of hostel-type accommodations. However, informal dwellings (i.e., shacks) exemplify the primary mode of dwelling (Kiangi, 1998). Informal houses consist of wood, cardboard, plastic sheets and corrugated iron with no water or electricity sources. An average shack is between 9m<sup>2</sup> and 15m<sup>2</sup>, housing approximately five to seven inhabitants, which indicates the overcrowded living conditions in Kayamandi (Perdu, cited in Cain, 2009). Approximately 62 to 77% of Kayamandi residents allegedly reside in informal housing without formal access to municipal services such as water and electricity (Booi, 2011; Darkwa, 2006; Kiangi, 1998). The makeshift nature of the shacks, surrounding pollution and hazardous illegal electricity connections are demonstrated in the photograph below (*Figure 2.*), taken from Makupula High School by the researcher.



*Figure 2.* Researcher's Depiction of Kayamandi Living Conditions.

**2.3.3.3. Provision of municipal services.** The provision of water and sanitation differs according to the type of housing. Council-brick hostels and employer-owned hostels are equipped with indoor taps and flush toilets (Kiangi, 1998). In contrast, accessible water and sanitation facilities occur as roadside taps and communal toilet blocks or combined toilet- and water facility units (Fuchs, 2010). The limited ablution facilities for the community result in blockages, overflows and reliance on bucket systems (Van Wyk, Cousins, & Lagardien, 2004).

In addition, the lack of electricity causes an over-reliance on paraffin lamps, candles and open fires for cooking and heat sources. Illegal connections are made to official structures that have electricity supplies (i.e., Kayamandi High School), and overloading often results in power cuts. Stellenbosch Municipality has attempted to improve Kayamandi's infrastructure through the acquisition of extra land in 2007 to build approximately 500 houses with electricity and water connections, yet more such services are needed (Traub, 2010).

**2.3.3.4. Existing community structures.** The Kayamandi community infrastructure includes three primary schools, two high schools, a number of pre-schools and early childhood development centres (Hani, Moss, Cooper, Morroni, & Hoffman, 2003). There is one sports field, a soccer stadium that was never completed, a library, a variety of small churches, a health clinic, a local hospice and a private medical practice (Du Plessis, Heinecken, & Oliver, 2012). Amazink (a restaurant acting as tourist attraction), the Kayamandi mall and licensed taverns also operate in the community.

Spaza shops and shebeen-type bars provide residents with essentials without having to walk to Stellenbosch. Services include cooking, butchering, brewing beer, traditional healers' remedies, tailoring, shoe polishing, hairdressing/barbering, car washing and repairs of appliances and/or cars (Erhard, 2000). The Kayamandi Economic and Tourism Corridor (KETC) is administered by the Stellenbosch Municipality. Although the KETC is located at one of the main entrances to the community, most of the centre remains vacant. The Kayamandi council offices and police station are positioned opposite the KETC, but the municipal offices remain in the Stellenbosch town centre (Skinner, 2000).

**2.3.4. Dynamics and initiatives.** Although Kayamandi is in close proximity to the Stellenbosch town centre, there appears to be little movement between them (Fuchs, 2010). A dynamic has been identified where Stellenbosch residents construe the Kayamandi community as separate from the town. Kayamandi residents' attitudes reflect this dynamic as

they feel unable or reluctant to use the town's infrastructure. Apartheid separators may have become internalised and then perpetuated as a marker of community identity (Cubizolles, 2011). The post-Apartheid psychological legacy of learned helplessness manifests in discounting available resources that could be used to collectively improve conditions for the Kayamandi community (Tlooko, 2011).

Despite this barrier, a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (e.g., Ikhaya Trust, Prochorus, Kuyasa, Ikhaya Lempilo-Legacy Centre, At heart, etc.) and private SU initiatives appear to be operating in the community (Fuchs, 2010; Traub, 2010). In addition, various churches and youth-focused forums are active in Kayamandi. However, these groups seem to be collaborating less and 'competing' more in efforts to aid the disadvantaged Kayamandi youth (Fuchs, 2010; Traub, 2010).

**2.3.5. Educational context of Kayamandi.** There are two high schools in Kayamandi, namely Kayamandi High School and Makupula High School, from Grades 8 to Grade 12. The former Kayamandi School consisted of learners from Grade 1 to Grade 9 and was situated on the grounds of Makupula High School. Due to overcrowding two primary schools were built, namely Kayamandi Primary and Ikhaya Primary. The old Kayamandi School then became Makupula High School, catering for learners from Grade 8 to Grade 12. However, the school grounds and facilities have become inadequate to accommodate the approximately 1 475 students (N. Gosani, personal communication, September 9, 2011). The school yard and the tennis court were overrun with shacks and other dwellings. One of the school buildings was taken over by the community to be used as a town hall. Therefore, the existing school ground space is limited, as it is surrounded by residential areas on three sides and a road in the front.

**2.3.5.1. The development of Kayamandi High School.** Due to the shortage of space, a proposal was made to build another high school, namely Kayamandi High School. This school was meant to cater for Grade 10s to Grade 12s as a Further Education Training (FET) institute. The old Kayamandi School was meant to remain a GET (General Education Training) institute, focused on Grade 8s and Grade 9s. Construction was completed in 2007 and Kayamandi High School officially came into existence.

**2.3.5.2. Establishment of Makupula High School.** The Grade 8s and 9s moved back into the old Kayamandi School premises. A grant was received on 1 October 2008 for the creation of another high school, known as Makupula High School (Traub, 2010). Makupula High

School became a business-oriented school. Predominantly business subjects, such as economics, tourism, accounting, business and computer applications technology (i.e., technical drawing, also known as CAT) are taught.

In contrast, Kayamandi High School has a science focus. Subjects such as life sciences and physical sciences (i.e., physics, chemistry and biology) are taught. The distinction between the two high schools was made in an attempt to accommodate learners' needs and subject choices. In spite of this, competition has resulted between the two schools for a specific number of learners to attend each learning institute to receive government funding. In the present study, Makupula High School was identified as a site that would provide rich data. Makupula High School is the oldest structure and remains unchanged. In comparison, Kayamandi High School has upgraded facilities, including a hall and computer centre, which indicates differing internal climates.

Makupula High School began with Grade 8, 9 and 10 classes in 2009, and the former Grade 9s became the first Grade 10 group. Thereafter, 2010 saw the first Grade 11 class as the Grade 10s moved up another grade and, finally, the first Grade 12 group was enrolled in 2011. The first Makupula High School Grade 12 class consisted of 46 learners, in contrast to Kayamandi High School's 224 Grade 12 learners. This research study was specifically interested in the group of 46 learners and their systems of career influences in facing an exit from the high school education system.

#### **2.4. Career education**

In schools across South Africa, Life Orientation (LO) teachers have the task of preparing adolescents to make future choices (Ebersöhn & Mbeste, 2003). These teachers face considerable constraints and demands on their time which contribute to limited career education (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Stead, 1996). As a result, career activities occur on an *ad hoc* basis and Makupula High School is no exception (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003).

Previously, career educators targeted subject and career choices at specific points in high school, thus overlooking the process of career development (Watson & McMahan, 2006). Studies have now emphasised that adolescents require *career adaptability* in order to master vocational transitions. This concept has been defined as a readiness to cope with predictable and unpredictable adjustments, required in both preparing for and acclimatising to the changing conditions of the world-of-work (Savickas, 1997). However, LO teachers at



Makupula High School indicated the formidable struggle that Kayamandi youth face in finding their way into careers.

## **2.5. Career barriers**

Many perceived or real barriers exist in disadvantaged environments that constrain how adolescents' career needs and aspirations are engaged with (Luzzo & Hutcheson, 1996; Stead, Els, & Fouad, 2004). A barrier has been defined as an event or condition that is believed to make career progress difficult (Crites, 1969). Barriers can include intrapersonal issues (e.g., lack of interest), environmental variables (e.g., poverty), internal conflicts (e.g., self-concept) as well as external frustrations (e.g., lack of access to education) (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004; Swanson & Woitke, 1997). The perception of career barriers, whether real or imagined, influences an individual's career development process, thereby facilitating or detracting from career goals (Luzzo & Hutcheson, 1996; Stead et al., 2004).

An individual's perceived barriers shape career maturity, attitudes and behaviour. Perceived barriers may lead individuals to repeatedly compromise career goals, even if high levels of self-efficacy exist (Lee, Yu, & Lee, 2008; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002; Luzzo & Hutcheson, 1996). Previous research has indicated that disadvantaged high school learners face environments that have a lack of resources, contain emotional and physical stressors, are characterised by unstable family structures and a lack of role models that make career choices formidable (Ladany et al., 1997). Career choices are often based on stereotypes or dysfunctional beliefs that provide stumbling blocks to career development, and self-defeating assumptions need to be challenged to empower the individual (Kovalski & Horan, 1999; Stead & Watson, 1993; Stead, Watson, & Foxcroft, 1993).

## **2.6. Identified career barriers of Makupula High School learners**

The LO teachers, Ms Ndzamela and Mrs Gosani (personal communication, July 23, 2010), described a context of *limited accessible career information* with 'once-off' career days in the school context, when more sustainable channels should be constructed. A *lack of real-life exposure to occupations* was cited as problematic as access to role models and job shadowing opportunities was restricted. Low-status occupations arising from Apartheid caused inadequate career support due to *insufficient parental involvement in career development* as well as a deficit of positive values attached to careers (Maesala, 1994; Stead, 1996). Mrs Gosani (personal communication, August 10, 2010) explained that the limited availability of

information and lack of exposure to vocational realities resulted in distorted ideas of careers and access requirements.

In addition, *financial constraints* were mentioned as a considerable impediment. Career fairs were offered outside Stellenbosch and learners did not attend due to transport expenses. Moreover, the *insufficient self-awareness* of learners was also mentioned by Ms Ndzamela (personal communication, September 8, 2010). Learners had limited knowledge of their specific abilities, interests, achievements and role models, which negatively impacted Grade 9 subject choices. Lastly, *peer pressure* was a contributing influence that prevented career development and resulted in pregnancy, drug use and gang involvement. Three learners had dropped out of the 2011 matric group due to pregnancy and drug use.

The teachers are not able to address all these needs in their LO classes, as large classes (approximately 50 learners) do not allow one-on-one interaction. Furthermore, LO is a secondary teaching responsibility linked to primary ones (e.g., tourism, geography and history). As a result, many adolescents in Kayamandi experience great challenges in finding their way into careers or do not find employment at all.

## **2.7. Chapter summary**

This chapter provided a contextualisation of the Kayamandi community. The township environment was described to portray the reality that these adolescents face in constructing career paths. A brief overview was provided of vocational difficulties and barriers facing disadvantaged learners. Makupula High School's adolescents' career development processes and needs were discussed, as described by LO teachers. Vocational development will be discussed in the next chapter, using different theoretical approaches to assess whether these models enable or are merely made to 'fit' career development (Savickas, 1997).

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1. Introduction

The advent of technology and globalisation has drastically changed the world-of-work, resulting in a call for adaptations to career theory and practice (Maree & Beck, 2004). Practitioners and researchers are realising that traditional approaches to career counselling and assessment are prescriptive with more comprehensive postmodern approaches needed for constructive self-discovery (Maree, 2010b). This chapter aims to highlight three main trajectories of career theory, namely: 1) the *traditional approach (i.e., trait-and-factor)*, based on individual attributes and exemplified by John Holland's typology; 2) the *developmental career approach* of Donald Super, describing adjustments to tasks and roles as paramount; and 3) the *constructivist approach*, that explores the underlying meanings of individuals' choices as elucidated by the STF. While a plethora of theoretical career concepts and constructs exists, a recent scope of South African career concerns guides this section.

**3.1.1. Fragmented theoretical base.** An assortment of theoretical approaches and constructs resulted in inconsistent and fragmentary 'directions' in describing career processes (Brown, 2002; Watson & Stead, 2006a). Criticism has been directed at career theories that describe rather than aim to understand factors influencing career choices (Brown, 2002; Watson & Stead, 2006b). A lack of cohesion is evident in career literature with a lacuna for an integrating strategy to converge career development theories (Brown & Brooks, 1996; Savickas & Lent, 1994). An overarching framework is needed to easily incorporate various valuable concepts and efficiently position these for both theoretical and practical application (Dullabh, 2004). The STF has been proposed as such a metatheoretical framework due to its adaptability in breadth and depth. The STF encompasses environmental-societal influences as well as experience-near accounts (Patton & McMahon, 1999). A creative bridge between theoretical perspectives and culturally relevant career counselling practices could result (Kuit, 2006; McMahon & Watson, 2008; Watson & Stead, 2006a).

**3.1.2. Scope of career concerns.** According to Morgan (2010a), career literature specifies three critical concerns. The first concern is the *shift towards postmodern career counselling practices* and the practical application of narrative or story-telling techniques in depicting individuals' meaning-making processes (McIlveen, 2007; Stead & Watson, 2006). Secondly, a heightened awareness of the *need for cultural sensitivity* has surfaced when addressing an

individual's career needs respectfully. In collectivistic cultures, such as the isiXhosa-speaking sample used in this research, group career counselling and story-telling could greatly aid adolescents in narrating and pursuing ideas of a culturally-centred meaningful life (Watson & Stead, 2002). The third concern is the *career development of adolescents*, where the changed nature of the world-of-work has made career transitions even more challenging (McMahon et al., 2008).

**3.1.3. Adolescent career development.** Self-concept and identity elucidation, the focal points in Erikson's (1982) psychosocial stage of identity versus role confusion, are specifically associated with adolescence as a developmental stage. In order to craft realistic career aspirations, accurate knowledge about self and world-of-work is required, and this has been found to be sorely lacking in the adolescent age group (Watson, Foxcroft, et al., 1997). The difficulty lies in gaining valid self-knowledge to aid career decision-making within cultural paradigms (Ackermann & Botha, 1998). Cultural backgrounds create different career aspirations, values, attitudes and barriers to career decision-making processes (Tinsley, 1994). Traditional career choices amongst black adolescents were teaching, nursing, social work and office work professions, reflecting cultural norms and Apartheid restrictions (Maesala, 1994). Post-Apartheid socio-political changes have opened occupations to black adolescents, but the task of choosing a career remains formally unaided (Watson, Stead, & De Jager, 1995).

Unaided career choices result in realisations that entry requirements have not been met or that occupational niches are saturated after training has been completed (Maesala, 1994). Furthermore, movement from rural locations to urban settings for educational opportunities juxtapose adolescents' former rural community environment with a more western lifestyle (McIlveen, Morgan, & Bimrose, 2012; UNESCO, 2002). The reconciliation of 'western' career aspirations with rural roots to form a coherent self-concept may in fact be the greatest stumbling block in the identity development of disadvantaged adolescents. A section in this chapter entitled "*ubuntu*" will explore cultural values evident in isiXhosa-speaking adolescents' career choices.

### **3.2. Changed world-of-work**

Global economic crises, technological innovations and unstable global employment patterns have drastically impacted the world-of-work (Savickas, 2007). Life-time occupations and linear upward mobility have become outdated. Instead, temporary assignments or contractual

labour have become the norm (McMahon & Yuen, 2009). Individuals, who work part-time or are self-employed, frequently revisit career decision-making processes throughout their lifetimes (McMahon & Patton, 2002). The rational-scientific approach that previously informed career choices has been replaced by the understanding that career realities are subjectively constructed by individuals (Nkoane & Alexander, 2010). Personal variances in career decision-making processes are most apparent in multicultural contexts, such as that of South Africa. This results in culturally sensitive techniques (i.e., narrative approaches) being endorsed (Maree et al., 2010).

### **3.3. Career psychology: A South African theoretical overview**

**3.3.1. Circumscribing climates.** The Apartheid system prescribed career counselling practices and constrained career choices for most South Africans, especially black, coloured and Indian population groups (Nicholas et al., 2006; Watson & Stead, 2002). However, post-Apartheid socio-political and economic climates continue to exert important influences on adolescents' perceived career barriers and career choice processes (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006).

**3.3.2. Privileged populations.** Career assessments were conducted predominantly on privileged populations and socio-economic classes (i.e., English- and Afrikaans-speaking people) in the past. As a result, a vast majority of the South African population that urgently required career counselling services was excluded (Blustein et al., 2005; Maree & Beck, 2004; Maree et al., 2006). Sole reliance on psychometric assessments in career counselling is specifically problematic in a South African context due to the diverse cultural groups (Alexander et al., 2010; Morgan, 2010b). Varying scores on popular instruments, such as the Career Maturity Inventory, can be traced back to socio-economic status, with previously disadvantaged groups such as coloureds and blacks scoring lower (De Bruin & Bernard-Phera, 2002).

**3.3.3. Imported theoretical frameworks.** The assumption that imported theories, constructs and assessment instruments had the same relevance for different ethnic groups in different contexts guided South African career counselling research and practice (Stead & Watson, 1998). Constructs, such as career maturity and career decision-making self-efficacy, are situation-bound. Therefore they may not necessarily be valid in a South African context, and mixed results have been found (De Bruin & Bernard-Phera, 2002). Since 1990, the appropriateness or universality of imported career development theories has come under

scrutiny. The influence of contextual factors in the career choices of South African youth has been acknowledged to address theoretical shortcomings (Naicker, 1994b). Currently, career counselling in South Africa is undergoing a transition from assessment-focused approaches to more interpretative and narrative processes (Maree & Beck, 2004).

### 3.4. Traditional career approaches

Traditional career psychology was based on the assumption that an ‘expert’ should provide a lifelong occupational fit for an individual through the assessments of interests, abilities and needs (Kazuyuki & Kuo-Lin, 2006; McIlveen & Patton, 2006). Career counselling was conceptualised as an assessment that resulted in an ABC type that should work in XYZ environments, delineating a *trait-and-factor approach* to career choice (Kazuyuki & Kuo-Lin, 2006; McIlveen, McGregor-Bayne, Alock, & Hjertum, 2003; McIlveen & Patton, 2006). Trait-and-factor (matching) techniques are still the most accepted approach used in career counselling (Bimrose, 2010). This is inherently problematic as stability cannot be assumed of an individual’s traits or of opportunities that fit an individual’s particular view of self (Shefer, 2011). John Holland’s typology exemplifies the trait-and-factor approach and serves to link a person’s specific interest profile to a suitable career (Nauta, 2010).

**3.4.1. Holland's typology.** Holland’s (1997) theory categorises individuals into occupational fields according to their interests, using the Self-Directed Search (SDS) as a psychometric instrument. This theory was quickly adopted and extensively used in South African secondary and tertiary educational institutions (Brand, Van Noordwyk, & Hanekom, 1994). Yet it was not *adapted* by South African practitioners (Watson, 2000). The SDS is one of the typologies matching an individual’s scores on specific traits to a classification of occupations (Holland, 1974). A successful work adjustment is assumed to result from the correspondence between the individual’s strengths, abilities and the characteristics of the chosen work environment (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). The RIASEC structure was used in this model to classify career information (Nel, 2006).

**3.4.1.1. RIASEC.** A career choice was not only an articulation of suitable work environments for the individual, but also an expression of personality (Holland, 1997). Holland (1985) posited that most people can be classified into six RIASEC types according to their personality by using their interests, values, abilities and fantasies. The RIASEC fields are *Realistic (R)*, *Investigative (I)*, *Artistic (A)*, *Social (S)*, *Enterprising (E)* and *Conventional (C)*. The *Realistic* type prefers to work with tools, objects and machinery. In comparison, the *Investigative* type prefers scientific exploration of physical, biological or

cultural realms. The *Artistic* type prefers creativity and mastery of artistic skills, whereas the *Social* type prefers to work with people through education, training or healing professions. In contrast, the *Enterprising* type prefers to be innovative and influential in the business world and, lastly, the *Conventional* type prefers ordered activities such as the capturing of data (see Table 3.1.).

Individuals are believed to seek out work environments that complement their dominant personality types, thereby maximising individual work satisfaction and well-being (Miller et al., 2008). These six fields are not the only categories into which vocations may fall as individuals cannot be neatly boxed into only one of these fields (Holland, 1997). Therefore, interests are associated with each of the six types descending in order of preference. A three-letter-code is formed to express vocational identity according to a hexagonal model (see *Figure 3.*) (Holland, 1997; Miller et al., 2008).

Close proximity of fields in the hexagon indicates consistency, which demonstrates a high connection between an individual's interests, skills and values (Bisschoff, 1987). If interest fields are found on opposite sides of the hexagon (i.e., inconsistent), individual attention is given to the person to ascertain whether there are careers where these two fields can be combined or if interests are not clearly defined (Bisschoff, 1987).

**3.4.1.2. South African application.** The SDS as a measure was first published in an American context in 1970 and validated for this specific population group (Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), n.d.). It was not clear whether the model was applicable to different cultures, genders or socio-economic groups. However, the model's simplicity made the SDS popular in South Africa, and it was also applied to traditionally disadvantaged learners (Maree & Beck, 2004). Brand et al. (1994) determined the usefulness of the SDS for black adolescents in South Africa, and the SDS was indicated as an effective interest assessment technique in a non-western cultural environment.

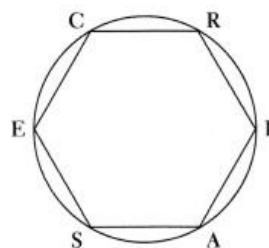
In contrast, Watson, Schonegevel and Stead (1997) found that a misshapen hexagon resulted among Grade 10 to 12 black adolescents. Similarly, when the SDS was applied to black Grade 12 learners, no correct ordering of interests was found (Wheeler, 1992). In determining the structural validity of the SDS, Du Toit and De Bruin (2002) tested a sample of black men and women selected randomly from the Eastern Cape and the North West. Their results showed that the SDS did not fit the data well.

Table 3.1.

*The RIASEC Personality Types*

Personality type	Characteristics
Realistic (R)	Practical, physical, hands-on and tool-orientated. E.g., agriculturist, athlete, engineer, mechanic, paramedic, police officer, etc.
Investigative (I)	Critical, scientific, analytical, explorative and intellectual. E.g., actuary, economist, financial executive, lawyer, psychologist, professor, physician, etc.
Artistic (A)	Expressive, creative, non-conforming, original and independent. E.g., actor, animator, art therapist, author, graphic designer, musician, painter, etc.
Social (S)	Cooperative, nurturing, helping and supportive. E.g., counsellor, educator, nurse, psychologist, social worker, teacher, pastor, speech and hearing therapist, etc.
Enterprising (E)	Persuasive, leadership orientated and competitive. E.g., marketing/advertising consultant, journalist, communicator, insurance broker, politician, public health worker, publisher, etc.
Conventional (C)	Conscientious, clerical, detail-oriented and organised. E.g., accountant, bank clerk, investment broker, copy editor, receptionist, retail assistant, administrator, proof reader, etc.

*Note.* Adapted from “Manual for the Self-Directed Search questionnaire (SDS): Occupational interest” (pp. 6-7), by J. Gevers, R. Du Toit, & R. Harillal, 1997, Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council. Copyright 1997 by Human Sciences Research Council.



*Figure 3.* Holland's hexagonal model. *Note.* Adapted from “The structural validity of Holland's R-I-A-S-E-C model of vocational personality types for young black South African men and women,” by R. Du Toit, & G. P. Du Bruin, 2002, *Journal of Career Assessment*, 10, p. 63. Copyright 2002 by Sage Publications. Reprinted with permission.



These mixed results regarding the validity and applicability of the SDS to non-westernised and multicultural contexts indicate that significant adaptations and refinements are essential in a South African setting before any conclusions can be drawn. Further research is needed if the translation of the SDS into indigenous South African languages (e.g., isiXhosa and seTswana) would result in a better fit of Holland's theory and the SDS model (Du Toit & De Bruin, 2002).

**3.4.1.3. Criticisms of traditional career counselling approaches.** Traditional career services have been criticised for being expensive, impractical, atheoretical and failing to reach people who need career guidance the most (Holland, 1974). A major criticism of the trait-and-factor approach has been the overemphasis of individual factors (e.g., personality, interests and abilities) at the expense of contextual issues. The interaction between individuals and contexts was thus disregarded (Watson & McMahon, 2005). The influence that parents, peers as well as other social and interpersonal factors have on adolescents' career decisions goes largely unrecognised in Holland's typology (Watson & Stead, 2006b). Similarly, socio-historical, socio-economic and cultural factors, that have far-reaching implications for career decision-making processes, were also excluded (Alexander et al., 2010). Holland's interest structure requires further research and refinement due to the poor fit observed in its application to black South African adolescents and disregarded career developmental stages (McMahon et al., 2008; Wheeler, 1992).

### **3.5. Developmental career theory**

A greater awareness of contextual influences in career concerns resulted in the trait-and-factor approach being challenged (McMahon & Patton, 2002). The perception that career choices and decision-making are malleable and on-going, replaced the assumed stability and rigidity of traditional career counselling approaches (Savickas, 2002; UNESCO, 2002). Instead of a once-off event, career choice was newly articulated as a dynamic process in which past and future career behaviours were interwoven (Watson & Stead, 2006b). The career development theory proposed by Donald Super included diverse life roles in order to acknowledge individuals' multi-faceted realities (McMahon & Patton, 2002). Therefore work roles were viewed as part of a constellation of other life roles, influenced by individuals' altering definitions of self (Watson & Stead, 2006c).

**3.5.1. Super's career theory.** Career decisions were theorised to take place at different age-related stages with specific tasks that required mastery (Super, 1990). The life career

rainbow in Super's career development theory (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996) depicts an orderly progression of stages throughout an individual's life-span. The graphic representation (see *Figure 4.*) portrays the *Life-span, Life-space theory* to consist of two main dimensions (Super et al., 1996). The first dimension, termed *Life-span*, demarcates age-related developmental stages that each individual is hypothesised to undergo. In contrast, *Life-space* is centred on the major life roles an individual can assume at any moment in time. The point of intersection between these two dimensions is the individual, who remains integral in assimilating various life and role experiences into his/her self-concept (Kazuyuki & Kuo-Lin, 2006).

**3.5.1.1. Self-concept.** Super claimed that individual insight into identity or sense of self allows a clear idea of potential capabilities to be ascertained (Super, 1990; Super et al., 1996). As a theoretical construct, self-concept is the coherent assimilation of self-knowledge, which forms a core developmental task of the psychosocial stage of adolescence (Erikson, 1982). Career choices are thus an implementation of a self-concept, where a specific vocational identity has a related self-concept (Sharf, 2006; Super et al., 1996). Multiple self-concepts result when "the picture the person has of [him/her] self in numerous roles and situations" changes due to circumstances, social learning and personal growth (Super et al., 1996, p. 141).

**3.5.1.2. The Life Career Rainbow.** There are five developmental life stages in Super's theory. These are *growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance* and *decline* (Super 1990; Super et al., 1996). These age-related stages have been linked to specific tasks that need to be accomplished in order to move through a normative sequence of developmental life stages (Kazuyuki & Kuo-Lin, 2006). In the present research, the *exploration stage* is only relevant as Grade 12 adolescents were the participants. The *exploration stage* (14 to 24 years) is seen as a crucial stage which involves active investigation to gain self-knowledge, world-of-work information and decision-making skills that culminate in a career direction (McMahon et al., 2008). Assessments, such as the Career Mastery Inventory (Crites, 1996), were developed to measure an individual's career readiness, maturity or adaptability to make appropriate stage-related career choices or assume a work role (Watson & Stead, 2006c).

**3.5.1.3. Role salience.** The Life Career Rainbow (*Figure 4.* below) illustrates that many different life roles can be simultaneously assumed, such as child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, home-maker, spouse and parent (Super, 1990). These major life roles are acted out in four main arenas, namely the home, education institution, work place and community

(Kazuyuki & Kuo-Lin, 2006). The emphasis on life roles suggests that some roles are more significant than others at a specific time, and this is illustrated by the thickness of shading in each inner role arc (Watson & Stead, 2006c).

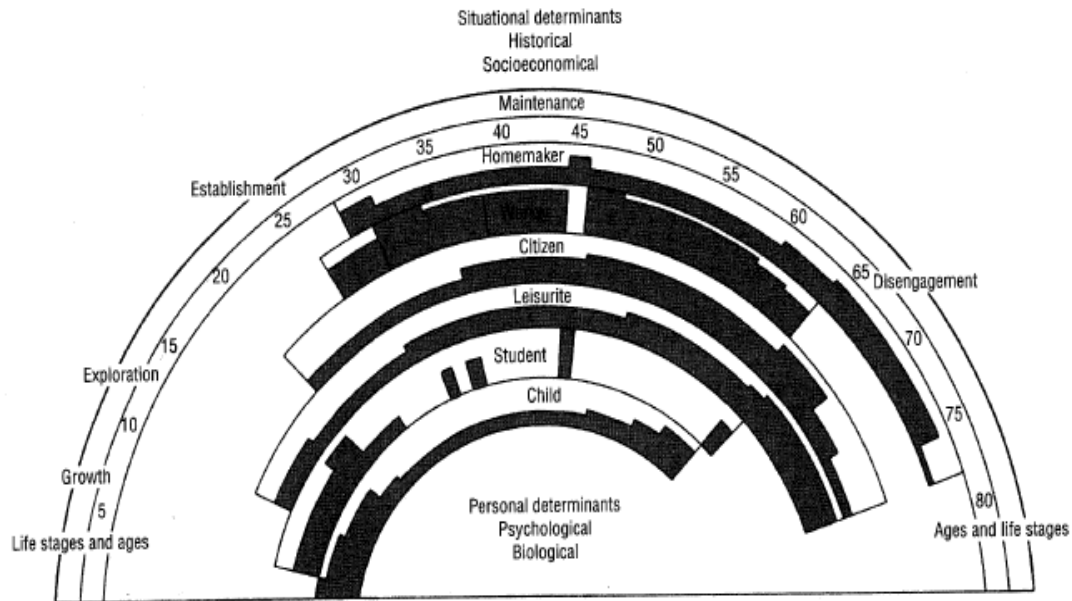


Figure 4. Career Life Rainbow. Note. Adapted From “The career development theory of Donald Super” (pp. 58), by M. B. Watson, & G. B. Stead. In *Career psychology in the South African context* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), 2006, Pretoria, South Africa: Van Schaik Publishers. Copyright, 2006 by Van Schaik Publishers. Reprinted with permission.

Super’s career rainbow describes a career as an interaction of all activities that an individual takes part in (both paid and unpaid). Work was not viewed in isolation from an individual’s lifestyle activities (Watson & Stead, 2006a). Culturally, this perspective is supported by differing isiXhosa meanings attached to the word work. *Phangela* refers to a formal work commitment, whereas *umsebenzi* reflects both formal and informal work roles (Watson & Stead, 2002). Super attempted to present a holistic understanding of the roles and role changes that each individual assumes throughout his/her life-span.

**3.5.1.4. Career maturity versus career adaptability.** Initially, the ability to cope with the changing nature of work commitments and to manage various life roles was considered to be an adult ability, termed *career adaptability* (Watson & Stead, 2006c). In comparison, *career maturity* was focused on adolescents’ readiness to make career choices. The completion of various developmental tasks during the exploration stage was required. An individual was *career mature* when a certain level of self-knowledge was possessed, decision-making skills

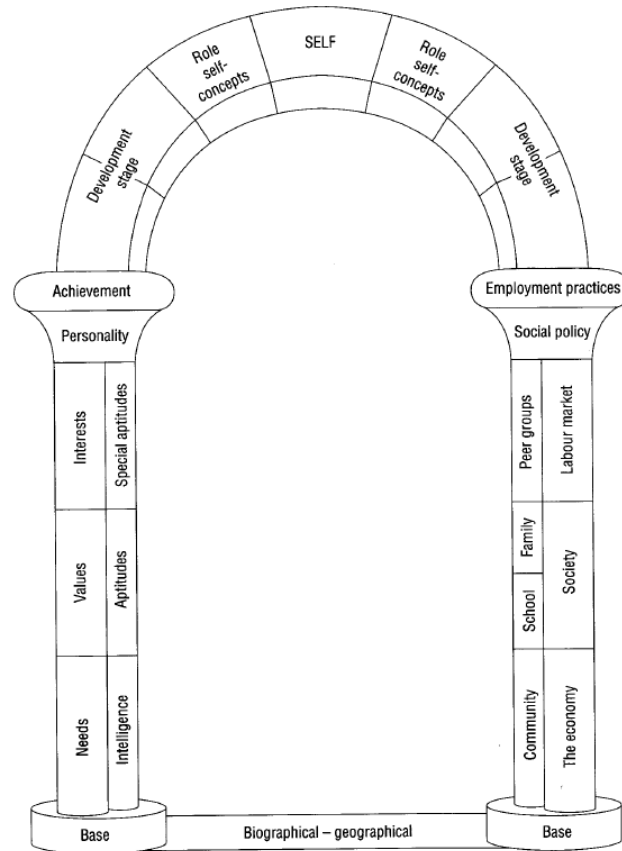
were demonstrated and sufficient world-of-work knowledge was retained (Super et al., 1996). Thus self-awareness was translated into career plans.

Recent revisions have favoured career maturity and career adaptability to be indicative of change across the entire life-span. Career adaptability has superseded career maturity as a construct. The re-use of the term career adaptability formed the foundation of the career construction theory (Savickas, 2002, 2005; Watson & Stead, 2006c). The readiness to deal with predictable work role tasks and unpredictable career transitions is now included in the term career adaptability (Savickas, 1997). Although there is ongoing change in an individual's career and circumstances, the transition from school to work has been indicated to require far more adaptability, depending on the unique contextual determinants involved in this process (Savickas, 2002, 2005).

**3.5.1.5. The Archway Model.** Previous criticisms claimed that Super's description of situational and personal determinants in the Life Career Rainbow were too general (Watson & Stead, 2006b). The Archway Model (see *Figure 5.*) attempted to explain contextual factors integrated into an individual's self-concept by constructing two pillars of personal and situational determinants as the base of the Life Career Rainbow (Super, 1990). A combination of personal and environmental factors was theorised to influence an individual's ongoing career pattern, including the sequence of occupations throughout an individual's life-span (Super, 1990). Thus age, sex, ethnicity, education and socio-economic variables were acknowledged and initiated as significant role players in career development processes (Watson & Van Aarde, 1986).

**3.5.1.6. South African application.** Previous research focused on white, middleclass 15 to 25-year-old individuals in a South African context (De Bruin & Nel, 1996). Therefore precursory factors and consequences of career behaviour were ignored in other population groups (Watson & Stead, 2002). The holistic theoretical context proposed by Super was insufficiently utilised in a South African context; diverse cultures were overlooked by the limited application of Super's theoretical propositions. Recognition that the meaning of work is deciphered through different cultural lenses calls the construct of role salience, as linked to life stages, into question (Ferrari et al., 2009). However, the differing access of population groups to educational and vocational services, rather than the completion of developmental tasks, may be mirrored in the construct of career maturity (Nicholas et al., 2006). Therefore, Super's developmental stages may not adequately reflect the career paths of disadvantaged black youth, who rarely have opportunities to explore and commit to long-term careers,

resulting in lower career maturity scores (De Bruin & Bernard-Phera, 2002; Van Niekerk & Van Daalen, 1991; Watson & Van Aarde, 1986; Watson et al., 1995).



*Figure 5. The Archway Model. Note.* Adapted from “The career development theory of Donald Super” (pp. 58), by M. B. Watson, & G. B. Stead. In *Career psychology in the South African context* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), 2006, Pretoria, South Africa: Van Schaik Publishers. Copyright, 2006 by Van Schaik Publishers. Reprinted with permission.

**3.5.1.7. Criticisms of career development approaches.** South African contextual factors such as discrimination, ethnic identity and unemployment were overlooked (Watson & Stead, 2006b). Super’s hypotheses about socio-political, socio-economic and familial factors have been questioned (De Bruin & Nel, 1996; McMahon et al., 2008; Watson, 2000). In addition, Super’s developmental processes are not necessarily reflective of all the South African population groups where gender, ethnicity, cultural and socio-economic variables influence self-concept construction (Dullabh, 2004). Disadvantaged learners who live in townships are unlikely to follow the same development stages as their advantaged peers. Stead and Watson (1998) have suggested that developmental stages, self-concept, career maturity and decision-

making constructs either need to be re-examined or redefined indigenously to be more meaningful in a South African context.

### **3.6. Constructivist approaches to career psychology**

Constructivism places emphasis on individual cognitive processes and the *subjective meanings* that clients assign to career concerns (McMahon & Patton, 2002; Young & Collin, 2004). Individuals define themselves and their environments through social interactions located geographically, historically and culturally (Young & Collin, 2004). Constructivist approaches focus on how personal realities are created, and reflection is encouraged to narrate “careers as stories” (Maree, 2012; McMahon & Patton, 2002).

**3.6.1. Narrative career counselling.** The underlying assumption of a narrative approach is that individuals live according to specific narratives they have constructed about themselves or others have constructed about them (McIlveen & Patton, 2006; McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2003). Story-telling can be used to reflect the diversity of the human experience. Reconstruction of an individual’s future career story can be achieved within socio-cultural, political and economic variables (Severy, 2008).

**3.6.1.1. Defining narrative approaches.** Narrative career counselling remains a rapidly evolving collection of ideas and methods. In this research, the terms ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ will be used interchangeably (McIlveen & Patton, 2007; McMahon et al., 2003). A collection of practical techniques (such as genograms, card sorting exercises, collages, time/life lines, life-space maps, pattern identification exercises, vignettes, metaphors, creative writing activities and the recollection of early memories) are used to elicit ‘thick’ stories (McMahon & Patton, 2002; Morgan, 2010a). Narrative approaches can create both a meaningful and attainable career story through holistic meaning-making processes that are emotional, action-orientated and collaborative (McIlveen & Patton, 2006, 2007; McMahon et al., 2003; Taylor, 2007). The client is involved in accessing a range of contextual data. Affective, subjective and cognitive information is gained through different media (i.e., visual/ kinaesthetic) to tie relevant personal and career variables together (McMahon & Patton, 2002).

**3.6.1.2. Narrating career chapters.** Individuals are accepted as active agents in the contexts of their own lives, capable of creating their own career stories irrespective of their circumstances (McIlveen & Patton, 2006; Savickas, 2002). A ‘space’ is facilitated where experiences can be recounted, career stories told and aspects not admitted before elaborated (McMahon & Watson, 2009). This interpretative process allows the past, present and future

to be woven together to explore *how* informed career decisions can be made to transform future actions (Van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008; Watson & McMahon, 2006). Personal narratives are continuously reconstructed as an individual makes meaning of the influences in his/her life whilst being embedded in a context consisting of the real, unreal, known and unknown (McIlveen, 2007).

Story-telling processes provide a platform for reflection, learning, agency, connectedness and meaning-making (McMahon & Watson, 2008). Although this process is time consuming and labour intensive, the narrative approach is inherently valuable in achieving personal career insights (McMahon et al., 2004). The STF can be used as a map to guide the narrative approach. In the present research the STF was used as a bridge between theory and data in order not to reduce reliance on western models of counselling (McMahon et al., 2005a; Patton & McMahon, 2006; Watson & McMahon, 2006).

### **3.7. Systems Theory Framework (STF) of Career Development**

The STF is a metatheoretical account of career development consistent with a constructivist worldview that clearly indicates the *content* and *process* dimensions of career development (McMahon, 2005; McMahon et al., 2004). Personal qualities, intrinsic traits and contextual influences within which individuals interact and live are all represented as *content influences* (McMahon & Watson, 2008). In contrast, *process influences* include the multi-directional interaction between various subsystems of influences (McMahon & Watson, 2008).

Punctuated or discontinuous incidents that require sudden adaptability are also incorporated in recursive contexts of past, present, future development and learning (Dullabh, 2004).

**3.7.1. Basic tenets of the STF.** The STF is the forerunner in efforts to embed school-based career education into a theoretical framework that portrays the myriad of influences within an individual's career system (McMahon, 2005; Patton & McMahon, 2006). The term *influence* is used to avoid any negative or positive connotations; instead, the individual ascribes meaning to influences identified (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; McMahon, 2005).

The STF depicts a comprehensive range of two categories of constructs, namely *content* and *process* influences on career development, to contextualise important intrapersonal variables relevant to career behaviour (McIlveen et al., 2003; McMahon et al., 2008; Patton & McMahon, 2006; Watson & McMahon, 2006). As a construct category, *content influences* refer to the *individual influence system* (e.g., age, personality, gender, beliefs, interests and ethnicity), the *social influence system* (e.g., family, school, peers and the media) and the

*environmental-societal influence system* (i.e., geographic, political and socio-economic factors) (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; McIlveen et al., 2003; Patton & McMahon, 2006; Stead & Watson, 2006). Therefore, the individual is perceived as a system and part of a greater contextual system consisting of the social and environmental-societal systems (McMahon & Watson, 2008).

The changeable nature of career development within and between the systems of influence is recognised in the *process influences* construct category (McIlveen et al., 2003; McMahon et al., 2008). These process influences include *recursiveness*, *change over time* and *chance* (Watson, Foxcroft, McMahon, & Dullabh, 2004). Each system represented in the STF is open to influences from the outside, and a change in one part of the system results in a ripple effect of changes throughout the system (Patton & McMahon, 2006). The complex interplay between influences is exemplified in the STF diagram (see *Figure 6*). Broken lines express permeability, whereas chance is illustrated with lightning flashes. The past, present and future dimensions of time are placed in different parts of the outer circle, showing temporal interconnectedness (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

The recurring nonlinear, acausal, mutual and multidirectional interaction within the individual system and between the individual and his/her context, is known as *recursiveness* (McMahon et al., 2004). The concept of recursiveness includes the openness of each system to outside influences and the resulting changes in other parts of the system (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Interaction occurs within and between subsystems and the individual system, where both the nature and degree of the influences change over time in a largely unplanned manner (McMahon & Watson, 2008).

Qualities such as adaptability, flexibility and mobility inherent in career development are recognised in the concept of change over time (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). Content and process influences are located within a context of time. The past is connected to the present and together they shape future career considerations (McMahon, 2005). In addition, chance events acknowledge that career trajectories are not predictable or logical. Events, not anticipated by the individual, may play a profound role in career development (e.g., illness, natural disasters, immigration, accidents) (McMahon & Watson, 2008; Watson & McMahon, 2006).



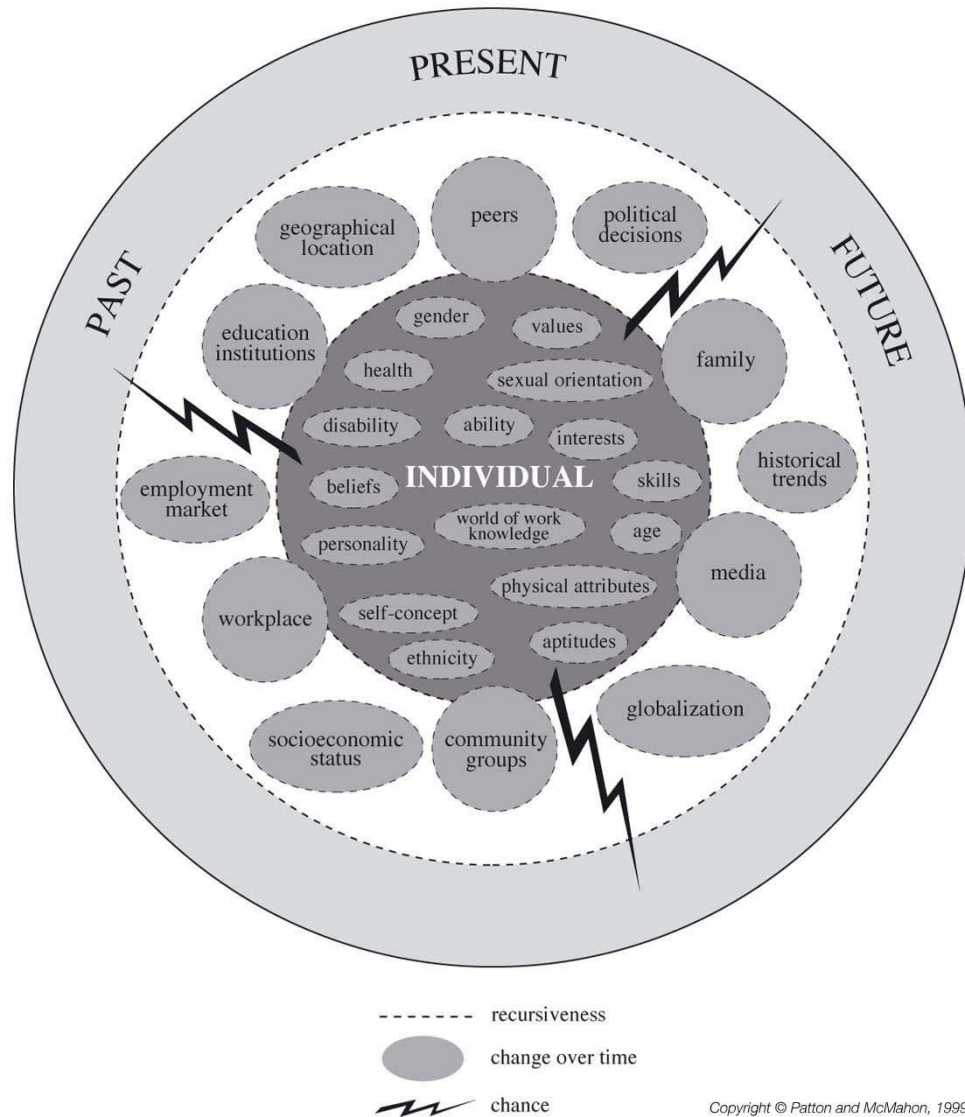


Figure 6. The Systems Theory Framework of Career Development. *Note.* Adapted from “*Career Development and Systems Theory: A New Relationship*” by W. Patton & M. McMahon, 1999, Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. Copyright 1999 by Brooks/Cole. Reprinted with permission.

**3.7.2 Multicultural application.** The STF can be customised to accommodate career development within individualistic or collectivistic cultures by incorporating aspects of culture (e.g., interests, attitudes and values) that are relevant for each client (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; McMahon, 2005; Stead, 1996; Stead & Watson, 2006). The STF has been applied across countries and cultures because of its flexibility in addressing specific client issues (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; McMahon, 2005). In the present study, the STF was used as an overarching theoretical framework to provide methodological consistency and a holistic examination of adolescent career development (McMahon et al., 2008). Career development

of adolescents was conceptualised to be affected by complex interactions between various factors (i.e., environmental, emotional and cognitive factors). Nonetheless, the STF supports the notion that career problems are not internal to the adolescent (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Hirschi, 2009).

The STF can provide a means of engaging with clients from traditionally marginalised groups and can offer a mechanism to explore the impact of overlooked career influences (e.g., rural locations and disadvantaged socio-economic conditions) (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). A qualitative assessment based on the STF, the *My System of Career Influences* (*MSCI*; McMahon et al., 2005c) was used in the present research. The *MSCI* allows career narratives of participants to be voiced to reduce the gap between assessment and career counselling (McMahon & Watson, 2008).

### **3.8. *My System of Career Influences* (*MSCI*)**

The *MSCI* booklet contains a personalised map based on the STF. Visually represented information encourages individuals to reflect on their career realities and tell their career stories (McMahon et al., 2004; McMahon & Watson, 2008). The qualitative story-telling approach, specifically the *MSCI*, was found to be effective in research conducted on rural and urban middle class Australian secondary school learners (McIlveen et al., 2012). In a South African context research has been conducted on low socio-economic urban black secondary school learners as well as middle class urban white and black secondary school learners. The appropriateness of the *MSCI* across a diverse group of individuals was demonstrated in past research (McMahon & Watson, 2012). The meaning-making that disadvantaged adolescents undergo based on their unique constellation of career influences and the resultant story-telling, is intrinsic to understanding local South African career identities (McMahon & Watson, 2008, 2009).

### **3.9. Comparing narrative and career counselling**

The numerous similarities between career counselling and counselling/therapy have recently been acknowledged (Maree, 2010a). Career counselling practice encompasses principles of career theory and therapeutic elements. In addition, the STF incorporates a systems approach previously utilised in family therapy (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Savickas (1993, p. 212) claims that a “career is personal” and individuals can unearth subjective career realities through telling their own stories (McMahon & Patton, 2002). Narrative career counselling is

therapeutically effective because personal needs and losses are inexplicably intertwined with career trajectories.

A life narrative can disintegrate through everyday losses, such as that of illness, death, shattered dreams or unfulfilled needs (Van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008). A life experience can be turned into a narrative as a method of finding meaning. The description of the significance of each part of the story enables insight and learning to be achieved (Chope & Consoli, 2006; McMahon & Patton, 2002). Previously marginalised members of society may find healing in telling stories, creating future narratives and selves to alleviate internalised oppression by constructing new career chapters, whilst structural barriers can be lessened (Smith, Chambers, & Bratini, 2009).

A detailed co-construction of career stories occurs during counselling guided by the STF. Client and counsellor form their own systems of influences, on equal terms, early in the counselling relationship (Chope & Consoli, 2007). In this manner, career counselling will not serve to marginalise “the perspectives on life of an already disadvantaged, large majority of the population” (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000, p. 6). Derived inferences that point to individual or cultural deficits as a manner of masking unfair social systems can be moderated (Blustein et al., 2005).

### **3.10. *Ubuntu*: A cultural paradigm**

Individuals are socialised with different worldviews, expressed in interests, attitudes and values (Stead & Subich, 2006; Stead & Watson, 2006). In this research, culture consists of an *emic view*, where variables such as ethnicity, age and gender form group membership. In addition, an *etic view* of culture includes internalised cultural beliefs or perceived barriers which form an individual’s worldview (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). An individual’s views of career development and the world-of-work are determined partially by cultural values and constraints (Hansen, Scullard, & Haviland, 2000; Stead, 1996).

Black South Africans hold a particular cultural value, called *ubuntu*, which is associated with collectivism (Du Toit & De Bruin, 2002). *Ubuntu* is based on the belief that a person exists through other people (Stead & Watson, 1998). Individuals show a willingness to suffer for the well-being of others in a societal context in which harmony and wholeness are given paramount importance (Van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008). In contrast, western societies place emphasis on individual achievement, satisfaction and actualisation (Du Toit & De Bruin, 2002; Stead & Watson, 1998). Differences in the meaning of vocational interests

may manifest, which calls for a re-examination of theoretical constructs emphasising individualism (e.g., career maturity) in career development (Du Toit & De Bruin, 2002; Maree et al., 2006; Watson & Stead, 2002).

### 3.11. Chapter summary

Recent career concerns have identified the challenges adolescents face in adapting to school-to-work transitions within the changed nature of the world-of-work. Three career psychology movements were delineated, with Holland's typology presented as an example of *traditional career approaches* that focus on individual career behaviour at the cost of other intrapersonal variables (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Secondly, *developmental career approaches*, exemplified by Super's theory, indicate the re-conceptualisation of a career to include tasks, life roles and stages. The *constructivist movement* best accommodates cultural paradigms, worldviews and interpretations of experiences (Swartz, 2002). Narrative approaches that form part of the constructivist movement, especially the *MSCI*, were discussed as a welcomed shift away from a past over-reliance on individual traits (McMahon & Watson, 2008; Munsaka, 2009). Lastly, the call for culturally-relevant career counselling was explored, and cultural values of the *ubuntu* paradigm were reviewed. The next chapter describes the methodology, research design details, sample demographics, data collection and data analysis processes of the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1. Introduction

Qualitative research is useful for studying uncharted terrain, where individual experiences can provide detailed descriptions to bring to light the unknown (Field & Morse, 1985). The qualitative research design in this study is particularly apt to present a complex and thorough understanding of Makupula High School learners' systems of career influences. Information can thus be gained about the parameters of what is known and unknown in the career development of disadvantaged adolescents (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). However, exactly *how* the thoughts and feelings of participants should be represented in an honest and systematic way is a complex task (Burnard, 1991).

#### 4.2. Criteria for quality assurance

Qualitative data pose complex issues that require responses obtained from participants to be presented in a truthful way. Reliability of the research, known as *trustworthiness*, allows replicability of procedures and data generated under different circumstances can yield similar results (Bryman, 2001; Stiles, 1993). In order to enhance the validity or trustworthiness of the study, issues of *credibility*, *confirmability*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *triangulation* were addressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**4.2.1. Credibility.** This refers to the fit between participants' views and the researcher's representation (Schwandt, 2001; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Approaches to increase credibility include prolonged engagement in the research site, with extensive field work (Erlandson, Harrison, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). The researcher has been involved in the Kayamandi community as a member of the Career Life-Planning Project since 2010 and was active in community forums, career workshops and counselling sessions with Grade 9s and Grade 11s from both high schools. Face-to-face meetings with the principals and LO teachers provided first-hand, lived experience of the school conditions, which added to the validity of the study.

**4.2.2. Transferability.** Although individual subjective meanings are crucial to the findings, transferability is known as the generalisability of the inquiry (Sandelowski, 1993; Tobin & Begley, 2004). The present study is based on comprehensive and extensive descriptions of a specific sample that is not generalisable to other contexts. However, if a

high degree of similarity exists between times, people and settings in the original research and the applied context, then findings could be transferred (i.e., proximal similarity) (Appleton, 1995; Lewis, 2009; Tobin & Begley, 2004).

**4.2.3. Dependability.** Technical accuracy was seen as equally important in the recording and transcribing of data. A computerised data analysis package (viz., ATLAS.ti) was used to enhance dependability (Roberts & Woods, 2000). Thematic content analysis was used with specific codes created to describe the data. The recorded statements were transcribed line-by-line to form numbered interview scripts that were checked by the researcher to ensure accuracy of captured data (Roberts, Priest, & Traynor, 2006). Intensive engagement with the data and a range of verbatim examples were used to make solid links between the data, and interpretations were used to increase confirmability (Lewis, 2009).

**4.2.4. Triangulation.** Different methods of data collection enhance the consistency and the validity of the study (Halcomb & Andrew, 2005; Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004; Williamson, 2005). Methods used included a demographic questionnaire, a written narrative exercise, the *MSCI*, individual and focus group interviews. Thereby a process of *triangulation* was followed to cross-check data collected. Verbatim accounts (i.e., direct quotations) were used to validate findings (Boeijie, 2010; Johnson, 1997). In addition, participants were asked to validate interpretations during the focus group (Bryman, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Roberts et al., 2006). The researcher's subjectivity as a research instrument, in terms of reflexivity and the researcher self, is described at the end of this chapter (Holloway & Biley, 2011).

### **4.3. Research design**

The present study utilised a qualitative epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) in order to understand the meanings as represented by the participants themselves. The usefulness of the *MSCI* as a qualitative career measure was analysed in this exploratory research in order to address the career needs of adolescents living in a disadvantaged context, such as that of Kayamandi (McMahon et al., 2008). Thematic content analysis was used to extract themes according to the *MSCI* to ascertain barriers and enablers that could be addressed in career development (McMahon et al., 2004). A qualitative description of adolescents' subjective career stories allows new and critical issues in career counselling with marginalised South African youth to be explored (Ebersöhn & Mbetse, 2003; Patton, Creed, & Watson, 2003; Stead et al., 2004).

#### 4.4. Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select participants with the main selection criterion that learners had to come from the Kayamandi township. Both high schools in Kayamandi were approached, but the final sample was drawn from Makupula High School due to logistical constraints at the other high school. Makupula High School had its first group of matriculants in 2011. The researcher therefore felt that novel and rich data could be elicited from this group of adolescents. All Grade 12 learners (47 in total) were given the opportunity to participate, although only 29 learners completed the narrative exercise used to determine English proficiency. The *MSCI* is currently only available in English. The usefulness of the measure can still be determined if the respondents' command of English is sufficient until an isiXhosa version of the *MSCI* is developed. The limitation of using an English-based measure with non-mother tongue English participants is central to the findings of the context of this study.

The narrative exercise required a textual description of what plans or ideas the illustrated person was considering. The figure was represented as male or female, depending on the specific gender of the participant (see Appendix H & I). Eight participants dropped out after the narrative exercise had been completed on 21 July 2011. A total of 21 learners, consisting of 12 boys and 9 girls, were still willing to take part. A core sample of 12 learners remained by 16 August 2011, with 3 girls and 9 boys, constituting a 1:3 ratio. The high attrition rate was assumed to have resulted from academic demands and time constraints. The adolescents in the core sample were between 17 and 20 years old. The mean age of the sample group was 18.4 years ( $SD = 0.65$ ).

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the demographic information collected from the research sample including gender, home language and parents' education levels and occupations. The home language was predominantly isiXhosa (83%), and both isiXhosa and English were cited by two participants (17%). Parents' education levels and occupations were separated by gender to compare the educational levels achieved by mothers and fathers as well as their respective occupations.

In the sample, fathers with a low level of education were the highest percentage (50%), followed by 33% of the mothers. Interestingly, more mothers had achieved Grade 11 and 12 levels of education (50%). This can be contrasted with only one father in the sample who had

a Grade 12 level of education (8.3%). Although mothers had higher education levels, the occupations reported were low-paying and semi-skilled jobs.

Table 4.1.

*Demographic Data of the Grade 12 Makupula High School Sample*

Measures		Sample group ( <i>n</i> = 12) F	%
Gender	Male	9	75.0
	Female	3	25.0
Home language	IsiXhosa	9	75.0
	IsiXhosa & English	2	16.7
	Not given	1	8.3
Mother's education	Less than Grade 4	3	25.0
	Grade 4	1	8.3
	Grade 9	1	8.3
	Grade 10	1	8.3
	Grade 11	2	16.7
	Grade 12	4	33.3
Mother's job	Cook	1	8.3
	Housewife	1	8.3
	Domestic worker	2	16.7
	Self-employed	1	8.3
	Unemployed	6	50.0
	Not answered	1	8.3
Father's education	Less than Grade 4	6	50.0
	Grade 4	1	8.3
	Grade 8	1	8.3
	Grade 9	2	16.7
	Grade 10	1	8.3
	Grade 12	1	8.3
Father's job	Factory worker	2	16.7
	Petrol attendant	1	8.3
	Truck driver	1	8.3
	Mine worker	2	16.7
	Taxi driver	1	8.3
	Water proofer	1	8.3
	Unemployed	3	25.0
	Not answered	1	8.3



Occupations such as domestic worker, housewife, cook and self-employed were reported. A high number (50%) of mothers was unemployed, raising interesting career questions about the work status of black women. In contrast, fathers' occupations were reported as factory worker, mine worker, taxi driver, construction worker (i.e., water proofer), petrol attendant or unemployed. These occupations correspond to semi-skilled labour and the lower education levels cited in this sample. The participants also had to write three career ideas on the demographic questionnaire to establish their current career thinking processes. These are presented below.

Table 4.2.

*Career Ideas Taken from the Demographic Questionnaire*

Career ideas listed (3 for each learner)	Sample group ( $n = 12$ ) F
Actuarial science	1
Auditor	2
B Commerce (marketing)	3
Businesswoman	1
Chartered accountant	2
Economist	1
Entrepreneurs	1
Human resources	1
Mathematician	1
Radio/TV presenter	2
Social worker	1
Sports	2
Management	1
Professional	1
Tourism	8
Guide	1
Operator	1
Travel agent	2
Flight attendant	1
Management	2
Marketing	1
Learners who did not answer	3

Participants' career ideas included accounting, business, marketing, management, auditing, economics, tourism, human resource management and entrepreneurship. Predominantly business or economic careers were expected due to Makupula High School's business orientation. However, some other career ideas were mentioned, such as Radio/TV presenter, sportsman, flight attendant, tour guide/operator, travel agent, mathematician and social worker. Three learners left out career ideas, which was interpreted as uncertainty about career decisions and was further explored in the *MSCI*. The career ideas mentioned were all highly paid and seemed to be gender neutral occupations. The implications of these career ideas will be explored in the next chapters.

#### **4.5. Career Measure: *My System of Career Influences (MSCI)***

The measure used was the *My System of Career Influences (MSCI)* (McMahon et al., 2005c), which is a qualitative career assessment instrument derived from the STF of career development (Patton, McMahon, & Watson, 2006). The *MSCI* is adaptable for either individual or group career counselling processes (McMahon, et al., 2005b). The main strength of this instrument is that individuals identify their own unique constellation of influences and narrate their own career development stories. Learning about the interaction of various elements that constitute the systems of career influences helps to develop an understanding of what is important and why this is so (McMahon et al., 2003; 2005b; McMahon & Watson, 2009).

**4.5.1. Target group.** The *MSCI* was designed for use with adolescents and has been shown to be effective in providing insight into both the content and process of career development (McMahon et al., 2008). The instrument may be particularly useful in subject selection, transition times, exit points and contemplation of further training options (McMahon et al., 2005b). The *MSCI* can be completed at different times to compare the results, indicating progress and change in the client's systems of influences. Although the assessment is self-guided, teachers or career counsellors should be present to provide support or clarification, if needed (McMahon & Watson, 2008).

**4.5.2. Description of the *MSCI*.** The *MSCI* is a twelve-page booklet divided into five sections that enables reflection on current career situations, with instructions, examples and space to respond (McMahon et al., 2005c). In Section 1 of the *MSCI* workbook, *My Present Career Situation*, seven open-ended questions are presented related to: current career

decisions, work experience, life roles, occupational aspirations, decision-making approaches and people who have provided advice.

In Section 2, each of the interrelated systems of influence in the STF are represented diagrammatically. Here, users need to indicate three of their most important influences in each step with an asterisk. The first step, *Thinking About Who I Am*, is based on the intrapersonal system of influences with reflection on influences such as interests, personality, gender, health and culture. The second step, *Thinking About The People Around Me*, is based on the social system of influences with reflection on family, friends and media. The third step, *Thinking About Society and Environment*, is based on the environmental-societal system of influences with reflection on financial support, local area and public transport. The fourth step, *Thinking About My Past, Present and Future*, contextualises time, using reflections on past role models and future lifestyle aspirations. The final step, *Representing My System of Career Influences*, integrates the information gained in the preceding steps and results in a personalised diagram of an individual's system of career influences.

Section 3 of the *MSCI* workbook, *Reflecting on My Systems of Career Influences*, is a reflection process guided by 11 open-ended questions. Section 4, *My Action Plan*, and Section 5, *My System of Career Influences 2*, were not included in the study. This research was limited to eliciting the adolescents' systems of career influences. The qualitative approach of the *MSCI* encourages systematic and systemic engagement with career stories and future planning (McMahon et al., 2008).

**4.5.3. Development of the *MSCI*.** The *MSCI* was developed using a three-stage cross-national trialling process (see Appendix N for further details) (McMahon et al., 2005b). The development of the *MSCI* has involved a meticulous process of theoretical, conceptual and practical refinements over a four-year period.

Stage 1 involved the trialling of the pilot version of the instrument, using Master's level students enrolled in career development courses in South African and Australian universities (McMahon, Gillies, & Carroll, 2000). The feedback received showed that this sample of participants could successfully create their own career stories through reflection. However, the need was identified for an adult and adolescent version (McMahon et al., 2003c). Stage 2 was based on a refinement of the pilot version in order to trial an adolescent version with a similar sample to stage 1. The third trial sample, conducted by Dullabh (2004), consisted of English-speaking South African adolescents from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and was used to refine the *MSCI* (McMahon et al., 2005b).

The feedback from the three trials suggests that the *MSCI* is suitable for adolescents based on the language refinement, booklet layout and development of a facilitator's manual (McMahon et al., 2005b). In addition, the *MSCI*, as a practical application of the STF, was indicated by socio-economically disadvantaged learners to assist in the meaningful creation of career stories through reflection (Dullabh, 2004). Therefore, this instrument was deemed suitable for the adolescents in Kayamandi.

#### **4.6. Data collection methods and procedure**

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Stellenbosch University ethics review committee and from the Western Cape Department of Education (WCED) prior to data collection. The principal of Makupula High School gave written permission for the Grade 12 learners to be interviewed. The researcher's earlier community involvement facilitated credibility and access to the learners. Data collection constituted a four-phase research process: firstly, a research introduction (narrative exercise and demographic questionnaire); secondly, the completion of the *MSCI*; thirdly, individual interviews; and fourthly, the focus group interview. Multiple sessions were arranged for each phase, from May to September 2011. The lengthy structure of the research process was based on recommendations in the facilitator's guide. An extensive learning process was implemented, with activities completed prior to the administration of the *MSCI* to maximise learning.

**4.6.1. The first phase: Research introduction.** Teachers were asked for permission to invite learners during an LO class to participate in the research project. The first phase included an introductory session describing the purpose and procedure of the study. Interested learners were given a take-home pack, consisting of a cover letter explaining the research in English and isiXhosa (Appendix A), an assent form for the learner to sign (Appendix B), a consent form for guardians or parents to sign (Appendix C) and a demographic questionnaire (Appendix D). The completed consent forms, demographic questionnaires and assent forms were collected and checked by the researcher. Once all the forms had been returned, research participants were given a take-home narrative exercise during another LO class. The narrative exercise and a form, indicating availability times, were returned the next day. Although English proficiency was informally assessed with the narrative exercise, the exercise also helped to stimulate ideas about career choices.

**4.6.2. The second phase: The *MSCI*.** Although the *MSCI* was initially scheduled during two lunch breaks of about 30 to 40 minutes, participants decided that contact sessions were to

occur *ad hoc* after school. Specified times on a timetable were arranged for the *MSCI* to be completed. Thereafter individual interviews took place in an empty classroom after school.

The *MSCI* booklet (see Appendix J) was administered in a group because learners were reluctant to participate individually. This could be attributed to the familiarity of group contexts in school learning, with limited one-on-one interaction (Alexander et al., 2010). An introductory session was used to accustom the group of participants to the concept of systemic thinking, as recommended in the *MSCI* Facilitator's Guide (McMahon et al., 2005b). This familiarised the participants with the terminology used. Examples of systematic thinking were also provided, and career development was conceptualised as a continuous process (McMahon et al., 2005b). The researcher then played a facilitative role in guiding the group of participants through the various levels of influences in the *MSCI* step by step.

The researcher had a conversation with each participant to enable personal reflection on his/her own career narrative. The *MSCI* booklet can be completed in a single sitting of 30 to 40 minutes, but the group took two sessions of an hour each. Participants identified the *MSCI* as a novel way of thinking. Continuous guidance from the researcher and an isiXhosa translator was needed. Higher levels of support were expected, based on the disadvantaged context and lack of career counselling background (McMahon et al., 2005b).

**4.6.3. The third phase: Individual interviews.** After participants had completed the *MSCI* booklet, they were invited to discuss their experiences of completing the *MSCI*, guided by 11 open-ended questions in an interview schedule (Appendix K). Anonymity and confidentiality of the data was assured before interviewing commenced. An empty classroom on the school premises was used after school to avoid interference with the academic syllabus. Permission to record the interviews electronically was requested. Interview data were stored electronically for data analysis, accessible to the researcher, the research supervisor and an external researcher for transcription.

Reflective interviews took 30 to 40 minutes to complete. The learning experiences derived from the *MSCI* were supported by direct responses to learners' questions as they arose (Appleton, 1995; McMahon et al., 2005b). Participants' perspectives, understandings and meanings attached to individual systems of career influences were elicited during the interviews to gain richer narratives of career development experiences (Henning et al., 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Participants were referred to other resources available within the school or broader community system for further career support. Contact details of the Career Information Centre in Kayamandi and Stellenbosch University's Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) were provided (Watson & McMahon, 2006). The participants were informed that they could gain access to the findings of the study and that the results would be used in designing Career Life-Planning Project interventions for Kayamandi high school learners. The isiXhosa translator was not used after the second session, as it was established that the translator was not needed (Maree et al., 2006). English was the main medium of communication from this point on. A focus group interview was held to solidify the elicited career influences.

**4.6.4. The fourth phase: Focus group.** All 12 participants were invited to the focus group interview picnic. Invitations were based on criteria that respondents had completed their demographic information, the *MSCI* booklet, and they were interviewed individually. Those who were present were committed and had undergone a process of career reflection and development. A token of gratitude, a bracelet, was included in the picnic invitation to enhance the group solidarity of the cohort. Ten participants arrived at the picnic and sat in a circle. At first the participants were unwilling to share their career development experiences with the other group members, but became more comfortable as time passed. Although the same interview schedule was also used for the individual interviews (Appendix K), changes were made through the group interaction to determine participants' perceptions of the *MSCI* and their career influences.

The focus group interview was viewed as useful to consolidate overarching themes that emerged during the individual interviews. A direct comparison of participants' opinions was provided without the depth and detail that encumbered individual interviews (Powell & Single, 1996). Multiple perspectives were shared and ideas were cross-fertilised under the guidance of the researcher in order to shape future career plans (Kritzinger, 1995; Morgan, 1997).

As this sample consisted of marginalised black adolescents, the white researcher had to be conscious of the power attached to her role as researcher. Issues surrounding multiculturalism, diversity and empowerment had to be dealt with and unpacked sensitively. Each member of the focus group was treated with dignity and respect. The researcher attempted to facilitate the session without domination or judgement, and participation was encouraged.

**4.6.5. Grade 12 intervention.** A short career development session was held with the rest of the Grade 12 learners of Makupula High School to ensure that these learners also had exposure to career development. The session was held in 30 to 40 minutes, using the *career flower*, a summarised version of the *MSCI* (Appendix L). The same brief intervention was used as part of the Career Life-Planning Project at Kayamandi High School to ensure that the entire Grade 12 group in Kayamandi had received access to a career development process before leaving school. However, only the *career flowers* of Makupula High School Grade 12 learners were retained as additional data for further examination of career influences and decision-making. This data was not included in the analysis undertaken for the current study.

#### **4.7. Ethical considerations**

Written permission was obtained from the relevant authorities, such as the Western Cape Department of Education (Appendix E), the principal of Makupula High School (Appendix F) and the Stellenbosch University Ethics Committee (Appendix G). Consent to allow their children to participate in the study was obtained from the learners' parents (Appendix C) as well as individual assent from the learners (Appendix B). All Grade 12 learners from Makupula High School were invited to participate and assurance was given that confidentiality would be maintained. A short career development session, using the *career flower* (a summarised version of the *MSCI*) (see Appendix L) was also offered to the whole Grade 12 group before the WCED ethical window period closed. Therefore learners who were not involved in the research process also benefitted.

Principals, educators and learners were under no obligation to assist with this research, and special care was taken not to interrupt education programmes. This study posed no foreseen risks and no apparent benefits. However, the career narratives elicited by completing the *MSCI* would enable individuals to gain insight into their career development and career choices (McIlveen, 2007). Participants were provided with contact details of resources to provide further career counselling support. The researcher focused on available opportunity structures that the learners had access to and aimed to instil a sense of responsibility for career decisions. A good working relationship was established to collect data on career influences (McIlveen & Patton, 2006).

#### **4.8. Reflexivity**

The researcher's ability to be unbiased and state subjective assumptions throughout the research process is known as *reflexivity* (Roberts et al., 2006). In describing another person's

perceptual terrain (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the researcher is responsible to offset her bias and subjectivity before data is interpreted (Burnard, 1991). Hence, the researcher aimed to achieve a state of conscious awareness of her presence, her effect on the setting, the observed individuals and their ensuing reactions (Lewis, 2009). Reflexivity is used to critically analyse the researcher as an instrument, using self-awareness and critical self-engagement to reconcile multiple selves present throughout the research process (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Johnson, 2010). The researcher's self-reflexivity can prevent the unintentional disregard of subtle nuances or ambiguities in the data.

#### **4.9. The researcher self**

As a researcher, I trust that sharing my worldview will help illuminate some of my own subjectivities. I am a 27-year-old Psychology Master's student. As a white South African female of direct German descent, my standpoint is located and created historically, socially and contextually (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). I was born 11 years after my sister in Johannesburg (the City of Gold) to German parents who moved with the aid of the South African government before the 1976 Soweto uprising. My parents were children during the Second World War and had to flee from East Prussia to escape Russian soldiers. The after-effects of the war have left invisible traces, as my sister and I are the first generation after the war. We grew up surrounded by stories of blood, courage, resourcefulness, betrayal and the value of sticking together as a family.

Against this backdrop, I started school in 1991, and my academic career began during Apartheid in a school that had started racial integration. However, the deeply entrenched beliefs that were held discriminated not only between skin colours, but also different nationalities. I was the 'wrong' white and was classified as an immigrant child, which led to extra acculturation classes. Whilst the other children were playing, I was learning extra Afrikaans, English and how it was to be different. Perhaps this was what sparked my interest in people's circumstances, their perceptions and their ability to change.

After I had finished matric I went to Germany as an exchange student. A deep respect was gained for humanity as well as the understanding of soul connections that form in 'being' with others (Johnson, 2010). Once I returned, I began studying at the University of Johannesburg in 2006 and had to create a new web of meaning for myself. In my third year, when my nephew was three, my sister slowly became ill after having a miscarriage. Although



no one understood how serious it was at the time, this incident of chance would change my life forever.

My parents have had intermittent financial difficulties for many years. I could only make certain of attending university with my academic results. I have been fortunate to study for six years on bursaries. Recently, I had to juggle my studies with working to get an income more than ever. This may have made me sympathetic to others who exist in far worse contexts, whose tenacity I admire. Internally a need has always existed to help others. This goal has found a focus in helping individuals who are driven to find a direction that gives their existence meaning.

As a researcher, I was attracted to the challenge posed by qualitative research, due to the inherent attitude I have for rigour. A critical textual eye has been developed through my work as a Stellenbosch University Writing Lab Consultant. As a former Anthropology major, I love reading ethnographies, as the narratives and stories that people tell have always intrigued me. The anecdotal evidence that shimmers beneath statistical data has always held an appeal for me. Narration entails the ability to embellish a story, recreate a new reality and restructure an event that has left scars. A copy of my personal *career flower* is included to provide additional information in order to understand the decisions or outcomes resulting from the researcher as a research tool (see Appendix M).

Lastly, the community context of Kayamandi was a challenge for all the beliefs I had linked to townships. Initially, I had been afraid of crime or negative responses. However, as time passed, these fears abated. My presence at Makupula High School was never questioned, and I found peace working with the learners. Undeniable physical, cultural and intellectual differences existed between me and the learners with whom I engaged. Assumptions of power and identity, that emerged in the research process, were continuously unpacked and addressed through permeable boundaries and open channels of communication between the researcher and the learners involved (McIlveen & Patton, 2007; Patton & McMahon, 2006). The research process had an impact at many deep and subtle levels on all those involved. I believe that it was a positive effect, based on equality, learning and respect.

#### **4.10. Chapter summary**

This chapter described the qualitative research design and methodology used. Representation of findings and trustworthiness in qualitative research were discussed. The *MSCI* as a qualitative instrument was described as a career counselling tool. Furthermore, the

demographic details of the sample were given as well as a description of the four-phase research process. Awareness, sensitivity and self-reflexivity were considered in describing the “essence” of career stories in the sample of Makupula learners (Holloway & Biley, 2011). The subjective systems of influences and themes that emerged according to the *MSCI* from Kayamandi adolescents’ career narratives are presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MSCI FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents interpretations of career narratives that were elicited from Kayamandi Grade 12 learners. Each individual's narrative is submerged within larger contextual narratives, which exert a never-ending influence on the individual and those in close proximity. The complex interplay of individual and collective narratives conveyed throughout this research was examined using the STF. The research focus was on exploring the continuous integration of influences in the career identities and decisions of an under-researched population group (McMahon et al., 2008). This study aimed to provide a critical glimpse into the complexity of Kayamandi adolescents' career constructions in facing a key life transition and how a multitude of influences, including career enablers and barriers, were incorporated (Ferrari et al., 2009; McMahon et al., 2008; McMahon & Watson, 2008).

#### 5.2. Presentation of data

The *narrative exercise* was presented first, as an exploration of the patterns elicited, before any career counselling dialogues had begun. This precursory exercise established the learners' English language proficiency and provided an indication of existing career narratives in the adolescent sample. The *MSCI booklet data* was then examined to determine recurrent themes. Chapter 6 will present the *individual interview* findings as well as the *focus group* data guided by the STF structure. The *career flower* exercise, a summative form of the *MSCI* completed by the Makupula High School Grade 12 group, is not included in this thesis, because the scope of the study had to be limited. However, these findings will be published at a later stage.

#### 5.3. Narrative exercise: "My future life story"

Respondents had to describe what an illustrated person was contemplating for his/her future career path (see Appendices H & I). Initial career insight was achieved through this written exercise. Recurrent themes provided information about participants' perspectives on career decision-making processes and career identities. The narrative exercise revealed relevant themes at individual, social and environmental-societal levels for each respondent.

**5.3.1. Individual level.** The narrative exercise attempted to provide information about participants' current career identities by grouping content-specific themes and discussing

elicited themes. Table 5.1 shows the themes that were extracted from the narrative exercise. At individual level, themes found were: **1) career uncertainty; 2) career information; 3) education; 4) career choices; 5) self-insight; and 6) future vision.**

Table 5.1.

*Overview of Narrative Exercise Themes Cited by Participants*

Themes	Frequency	Percentage	Verbatim examples
1) Career uncertainty	5	41.7%	<i>"I don't know what to do next"; "make a decision about my future."</i>
2) Education	10	83.3%	<i>"Go to university"; "study further."</i>
3) Information	6	50.0%	<i>"Must know more about the career"; "find out more about these careers."</i>
4) Choices	8	66.7%	<i>"My second choice"; "thinking about what he is going to do in tertiary"; "If next year I didn't do well."</i>
5) Self-insight	4	33.3%	<i>"The reason why I choose this career."</i>
6) Future visions	6	50.0%	<i>"In five years come"; "10 years then"; "I have a picture of myself."</i>
7) Barriers	3	25.0%	<i>"I am from the townships I won't make it"; "a financial to start at tertiary."</i>
8) Enablers	8	66.7%	<i>"Can help me to achieve my goals/dreams is to work hard"; "I do not give up in what I do because I need a better future."</i>
9) Community	3	25.0%	<i>"Also want to help my environment"; "support the community."</i>

**5.3.1.1. Career uncertainty.** Temporary career uncertainty has been hypothesised as developmentally appropriate for adolescents, as exploration and identity formation result in the implementation of a vocational identity (Erikson, 1982; Ladany et al., 1997, Super, 1990). Career uncertainty (i.e., career indecisiveness) was evident in 41.7% of the sample. This was viewed as part of a normal transitional phase that occurs in the process of making a particular career decision (Osipow, 1990). The opening sentence of participant 4's narrative clearly describes the career uncertainty faced: *"It's me. I have the matric qualification and I don't know what to do next."* This uncertainty can also result in career anxiety, which has been described as an affective distress related to career decision-making and is believed to inhibit

the career decision-making process (Germeijs, Verschueren, & Soenens, 2006). Career anxiety could reduce career self-efficacy beliefs, expectations and career information exploration (Janeiro, 2009; Kidd, 2002).

**5.3.1.2. Career information.** The active exploration of career information is theorised to result in career planning and a personalised career identity (Maree & Beck, 2004). The respondents chose to take part in this research process to gain more insight into their career processes. A need for additional career information was described by 50% of the sample. However, career information consists of three dimensions: 1) self-information, 2) world-of-work information and 3) the interaction between these two dimensions in career choices (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). Specific world-of-work information was required by participant 1. She had done research *“to find out about the work environment, opportunities for career development in this career.”* Although this primary research had been conducted, she described that she wants *“to learn more about this career...to make right career choices.”*

Similarly, participant 3 mentioned two career choices, marketing director and sports manager, yet had no idea what training at which institutions was required. He needed *“to find out more about jobs offered by these careers.”* Therefore, a lack of specific career and training details was identified. These details would enable reconciliation of disparities and inconsistencies in assimilated information.

Inconsistencies were exhibited in other participants' responses. The importance of choosing the right career was emphasised, although no considered career options were mentioned. For example, participant 10 said that the “correct” career choice would:

*“...brighten up my future. In order to have a brighter future I have to choose a career that suits me and that I can enjoy being a professional at it. There is nothing that feels great than doing what you enjoy most. Everybody wants to be successful and working hard, applying your values in everything you do brings you closer to what you are dreaming of.”*

As can be seen in the excerpt above, no mention was made of an ideal occupation. This could indicate a repetition of feedback from supportive family members who lack insight into career requirements or a lack of self-reflection on what a meaningful future entails.

Participant 7 wrote about his career decision to study for a Bachelor of Commerce (BComm) degree at university, although his underlying uncertainty is apparent: *“My plan is to make a decision about my future and choice of my career of being an economist...I need your help in order to focus more about my career choice study.”* Similarly, participant 5 also

had the career idea of studying for a BComm, except that she did not know which specific direction within commerce. Further uncertainty and lack of career information are evident when she writes:

*“If next year I didn’t do well in my results I just want to do finishing school or else do practicals at any college that I can be taken into. I am not seeing myself want to be employed next year because I do not have enough information about my career.”*

Although career choices were identified, uncertainty is noticeable, with an apparent need for factual career information. A lack of exploration and career information seems significant, especially regarding “lesser known” career options (Maree, 2012). This research will attempt to gain insight into career exploration behaviours as well as the influences that result in specific career choices in the absence of concrete world-of-work information.

**5.3.1.3. Career choices.** Post-Apartheid socio-political changes, visible at the individual and environmental-societal levels, have resulted in previously prohibited occupations becoming accessible. An overwhelming number of opportunities therefore were identified by 66.7% of the sample. Participant 6 clearly articulated the greater range of prospects: *“Now I know there are many opportunities in South Africa for each and every individual to achieve our goals.”* Whilst this is an indication of movement towards social justice and redressing past discrimination, these participants face huge difficulties in navigating a labyrinth of work opportunities and training requirements with little guidance (Nel & de Bruin cited in Watson et al., 1997; Watson et al., 1995).

Ideal careers were described by five participants (P. 2, 6, 8, 11 & 12). Participant 2 chose tourism management because she had researched the career and was interested in the field: *“The reason why I choose this career it is because I like tourism.”* Participant 6 identified radio personalities who had inspired his career choice: *“just like Lungo Singama from Heart 104.9 FM and my next role model is Ryan Cyrus from KFM.”* In contrast, participant 8 wanted to *“help businesses with their financial records to keep them accurately,”* and as a result had chosen to become a chartered accountant. Participant 11 had engaged in a self-reflective process in which *“I asked myself what I want and I reached the answer of Chartered Accountants and that is what I opt for.”* Participant 12 also indicated his first career choice as chartered accountancy, and his second choice was actuarial science. In summary, 41.7% of the sample mapped out career paths in the narrative exercise and may have moved beyond an indecisive state to a career commitment.

A commitment to a career choice is hypothesised to result from a comprehensive process of integrating skills, interests and abilities, alongside an exploration of the world-of-work and career alternatives (Blustein et al., 1989; Germeijs et al., 2006). The career choices expressed in the narrative exercise were surmised to be the result of early foreclosure without enough exploration of self and occupational information (Blustein et al., 1989). This inference will be explored throughout this chapter. Alternative career realities were only considered by 50% of the sample, which may not even be reflective of feasible options. The result is that career choices may unknowingly exclude a whole range of realistic career possibilities (Blustein et al., 1989).

There seemed to be a genuine lack of integration of career and self information at the outset of the research process. Previous studies support these findings and state that disadvantaged adolescents have little exposure to the world-of-work and a scarcity of knowledge regarding tertiary institutions (Ebersöhn & Mbestse, 2003; Stead & Nqweni, 2006). However, the respondents' willingness to participate in the research may be viewed as an indicator of motivation to pursue career goals, reflecting career self-efficacy and positive career exploratory behaviour (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Lent et al., 2000).

**5.3.1.4. Self-insight.** A career choice is the implementation of a picture that an individual has of what he/she is capable of and requires the collection and processing of relevant personal information (Super, 1990; Super et al., 1996). Only four participants (33.3%) had some insight into their personal attributes that made them suitable for a particular career. For example, participant 2 explained how her career ideal of becoming a tourist manager was linked to her interests: *“And the reason why I choose this career it is because I like tourism. I like nature, attraction, meet different people from different cultures & city. Speak different languages.”* Participant 9 described how he saw himself and his IT career by stating that: *“I like working with new technology and get to do my own evaluations to the new stuffs that are being implemented. Because I also like working with people my second choice is business management.”* However, the explanations of “why” these occupations were appealing had been answered in a manner that indicated participants did not have sufficient knowledge. Information of self and the world-of-work are both required to create realistic career aspirations (Maesela, 1994). Although intentional and meaningful career- and self-exploration were seen to be lacking, high self-efficacy beliefs seemed to exist in the sample (Usinger & Smith, 2010).

Career self-efficacy has been reported to lead to career goals and activities being pursued (Betz & Hackett, 1981). Exploring interests and the world-of-work is a vital part of career self-efficacy, yet this career behaviour was not reflected in the sample (Gushue et al., 2006; Lent et al., 2000). Participants believed that their personal efforts would bring success, which demonstrated the presence of self-efficacy beliefs in the sample. These beliefs were viewed as an indication of self-awareness of personal abilities and described as enablers. For example, participant 7 explained: *“I am hungry for studying, working hard to in order to achieve my dream and soul.”* Participant 3 revealed that he believed: *“The only thing that can help me to achieve my goals/dreams is to work hard and smart at school, to go out there to find out more about these careers I want to pursue after matric.”* These excerpts indicated that participants had an internal desire to apply themselves, to take responsibility for their careers and to use educational opportunities to build successful futures.

**5.3.1.5. Education.** Ten participants (83.3%) cited the importance of education in their narrative exercises. According to Maesela (1994), blue-collar parents emphasised achieving higher levels of education to improve economic prospects and occupational statuses. This finding was supported by participant 11, who wrote: *“Next year I plan to be at UCT going to B.Comm in Accounting and that will determine which path I will be walking in years to come.”* Participant 2 stated that her: *“plans for the future is to go to University and study further.”* This seemed to be the dominant viewpoint in the sample. University was seen as the pinnacle among higher education training institutions. However, these participants would be the first generation in their families attending university and had limited insight into the demands or structure of tertiary education.

**5.3.1.6. Future visions.** Process influences describe changes over time, which include past, present and future influences incorporated into career development processes. Six participants (50%) wrote about these recursive elements (McMahon & Watson, 2009). Future tasks and goals were assigned to time frames in the participants’ narratives. For example, participant 6 wrote: *“In five years to come I see myself being the top radio presenter.”* The most eloquent description was written by participant 11 and showed an integration of past experiences in a meaningful manner to create a future vision:

*“Since my childhood, I have been fantasising and dreaming about this beautiful house, this beautiful car and beautiful life. I realised that the only way to get there, is through education. I asked myself what I want and I reached the answer of Chartered Accountant and that is what I opt for. Next year I plan to be at UCT doing to BComm in Accounting*



*and that will determine which path I will be walking in years to come. After my varsity I plan to work for someone for less than 10 years then after that I will open my business which I will self employ myself at.”*

Thematic connectedness was demonstrated between participant 11's childhood fantasy, his life experiences so far and the possibilities for his future (McMahon, Watson, & Bimrose, 2010). Entrepreneurial qualities were also evident, as he had voiced the idea of opening his own business, which would have been considered a non-traditional occupational choice for a black adolescent (Maesela, 1994). However, changeability and unpredictability were also acknowledged by participant 9, who wrote: *“Life is full of unexpected movement, so my willings is to stop myself from not meeting my future purposes.”* Chance, luck and happenstance have only recently received attention in career research and have been documented to have profound effects on future career decisions (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

**5.3.1.7. Summary of individual level influences.** The narrative exercise, at an individual level, illustrated a lack of self-awareness to make effective career decisions as well as a lack of available career information. These findings support previous research on disadvantaged adolescents and demonstrate a desperate need for career counselling (Stead & Nqweni, 2006). Participants viewed education as paramount in achieving occupational success, and university was cited most frequently. Lastly, the sample seemed to lack clear ideas about what career ideals entailed.

**5.3.2. Social level influences.** Respondents' descriptions of significant others such as parents, teachers and peers were examined at the social level. Career decisions are often based on the feedback that others, such as teachers and parents, give about an activity or experience, resulting in self-observed generalisations (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). Positive feedback, in which success and recognition are received from family, friends, peers and community leaders, encourages individuals to continue with a specific activity or interest (McMahon et al., 2010). However, the participants did not mention significant social relationships in their written exercises. Only participant 6 referred to his role models, who were radio personalities: *“Lungo Singama from Heart 104.9 Fm”* and *“Ryan Cyrus from K-Fm.”*

The value attached to helping family and the community is reflective of ubuntu culture and was cited by three participants (25%). Participant 8 wanted to be a chartered accountant to: *“help businesses with their financial records to keep them accurately”* and ultimately prevent the misuse of funds. Participant 2 explained that she wanted to empower her

community: *“I see the opportunity to help the environment and I don’t want to help me only but I also want to help my environment.”* Participant 7 (P. 7) wrote: *“I have a dream of being someone in future. And improve my family standard of living. And support the community.”* Therefore, participants’ career decision-making is linked to specific cultural values that shape aspirations and stipulate a potential range of career choices (Chope & Consoli, 2007).

**5.3.3. Environmental-societal level influences.** The environmental-societal level assessed the respondents’ descriptions of surrounding environmental resources, enablers and barriers as career influences. Indirect references were made by the participants for support to overcome contextual barriers, for example: *“And I need more support to carry on my studies at all, through a financial start at tertiary”* (P. 7). Limited financial resources have previously been stated as a formidable career barrier, and this was reflected in the sample (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Seabi et al., 2010).

Geographic location, for example the Kayamandi township, was included as both a barrier and an enabler in shaping career decisions (Maree et al., 2006). A **barrier** associated with township residence was the perception that participants’ dreams would not be fulfilled because of their background. Participant 9 declared: *“I must work hard to beat the perception that is mostly exposed that because I am from the townships I won’t make it.”* Although the youth of previously disadvantaged population groups have access to a wider range of work opportunities, they encounter a stigma that is associated with their low socio-economic status and township background. This may have far-reaching implications for adjustment to tertiary education in adolescents exhibiting high career self-efficacy.

In contrast, the township background was also cited as an **enabler**. For the purposes of this study, an enabler was viewed as a factor that participants perceived to aid career processes (Lesch, Kafaar, Kagee, & Swartz, 2006). Participant 5 wrote: *“I need more for myself that is why I do not give up in what I do because I need a better future.”* In this excerpt the respondent was using the dismal circumstances in Kayamandi to motivate her to strive for independence in her career, as she wrote: *“I want to be employed in a big company so that I become self dependent.”* This is regarded as non-traditional for a woman within the patriarchal African culture, in which males are viewed as breadwinners and the heads of the household (Maesela, 1994).

**5.3.4 Researcher’s observations.** Initially I debated whether social desirability effects may have caused a lack of career information to be emphasised in the participants’ narrative

exercises so that they would be allowed to take part in the research. However, it became apparent that there was a genuine lack of accurate career and occupational information. As a result, the *MSCI* provided the respondents with a chance that they may not otherwise have been given. Facilitated career exploration allowed engagement with diverse life roles, employment options, career adaptability and career decision-making elements in constructing career identities (Chope & Consoli, 2007; Dullabh, 2004). The *MSCI* was used to uncover how this career identity was self-constructed through relationships with other people, institutions, cultural values and society.

#### 5.4 *MSCI* booklet

A description of how the *MSCI* encompasses the STF system levels according to McMahon and Watson (2009) is presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2.

*Comparison of Elements of the STF and MSCI*

STF	MSCI
<b>Content influences</b>	
Individual system of influences	Thinking About Who I Am
Social system	Thinking About the People Around Me
Environmental-societal system	Thinking About Society and the Environment
Past, present, future	Thinking About My Past, Present and Future
	Representing My System of Career Influences
	My System of Career Influences - 1
<b>Process influences</b>	
Recursiveness, change over time, chance	Reflecting on My System of Career Influences
	My Action Plan
	My System of Career Influences - 2

*Note.* Adapted from “Career psychology research challenges: A systems theory response,” by M. McMahon, & M. Watson, 2009, *Journal of Career Assessment*, 39(2) p. 187. Copyright 2009 by the Psychological Society of South Africa. Reprinted with permission.

The words and stories elicited by the *MSCI* can be used to locate the self as a method of clarifying perspectives or world views (Banks-Wallace, 1998). The *MSCI* is believed to create an awareness of personal meanings attached to work in relation to life roles,

relationships and self-development. Thereby a greater understanding of realistic career options can be created for disadvantaged adolescents (Nelson, 2002; Stead & Watson, 2006). The participants' classification of influences into individual, social or environmental-societal levels is thought to enable a cognitive re-evaluation of influences needed for vocational identity formation (McMahon & Watson, 2008).

**5.4.1. MSCI Themes: My Present Career Situation.** The first section of the *MSCI, My Present Career Situation*, consists of seven open-ended questions that deal with the following topics: *1) present career decisions; 2) part-time or voluntary work; 3) life roles, 4) employment options; 5) previous career decisions; 6) strategies employed in career decision-making; and 7) sources of help in decision-making.* Themes were identified according to frequency counts and are presented in tables with verbatim examples, according to what learners had recounted. Table 5.3. depicts three subthemes that were identified in the participants' current career concerns : *1) present career decision, 2) part-time/volunteer work, and 3) life roles.*

**5.4.1.1. Present career decisions.** The subtheme of *finishing matric* was identified, as the participants were studying for their final matric exams (41.7%). The majority of the sample planned to attend further learning institutions in the next year (83.3%), which formed the second subtheme of *studying further through university.* A new theme that emerged after the completion of the narrative exercise was *career-related part-time work.* Participant 6 explained: "*I would like to work as a volunteer at any radio station that is around or near i.e., MFM.*" Participant 7 had also identified the need to work part-time whilst acquiring training after school, which indicated further engagement with career processes after the narrative exercise.

**5.4.1.2. Part-time employment.** All 12 participants had been employed. Weekend and holiday part-time work helped provide an extra income for the participants and their families, which supports Super's (1990) worker role. The following subthemes emerged: *1) entrepreneurial work; 2) informal work; 3) formal work sector; and 4) community programmes.* Firstly, three participants had *entrepreneurial work experiences,* which included selling sweets and creating informal spaza shops.

Table 5.3.

*Present Career Decision Themes Elicited from the MSC1: My Present Career Situation*

Themes	Subthemes	Frequency	Percentage	Verbatim Examples
1) Present career decision	• Finishing matric	5	41.7%	<i>“Leaving at school”; “pass my matric”; “when I’m out of school.”</i>
	• Studying further	10	83.3%	<i>“University to study further”; “studying my course.”</i>
	• Part-time work	2	16.7%	<i>“My first part-time job”; “also work as part-time while studying my course.”</i>
2) Part-time/volunteer work	• Entrepreneurial work	3	25.0%	<i>“Selling sweets”; “owned a spaza shop.”</i>
	• Informal work	7	58.3%	<i>“Car washing”; “working in a cell phone container”; “baby-sitter”; “housekeeping”; “fixing things”; “braiding hair.”</i>
	• Formal work	6	50.0%	<i>“Bread delivery at Blue Ribbon”; “cashier at Shoprite”; “dishwasher”; “plumbing”; “Dros as chef part-time”; “Part-time in weekend”; “stock packer at wholesale.”</i>
	• Community programmes	8	66.7%	<i>“Community cleaning”; “SU Entrepreneur programme”; “Love Life”; “Bambanani patrol programme.”</i>
3) Life roles	• Student	8	66.7%	<i>“Class representative”; “Deputy Head of SRC”; “School representative (RCL)”; “president of my school (i.e. Head girl).”</i>
	• Citizen	9	75.0%	<i>“Choir member”; “Sunday school”; “leader at church.”</i>
	• Leisurite role	7	58.3%	<i>“Soccer player”; “cricket captain”; “Captain in my team.”</i>
	• Homemaker	3	25.0%	<i>“Older brother to my younger brother.”</i>

Most employment opportunities in Kayamandi were found in the informal sector. **Informal work** included babysitting, braiding hair, housekeeping, car washing, repairing appliances and providing cell phone services.

Female participants were involved in homemaker roles that included child care, beauty and domestic arenas (Super, 1990). In comparison, the males in the sample had ventured into the formal work sector. The **formal work sector** included dishwashing, stock packing, working as a cashier, bread delivery, working in restaurants and assisting other manual trades, such as plumbing. Lastly, **community programmes** were cited by 66.7% of the participants. Voluntary activities were organised by NGOs, such as keeping the community clean, Kuyasa computer classes and community patrols. These activities provided access to resources and opportunities for skills development. Part-time work experiences have previously been linked to greater levels of career maturity (Flouri & Buchannan, 2002).

**5.4.1.3. Life roles.** Respondents' part-time work responses demonstrate Super's (1990) six life roles (homemaker, worker, citizen, leisurite, student and child). Female respondents attached value to the **homemaker role**, participating in part-time employment in house cleaning and childcare. The homemaker role was also apparent in the male respondents who felt they had to care for their other siblings. Activities in the **leisurite role** revolved around extramural sports activities, such as soccer and cricket, and sport leadership positions. The **citizen role** was cited by 75% of the sample, consisting of church activities, being a choir member and other youth group membership roles.

The **student role** was expected to be the most prominent role, yet was only slightly less prominent than the citizen role. School leadership positions were described by 66.7% of the sample (i.e., prefects, class captains, head girl, etc.). Leadership positions suggest a strong participation in the student role. However, it became apparent that the respondents were involved in a variety of roles in addition to the student role. According to Super et al. (1996), the leisurite, citizen and student roles shape interpersonal skills during the career development process of adolescence.

**5.4.1.4. Future jobs.** All the participants chose high-status occupations requiring university education when considering their future occupations (see Table 5.4.). According to Holland's typology, most of the chosen occupations could be classified into the enterprising occupational type (i.e., manager, businessman, accountant). This reflects the business focus of Makupula High School. However, enterprising occupations may be poorly matched to

South African labour market trends that suggest deficits in scientific and technological fields (Dullabh, 2004).

Table 5.4.

*Participants' Future Occupations and Alternatives as Listed in the MSCI*

Participant Number	Further training course chosen	Alternative future jobs
Participant 1	<i>"I want to do tourism management in CPUT &amp; then after become a travel agent."</i>	<i>"Travel agent, tour guide, businesswoman &amp; flight attendant."</i>
Participant 2	<i>"I want to be a tourism management."</i>	<i>"Tourism management, social worker and human resources."</i>
Participant 3	<i>"My long-term goal of a market director by doing business management/BComm marketing."</i>	<i>"Businessman, marketing director and TV presenter."</i>
Participant 4	<i>"Open up my own business or do the course of the entrepreneur."</i>	<i>"Being a sole trader, taxi driver and work in a company."</i>
Participant 5	<i>"Tourism management."</i>	<i>"Tourism marketing."</i>
Participant 6	<i>"My first career is to be a radio announcer."</i>	<i>"Teacher, sports man, weather presenter and travel agent."</i>
Participant 7	<i>"My first career is to study a course of being an economist or second choice travel agent."</i>	<i>"Economist, journalist, presenter, travel agent."</i>
Participant 8	<i>"UWC to study BComm accounting in order to become a chartered accountant."</i>	<i>"Accountant, to be a manager in community projects."</i>
Participant 9	<i>"Pursue IT."</i>	<i>"IT, business management."</i>
Participant 10	<i>"Marketing director."</i>	<i>"General management, financial advisor."</i>
Participant 11	<i>"Chartered accountant."</i>	<i>"Being CEO of a big company, owning my business."</i>
Participant 12	<i>"Career path of actuarist and my second choice is chartered accountant."</i>	<i>"Actuarist, landlord, own farm, businessman."</i>

Participants 1, 2, and 5 are female and had chosen tourism, which could be a remnant of the traditional social investigative occupational types previously chosen by black adolescents (Watson, Schonegevel et al., 1997). However, a travel agent was also considered as an

occupation by two male participants and did not seem to be gender specific (P. 6 & P. 7). Watson, Schonegevel et al. (1997) have documented a contrast in male and female adolescents' aspirations, with males considering a variety of high-status professions requiring extensive training. The current sample supported these gender differences. Materialistic indications of success were attached to future occupations considered. The importance of money and prestige in career decision-making processes (UNESCO, 2002) is explored in the next chapter.

**5.4.1.5. Previous career decision-making.** The adolescents' career decision-making processes need to be better understood to ascertain the underlying reasons for their previous career selections. *Subject choice* was endorsed as an important subtheme, with seven of the participants (58.3%) identifying the Grade 9 subject choice as an important career-related decision, as shown in Table 5.5. Choices had also been made *to change schools* and move to the Western Cape for better educational resources. In addition, the conscious choice involved in the *reduction of time-consuming activities* is indicative of career decision-making self-efficacy skills. However, the strategies employed in career decision-making processes need to be investigated, especially in disadvantaged adolescents, who have scarce resources to collect information (Stead & Watson, 2006).

**5.4.1.6. Career decision-making strategies.** Career choice is a dynamic process that begins in childhood and continues through adulthood (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). The persistent importance of career decision-making strategies in changing economic climates and shifting job markets becomes apparent (Stead & Watson, 2006). Career decision-making skills (see Table 5.5.) are associated with future career planning and making adaptive career choices. Osborn and Reardon (2006) described career decision-making according to the Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) model. Four main career choice components are used in the CIP: *1) knowledge of self; 2) knowledge of options; 3) decision-making; and 4) thoughts about decision-making processes* (i.e. metacognition). Participants' career decision-making processes were seen to follow the same steps as those outlined in the CIP.

Initially, the *knowledge of self* dimension was explored through the analysis of personal abilities and interests (33.3%), which was done in conjunction with performance indicators (33.3%). School marks were prominent performance indicators to which adolescents had access. Secondly, *knowledge of options* was gained actively through research. In the sample, 50% of the participants had conducted research to "*check the job opportunities*" (P. 10) and to see what careers their abilities matched. Participant 12 explained this process: "*I have done*



*research in the library and find out that there was a new career that deals with mathematics a lot. So I love mathematics.”*

The next step of **decision-making**, consisted of assessing the assembled career and personal information in terms of advantages and disadvantages to reach a conclusion. A lack of access to occupational information and career education services in disadvantaged adolescents may compromise decision-making and result in poor future planning skills (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006).

The last step of engaging with **thoughts about decision-making processes (i.e., metacognition)**, was indicated by three participants (25%). Once distractors, either internal or external had been identified, participants eliminated factors that detracted attention from their career goals. For example, participant 11 wrote that he: *“eliminated all those that do not, at all contribute towards my success and I preserved to pull myself away from those that were already habits.”* Similarly, participant 8 described that he: *“looked at the behaviour of my friends & chose the good ones. I check what is making me not to focus on my studies and it was sport.”* Career decisions were formulated in relation to contexts of cultural webs, friendship ties or interpersonal behaviour patterns that were moderated by self-awareness and self-efficacy (Stead & Watson, 2006). Reflection skills are needed to identify negative behaviour patterns and allow for the integration of self-knowledge and occupational knowledge. Although behaviour was self-regulated in the sample, reflection processes previously have been found to be lacking in black adolescents, and this will be elaborated on further in Chapter 6 (Stead, 1996).

**5.4.1.7. People who provided career advice.** Career decision-making is embedded in relationships and culture, with **school, family and peers** being seen to play an important part in the individual’s career decision-making processes (Stead & Watson, 2006). The majority of the participants (91.7%) specified the combination of parents, teachers and friends as significant influences in their career decision-making processes. According to Africentric values, the self is viewed in relation to others, and this affects career choices.

Table 5.5.

*Career Decision-making Themes Elicited from the MSCI: My Present Career Situation*

Theme	Subthemes	Frequency	Percentages	Verbatim Examples
1) Previous career decisions	• Subject choices	7	58.3%	<i>"I have chosen my subjects"; "the commerce subjects."</i>
	• Moving to gain a better education	2	16.7%	<i>"Changing schools"; "I have chosen to live away from parents to get a good education."</i>
	• Reduce time-consuming activities	2	16.7%	<i>"I withdrew from soccer and any sport exercising because they were time consuming."</i>
2) Career decision-making strategies	• Analyse abilities and interests	4	33.3%	<i>"First look at what is good for me"; "looking at my interests &amp; my ability, my weaknesses &amp; my strengths"; "look how my career is related to my strengths and weaknesses."</i>
	• Performance indicators	4	33.3%	<i>"Grade 9 report &amp; checked which subject I've got high percentage in"; "performing well at these two subjects."</i>
	• Researched options	6	50.0%	<i>"I have researched about the careers so I chose my subjects"; "check the job opportunities of what I'm doing"; "I have done research in the library."</i>
	• Eliminated negative influences	3	25.0%	<i>"I have looked at the behaviour of my friends &amp; chose the good ones"; "check what is making me not to focus on my studies"; "I eliminated all those that do not, at all contribute towards my success."</i>
3) People who provided career advice	• My family, teacher and friends	11	91.7%	<i>"Teachers, family members &amp; friends"; "my brother"; "my parents they also helped me"; "my neighbour."</i>

**5.4.2. MSCI Themes: Individual systems influence.** The individual level of the *MSCI* allowed respondents to self-assess their most important personal attributes. Recognition of work-related strengths, skills and abilities allows an individual to conceptualise how these skills can be transferred to various contexts that will enable the satisfaction of psychological needs (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). Individuals make meaning of the influences in their lives, and a personal narrative is constructed out of personal beliefs, values, abilities, interests and personality traits (see Table 5.6.) (McIlveen, 2007).

The sample had indicated what they considered their *personality attributes* to be, and friendly and talkative personality traits were cited by eight participants (66.7%). Participants seemed to enjoy interacting with people and considered themselves to be ‘peoples’ people.’ The attribute of working hard to obtain a goal (i.e., perseverance) was also seen as a personality trait in 50% of the sample. Participant 11 described his personal abilities as: “*I am a kind of person who excels in everything that he does and that will lead me to explore & shine as a pioneer.*” The importance of *abilities* was highlighted by all 12 respondents, with interpersonal skills indicated as a subtheme.

The participants were aware of their interpersonal skills, with communication, persuasion and working with people cited as abilities by 75% of the respondents. *Beliefs* were also identified as important by 10 participants (83.3%). The sample held Christian beliefs (n = 5), Africentric beliefs in ancestry (n = 2) and self-efficacy beliefs (n = 3). *Coping skills* were also accented, with 58.3% of the sample indicating problem-solving as a noteworthy skill. Daily financial constraints that require creative solutions in the face of limited resources could be reflected in the emphasis on problem-solving skills.

In describing participants’ *interests*, working with people was cited by 58.3% of the sample. The *value* of helping people was held by 83.3% of the sample. The Africentric *cultural system* therefore was supported and 66.7% of the participants indicated culture to be a significant influence. Traditional African values revolved around *ubuntu*, as participant 6 explained: “*It is the belief that we are all one by helping one another.*” Cultural values place importance on family members and maintaining community social webs, which may explain why the participants had developed such good interpersonal skills.

Another accomplishment was *age*, where matriculating at the age of 17 or 18 (n = 3) was an achievement. *Gender* was expected to be a significant influence due to Africentric beliefs associated with the male role, yet only one participant asterisked his male gender, which was

negligible. Chapter 6 explores gender associations further. In addition, *health* and *disability* did not appear to be influences at all. Perhaps the adolescents in this sample did not perceive health risks associated with the lack of sanitation in Kayamandi or the risk of contracting diseases such as HIV/AIDS and TB.

Table 5.6.

*Themes Elicited from the Individual System: Thinking About Who I Am*

Themes	Subthemes	Frequency	Percentages	Verbatim Examples
1) Personality	• Friendly and talkative	8	66.7%	<i>"I like people"; "able to express myself"; "talkative."</i>
	• Hard working	6	50.0%	<i>"Work hard for something I want"; "willing."</i>
2) My interests	• Interacting with people	7	58.3%	<i>"Meeting new people"; "work with people."</i>
3) A value I hold	• Helping others	10	83.3%	<i>"Helping people in my community."</i>
4) My culture	• African traditional values	8	66.7%	<i>"Important to be with my family"; "respect elders"; "we are all one by helping one another."</i>
5) My beliefs	• Believe in myself	3	25.0%	<i>"Believe in myself."</i>
	• Christianity	5	41.6%	<i>"Believe in God most of the time."</i>
	• Ancestry	2	16.7%	<i>"My culture."</i>
6) My abilities	• Interpersonal skills	9	75.0%	<i>"Good at convincing"; "good at working with people"; "influencing people."</i>
7) How I cope	• Problem-solving	7	58.3%	<i>"Solve problems smart"; "negotiation"; "I work under pressure."</i>
8) My age	• Being young	3	25.0%	<i>"My age will let me reach goals in perfect time"; "my youthful age makes me unique."</i>

Individuals did not seem to consider how the characteristics of the working environment should be complemented by personal interests, values and abilities (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). A general lack of awareness of abilities was noted and hypothesised to stem from limited opportunities to gain self-awareness due to restricted financial means. Most part-time work experiences were linked to the informal sector or semi-skilled occupations, perhaps resulting in a lack of insight into abilities and skills required for the formal work sector.

**5.4.3. MSCI Themes: Social systems influence.** The social level examined respondents' descriptions of significant others in their mesosystems (parents, teachers and peers), as illustrated in Table 5.7. Influences in the social context may play a more visible role than those in the environmental-societal system, due to the relevance of adolescent peer pressure in managing group membership expectations and values (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Maree et al., 2006; McIlveen et al., 2003; McMahon, 2005).

The most prominent social influences cited by all the participants were *parents* and *teachers*. *Parents* were described as a supportive influence by all 12 participants. They were seen to push participants towards a better future; however, they were unable to provide career information (Seabi et al., 2010). The amount of time spent at school was the reason for the salience of *teachers*' influences (McMahon et al., 2000). Two subthemes indicated teachers' influences on career decisions. Firstly, teachers *reflected* the learners' abilities for them to become aware of their capabilities (83.3%), and secondly they provided *support* for the participants (25%). Participant 10 described this support: "*My teachers say I have what it takes to be successful.*"

Career choices are made on the basis of occupational knowledge learnt from parents and teachers, infused with adolescents' life experiences (Malone & Shape, as cited in McMahon et al., 2000). In order to increase occupational knowledge, the connection between school and the world-of-work needs to be addressed to allow better career decisions to be made in the absence of parental career assistance (Seabi et al., 2010).

*Friends* were mentioned by 10 participants (83.3%) as supportive influences. In contrast, friends were perceived as negative influences by 25% of the sample. Jealousy posed an impediment to success, an aspect that will be explored further in the next chapter. *Youth or group leaders* were also cited by nine participants (75%) as an important positive influence that mirrored their abilities. A reliance on social media for career role models and other career-related information was apparent, which was believed to be due to the scarcity of local

examples of career success. Therefore, *television (TV)* was identified as an important influence by seven participants. Six participants selected *reading* as a method to gain role model information to increase career self-efficacy and career commitment (Chung, 2002; Smith et al., 2009).

Table 5.7.

*Themes Elicited from the Social Systems: Thinking About the People Around Me*

Themes	Subthemes	Frequency	Percentages	Verbatim Examples
1) Teachers	• Reflection of abilities	10	83.3%	<i>"They think I am good at writing &amp; reading"; "communication"; "maths"; "business"; "great abilities."</i>
	• Supportive	3	25.0%	<i>"My teachers say I have what it takes to me successful"; "my school they are my builders."</i>
2) TV show	• Career-related	7	58.3%	<i>"Successful people"; "businessman"; "market exchange"; "IT duties &amp; got more inspired"; "about how to make it before 40."</i>
3) My friends	• Supportive influence	10	83.3%	<i>"Sharing original ideas &amp; enjoy ourselves"; encourage me to do what I want"; "We discuss our careers."</i>
	• Negative influence	3	25.0%	<i>"I ignore my friend"; "friends are the enemies."</i>
4) My parents	• Supportive of choices	12	100.0%	<i>"Motivating"; "My parents always tell me to work hard for what I want"; "choose what suits me but to be something."</i>
5) My youth/ group leader	• Reflection of interpersonal skills	9	75.0%	<i>"Communication"; "good leader"; "I deserve them, good at thinking"; "to stop problems."</i>
6) Read about a famous person	• Role models	6	50.0%	<i>"Businessmen"; "Lucas Radebe"; "Lunga Singama &amp; Ryan Cyrus"; "Will Smith."</i>

**5.4.4. MSCI Themes: Environmental-societal systems influence.** Individual and social systems occur within a broader environmental-societal system. Respondents' descriptions of their surrounding environmental resources and barriers are presented in Table 5.8. The Kayamandi community had an important effect on adolescents' identities due to the cultural value placed on belonging to a group and the historical group ties that were created to resist oppression (Shefer, 2011). Psychological and language barriers may have caused the adolescents to be further separated from the broader Stellenbosch town. A discussion thereof is presented in Chapter 6.

The Kayamandi community provides a number of *enablers* that were identified by the participants. For example, three participants cited *employment opportunities* (i.e., informal, part-time work activities). Kayamandi was seen to have *transport facilities* (n = 5), such as taxis and trains that made Cape Town accessible. However, severe financial constraints may have caused the adolescents to become isolated within Kayamandi. Furthermore, another four participants described other *community enablers*, such as NGO community programmes and voluntary youth clubs. In addition, the enabling belief was cited that the disadvantaged township background “*gave more power to overcome obstacles on my way*” (P. 9). Hence, the majority (58.3 %) of the participants viewed the Kayamandi community as consisting of *enabling* elements.

In contrast, two participants described the *barriers* inherent in the Kayamandi community. Participant 10 depicted his experience of the challenges posed by Kayamandi: “*I hate the power cuts that happen after the rain, sanitation not sufficient, my area is not clean.*” Participant 11 shared his perception of the Kayamandi context: “*The community wants to be a better place and so do I. The area I'm in prepares me for nothing but I choose to prepare myself for the best and being there, going out there in the world.*”

However, responses from the sample indicated that *educational resources* were in close proximity. Cape Town was a significant site for educational training, selected by all 12 participants (100%), versus that of Stellenbosch, which was cited by seven participants (58.3%). The evident preference for Cape Town can be traced back to the dominant use of Afrikaans in Stellenbosch. This is a significant language barrier, which is described in the next chapter.

Although training institutes seem readily accessible, a formidable *financial barrier* exists. Financial assistance was required by 83.3% of the sample due to their low socio-

economic background. This was linked to the *cost of my options*, where 91.7% recognised the financial burden that university or tertiary education poses. Higher education costs included books, course fees, accommodation expenses and travelling costs. The personal effort that needed to be expended was also recognised by participant 4: “*Lot of time, thinking & energy.*”

Table 5.8.

*Themes Elicited from the Societal-Environmental Systems: Thinking About Society and My Environment*

Themes	Subthemes	Frequency	Percentages	Verbatim Examples
1) Local area	• Transport	5	41.7%	“ <i>Lots of public transport</i> ”; “ <i>train and taxis.</i> ”
	• Employment opportunities	3	25.0%	“ <i>Opportunities for people who want to work.</i> ”
	• Community enablers	4	33.3%	“ <i>Voluntary youth clubs and computer training</i> ”; “ <i>Programmes in the community</i> ”; “ <i>Community gives me more power to overcome obstacles on my way.</i> ”
	• Community barriers	2	16.7%	“ <i>Power cuts that happen after the rain</i> ”; “ <i>sanitation not sufficient</i> ”; “ <i>My area is not clean</i> ”; “ <i>My area prepares me for nothing.</i> ”
2) Location of universities/colleges	• Stellenbosch	7	58.3%	“ <i>SU</i> ”; “ <i>Boland.</i> ”
	• Cape Town	12	100%	“ <i>CPUT</i> ”; “ <i>UWC</i> ”; “ <i>Northlink College</i> ”; “ <i>UNISA</i> ”; “ <i>Pen Tech.</i> ”
3) Financial support	• Financial aids	10	83.3%	“ <i>Student loan</i> ”; “ <i>university scholarships</i> ”; “ <i>bursaries</i> ”; “ <i>Municipality loan</i> ”; “ <i>welfare funds</i> ”; “ <i>NSFAS.</i> ”
	• Family	2	16.7%	“ <i>My mother</i> ”; “ <i>parents, relative.</i> ”



Table 5.8.(continued)

*Themes elicited from the Societal Environmental Systems: Thinking About Society and My Environment (continued)*

Themes	Subthemes	Frequency	Percentages	Verbatim Examples
4) Opportunities to work overseas	• Work opportunities overseas	3	25.0%	“A lot of opportunities”; “possibility of being selected to work overseas.”
	• Work in South Africa	5	41.7%	“Want to work in South Africa”; “Durban, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal.”
5) Whether jobs are available	• Available	10	83.3%	“Job is available”; “Cape Town available”; “more opportunities for blacks.”
	• Scarce	2	16.7%	“Few jobs available”; “job opportunities slim.”
6) Cost of my options	• Expensive accumulation of education, transport, book costs	11	91.7%	“Accommodation”; “equipment needed at college”; “book fees”; “course fees.”

The participants *perceived available jobs* in their career choice (83.3%), yet were not aware of fluctuating market trends that have an impact on job availability. **Working overseas** was considered a minor theme. More respondents indicated a preference to work domestically in South Africa (41.7%), compared to those who indicated a possibility to be selected to work overseas (25%). Africentric values of honouring family ties and staying in close proximity to communities are supported by these responses.

**5.4.5. MSCI Themes: Past, present and future.** Respondents’ descriptions of changes over time were analysed according to past, present and future influences and are presented in Table 5.9. Significantly, no past influences were mentioned. This absence is interpreted as a lack of previous reflection and insight into past career choices. Insight, re-evaluation and

reprioritisation enable individuals to locate career decisions holistically within their own systems of influences (McMahon et al., 2004; McMahon & Watson, 2008).

Table 5.9.

*Elicited MSCI Themes about Time: Thinking About My Past, Present and Future*

Themes	Subthemes	Frequency	Percentages	Verbatim Examples
1) I want to move away	• Want to move	7	58.3%	<i>“Want to leave the rural areas”; “to move away.”</i>
	• Undecided	3	25.0%	<i>“Still deciding”; “close to my college.”</i>
	• Don’t want to move	2	16.7%	<i>“I want to see my parents everyday”; “I will forget those that I was doing this for.”</i>
2) Lifestyle I anticipate	• Materialistic indicators of success	6	50.0%	<i>“Fancy car”; “build house”; “new technology”; “change of lifestyle.”</i>
	• Working hard	7	58.3%	<i>“Hard work”; “Studying”; “work all the time.”</i>
	• Africentric values	4	33.3%	<i>“Never take western life”; “give back to my community”; “my culture &amp; its activities.”</i>
3) Combine family & work	• Family first	8	66.7%	<i>“No working far from them”; “breadwinner of my family.”</i>
4) Work overseas	• Work in SA	4	33.3%	<i>“Total no”; “work domestically.”</i>
	• Wanting to work overseas	8	66.7%	<i>“Want to work overseas”; “China”; “Brazil”; “England”; “USA”; “Australia”; Germany”; “Want to work and travel around the world.”</i>

All 12 participants had selected *the lifestyle I anticipate* as an influence. The most significant subtheme was *working hard* ( $n = 7$ ; 58.3%). Participant 4 recounted what this subtheme meant: *“Hard work for my life; challenging things so that my life will be fine.”* Similarly, participant 11 conveyed that his aim was: *“to live the best and satisfying life...*

*until I reach that I shall never give up.*” The subtheme of **materialistic indicators of success** was cited by six participants (50%). An improved lifestyle, owning a house and a new car were named as desirable materialistic indicators. Future **combinations of family and work** were asterisked by eight participants (66.7%). Family was viewed as a priority, as explained by participant 9: *“No working far from them, put smile and pride within them.”*

The influence **I want to move away from where I live** was seen to threaten a set of Africentric values associated with being connected to family and community structures. Two participants indicated that they did not want to move (16.7%): *“Because I will forget those that I was doing this for”* (P. 9). In contrast, three participants (25%) were undecided, yet highlighted the importance they had attached to their Kayamandi background: *“Where I am from determines where I am going, true and influential.”* Lastly, seven participants (58.3%) indicated that they wanted to leave the rural areas to *“start a fresh life”* (P. 2). Participant 10 elucidated his desire to leave: *“From where I am from jealousy is a big thing. I saw black people who wasted their chances stupidly. We grow up in shacks. We’ve lost our shacks because there was fire. No one in my family is highly educated.”*

Career options were predominantly based in the Western Cape. However, the *MSCI* broadened work/study areas to include provinces such as Durban and Kwazulu-Natal. Participant 6 explained his desire to work within South Africa, which was mirrored by three other participants: *“I would like to work domestically but not here in Stellenbosch. E.g., Cape Town, Durban & Johannesburg.”* Overseas opportunities had not been considered before the *MSCI*, and participants had not realised that this could be a career reality.

The influence **I want to work overseas** was highlighted by seven participants (66.7%). Overseas was described as an: *“opportunity to get knowledge about other countries”* (P. 3). Countries such as Australia, China, Germany, USA and Brazil were mentioned by participants. However, the researcher hypothesised that Africentric value systems were not considered when filling out this section. The individual interviews realigned participants’ ideas about working overseas and accessible career opportunities.

Lastly, **Africentric values** were selected by four participants (33.3%) to guard African cultural roots against western ideologies of success. Participant 9 explained he would never *“take western life as of my living”* because he would like to *“show the youth road to be living, improve my family to better condition.”* A trend has been observed that, when individuals move from rural areas into more urban areas, the values associated with a more traditional

way of life are replaced and a more western lifestyle is adopted. This process is known as acculturation and differs for each individual. Traditional beliefs and values may not be entirely replaced, yet community members warn adolescents against changing their traditional lifestyle (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005).

Reflection processes, such as the *MSCI*, would enable adolescents to gain awareness of meaning-making patterns by tying personal and career variables together. The effects that a career or work role will have on interpersonal relationships, family and community could be made visible (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Maree & Beck, 2004; McMahon et al., 2005a). Creating awareness of the availability of job opportunities would aid adolescents to contextualise training and occupational aspirations within changing global markets. Furthermore, finding employment near Kayamandi and family structures may be difficult, thus an emphasis needs to be placed on career adaptability (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005).

**5.4.6. Summary of *MSCI* experience.** Participants' self-examination of the varying impacts of individual, social, environmental-societal and recursive influences is believed to have provided a valuable self-awareness experience to recognise previous limitations to career exploration (Ladany et al., 1997). Table 5.10. indicates the prominent themes that emerged from the diagrammatic representation of each participant's constellation of career influences in the *MSCI*.

At the *individual level*, participants included *interests* and *abilities* as an integrated, prominent theme (66.7%). This was followed by *self-efficacy beliefs* (50%) and *Africentric beliefs and values* (50%). Identifying interests and abilities was seen as challenging, where school-related subjects were used as mastery examples. However, other abilities and interests revolved around working with people, which was interpreted to form part of the *ubuntu* paradigm. The participants identified a need for comprehensive career information. Objective facts required subjective insight to allow awareness of work-related abilities already possessed and to limit distorted career ideas held (Maree & Beck, 2004; Nelson, 2002; Stead & Watson, 2006).

Table 5.10.

*Themes Elicited from the Integrated Representation of Participants' My System of Career Influences*

Levels	Themes	Frequency	Percent	Verbatim Examples
1) Individual influences	• Interests and abilities	8	66.7%	<i>"Interests &amp; abilities: I have the interest &amp; my abilities are my concern"; "Love math and I'm good at it, it will take me places."</i>
	• How I cope	5	41.7%	<i>"Consider the way I handle difficult situations; "be smart prioritise to succeed."</i>
	• Self-efficacy beliefs	6	50.0%	<i>"I believe that there is nothing that I cannot do in life or that is impossible"; "Just have to work hard"; "I can make it."</i>
	• Africentric beliefs and values	6	50.0%	<i>"Give back to my community"; "Value that I hold helping people"; "Xhosa person"; "My parents follow footsteps"; "The struggle I grown under."</i>
2) Social Influences	• Parents, friends and teachers	10	83.3%	<i>"Influences from friends or family"; "My parents, teachers and friends support me all the way."</i>
3) Environmental-societal influences	• Need to identify financial aids	7	58.3%	<i>"The finances needed to do my course"; "My parents do not have money to send me to university."</i>
	• Resources (transport, education, jobs)	2	16.7%	<i>"Educational resources are available, location of universities. My local area has public transport, employment opportunities."</i>
	• Lack of access to information	1	8.3%	<i>"Available opportunities: there are few chances ...to gain more access to know what is required for me &amp; how to change"</i>

Table 5.10

*Themes Elicited from the Integrated Representation of Participants' My System of Career Influences (continued)*

Levels	Themes	Frequency	Percentage	Verbatim Examples
4) Recursive influences:  Anticipated future lifestyle	• Materialistic indicators of success	8	66.7%	"Want to be successful by making money"; "Better payment, improve standard of living, my future success."
	• Combine family & work	2	16.7%	"Want to combine family and work."
	• Work overseas	3	25.0%	"I want to work overseas"; "Different countries."

Africentric beliefs and value structures are believed to create resilience mechanisms in disadvantaged adolescents (Theron & Theron, 2012) that emphasise setbacks as opportunities. Participant 9's words illustrated that "to grow under struggle" would enable him to succeed and reach a higher level than someone who had not grown up in a shack. The collective nature of suffering and the support structures that extended family networks form are valued by these participants. Africentric narratives will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

At the social level, the only theme evident is the combination of *parents, teachers and friends*, with 83.3% of the sample endorsing this influence. This supports previous studies that explain the importance attached to parental and teacher support in career decision-making (McIlveen et al., 2012; Seabi et al., 2010).

At the *environmental-societal level*, 58.3% of the sample selected the need for *financial aid* as a prominent influence. *Local resources* were cited by two participants, and one participant mentioned the lack of accessible career information in Kayamandi. There is no other mention of barriers inherent in the Kayamandi context. Optimal career development is hypothesised to occur when the individual is able to cope with and adapt to changing contexts. However, the severe financial constraints apparent in this sample could compromise career processes and result in a lack of career commitment (Ladany et al., 1997).

*Process influences* describe changes that occur over time at each systems level to illustrate lived experiences gained (McMahon & Watson, 2008). The only time element endorsed was *future anticipated lifestyle*, which was mentioned by all 12 participants. The most prominent subtheme was *materialistic indicators of success*, which was mentioned by eight participants (66.7%). The influence of *combining family and work* was identified by two participants (16.7%). Three participants (25%) endorsed the influence of *wanting to work overseas*. The participants elaborated on aspects that were novel to them and included them in their cognitive processes about career choices, enabling a process of reflection to occur (McMahon & Watson, 2008).

**5.4.7. Reflection on the MSCI exercise.** Access to books and opportunities to develop cognitive problem-solving strategies or critical thinking skills are limited in the Kayamandi context (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). Therefore, the learners were hypothesised to encounter initial cognitive difficulties in completing the *MSCI*, which was seen in the sample. In addition, reflective questions caused confusion, with slight variations being interpreted to elicit the same answers and further complicated by language difficulties.

For example, the participants said that questions such as: “*What stands out least for you?*”; “*What has been confirmed for you?*”; “*What would you like to change?*”; “*What would you like to remain the same?*”; “*Which influences have you encountered in previous career decisions?*” and “*Did they or did they not help you?*” were not specific enough. It is important to acknowledge that not all barriers a person perceives can in fact be overcome, and instilling personal control and responsibility in these instances would not be appropriate (Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Cardoso & Marques, 2008). Therefore, questions need to be made more explicit. The researcher would recommend specifying whether individual, social and environmental-societal levels were being addressed to aid recognition of overlooked resources or influences. In this way, additional support can be provided for disadvantaged learners to orient themselves and reframe the plethora of enablers, barriers and influences encountered.

Table 5.11 indicates the prominent themes of the *MSCI* as a reflection exercise. *The MSCI* was *perceived positively* by all 12 participants, with words like: “*Good and impressed*” (P. 8) being used. The reflection exercise inspired the participants to engage in further career exploration activities, which can be seen in participant 3’s statement that he feels: “*More interested in the choice of my career.*” Career self-efficacy beliefs and expectations were hypothesised to have increased, as participant 10 described that he felt: “*Like I got all the*

*keys to success.*” In addition, participants had seen the value in the *MSCI* as a career reflection exercise, although it was not what they had expected initially. They had limited past reflection experiences, and language difficulties existed, yet participant 2 summarised the experience positively: *“I feel happy because I see the difference.”*

Table 5.11.

*Reflection Themes Elicited from the MSCI: Reflecting on My System of Career Influences*

Themes	Subthemes	Frequency	Percentage	Verbatim Examples
1) Insight into personal attributes linked to career choices	• Personality abilities and interests	8	66.7%	<i>“My abilities and interests”; “Realised things that I did not know about me”; “Look at your strengths &amp; weaknesses”; “Know my abilities to find myself.”</i>
2) Need additional course and occupational knowledge	• Financial aids, detailed occupational information	5	41.7%	<i>“To get more information”; “Availability of schools”; “Explore more my knowledge”; “financial support to pay course fees.”</i>
3) Influences of People	• Parents, teachers and friends	9	75.0%	<i>“Even the people around me can influence careers”; “my parents &amp; friends they have an impact on my career”; “my parents &amp; teachers stand on my side, give more information.”</i>
4) Career decision-making processes	• Prioritising tasks	7	58.3%	<i>“To make a right choice of choosing a career”; “what you have to consider when choosing a career”; “prioritise in life so that I pursue my dream.”</i>
5) <i>MSCI</i> as reflection exercise	• Positive experience	10	83.3%	<i>“Good &amp; impressed”; “feel inspired &amp; motivated”; “I feel more interested.”</i>

A theme of gaining *insight into the link between personal and career information* emerged. Eight participants (66.7%) gained self-awareness of individual interests and abilities. These findings support previous studies, indicating that disadvantaged learners lack



connections between abilities and compatible occupational requirements (Usinger & Smith, 2010). Personal elements are essential in creating a self-concept to gain a vocational identity, which adolescents use as a means for self-definition (Leonard & Vriend, 1975).

The *theme of needing additional course and occupational knowledge* was emphasised by five participants (41.7%). Restricted occupational knowledge did not limit career aspirations in this sample (Stead, 1996). The need for comprehensive career information, ideally consisting of an integration of objective and subjective approaches, was identified in the sample to enable successful career choices (Maree & Beck, 2004). Limited comprehensive career information resulted in career choices being based on stereotypes or irrational beliefs (Stead, Watson, & Foxcroft, 1993). Participants' low socio-economic background could contribute significantly to career choices being distorted by materialistic motivators (Kovalski & Horan, 1999).

Respondents are at a vocational stage in which importance is placed on career exploration and information for realistic career planning (i.e., tertiary education or entry into the labour market) (Janeiro, 2009). However, previous research found that South African Grade 12 learners were the most uncertain regarding their careers and felt less capable of making career choices than Australian learners (Watson, Creed, & Patton, 2003). The difficulty that adolescents face in making career decisions is supported by the findings from this sample, where *insight into career decision-making processes* was highlighted as a significant factor that stood out for the respondents after completion of the *MSCI* ( $n = 7$ ; 58.3%). Participant 1 noted the difficulties in decision-making by stating that the *MSCI* enabled her to: “*learn more about how to make right choices.*” Adolescents from rural and peri-urban backgrounds face visible challenges in decision-making and adjustment processes that result from limited access to career education and information, in comparison to their urban counterparts (McIlveen et al., 2012).

The social realms that adolescents' subjective career stories are assembled within significantly affect the beliefs they hold about themselves, their career possibilities and their environments (Lent et al., 2002). The *MSCI* caused the respondents to gain awareness of the impact that people had on their career constructions. *People* were described as a significant influence and emerged as a prominent theme. Participant 2 explained: “*even the people around me can influence careers.*” In the sample, 75% of the participants indicated their new insight into family, teachers and friends as influences, which supports previous research

about the visible role of social spheres in adolescents' career choices (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Maree et al., 2006; McIlveen et al., 2003; McMahon, 2005).

To conclude, the *MSCI* as a reflective career development exercise could enable adolescents to overcome their disadvantage by ensuring that they are aware of the need for continuous re-formulation of career decisions, plans and goals (McIlveen, Everton, & Clarker, 2005). The *MSCI* addresses the integration of self and occupational knowledge. Therefore social influences as well as gaps in career and training knowledge were identified in order to sustain career exploration. Reflection processes and personal agency could enable individuals to anticipate challenges, avoid occasional employment or government-endorsed occupations (Stead, 1996), and make successful career routes a reality.

### **5.5. Researcher's observations**

Participants perceived the completion of the *MSCI* to be challenging. Two hours were taken to complete the *MSCI* booklet, although the suggested sitting is 30 to 40 minutes. Higher levels of support were expected because of the disadvantaged context in which the learners' specific language or learning support needs were situated as well as the lack of career counselling background. The diagrammatic nature of the *MSCI* is believed to aid learners to tap into previous educational experience (Maree et al., 2006). However, learners seemed confused by the visual-spatial layout, where circles and a lack of space seemed to pose difficulties needing additional explanations.

Participants seemed to work best with lined paper that needed filling out, such as the first part of the *MSCI*. The same phenomenon was documented in the researcher's community involvement in the Career Life-Planning Project's career interventions. Learners seemed to be unfamiliar with mind-mapping and spider diagrams as useful cognitive processing tools to present information. This has important implications for further use of the *MSCI* in disadvantaged population groups, as limited opportunities exist for high-order cognitive processing in township contexts (Swartz, 2011). In order to facilitate the reflection needed to fill out the *MSCI*, the researcher recommends that an extra exercise is done. A precursory cognitive processing opportunity is needed to incorporate diverse information and create familiarity with mind-mapping exercises (i.e., the *career flower* – see Appendix L).

The necessity for career counselling in this marginalised group is apparent because of the documented difficulties that disadvantaged adolescents have in forming a vocational identity. The experience of being in between two worlds has been cited in previous studies that dealt

with rural adolescents' career choices. In addition, the Africentric value system of black adolescents may seem irreconcilable with the western world, where training and job opportunities are located (McIlveen et al., 2012). This could explain the need to stay in the township and remain in close proximity to family and community members. Respondents were anxious about forgetting the life lessons and stories of suffering which community elders had shared to motivate them to seize opportunities. These individual narratives are discussed further in Chapter 6.

### **5.6. Chapter summary**

The narrative exercise allowed insight into respondents' initial career stories at the beginning of this research process. Career uncertainty, career options, further education and a lack of information were highlighted as prominent themes. Perceptions linked to a township background were discovered to enable self-efficacy beliefs. However, barriers were also present, such as discrimination based on the low socio-economic status that formed the township background. The *MSCI* was also used to identify career influences located at individual, social and environmental-societal levels as well as significant time elements.

At the individual level, Africentric values and beliefs, personal abilities and a lack of self-knowledge were prominent themes. Parents, teachers and friends were identified as significant social-level influences. The environmental-societal level showed that the local area of Kayamandi was an important influence, with educational resources, transport and jobs being available, although financial aid was needed. Time elements indicated that all the participants anticipated an improved future lifestyle, but uncertainty was exhibited about work overseas, and proximity to family was paramount.

Respondents viewed the *MSCI* as a positive reflection experience. The next chapter presents the individual interview findings to explore the unique constellations of career influences. Career ideas and identities are examined to include external influences restricting career options as well as internalised barriers resulting in lowered self-efficacy (Maree et al., 2006).

## CHAPTER SIX

### INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 6.1. Introduction

In the STF, individuals are placed at the centre of interacting systems. Similarly, the adolescents in this study were located in an extensive system with overlapping subsystems to illustrate the range of dynamic influences faced in making career decisions in Grade 12 (McMahon & Watson, 2012). The *individual* and *focus group interviews* are presented in this chapter. Interviews aimed to create a space for dialogue that would enable reflection on career exploration and planning processes. This would enable the identification of important influences, barriers, effective resources and strategies for coping with anticipated barriers (Cardoso & Marques, 2008). Socially constructed conversations form the basis of narrative career counselling techniques, and this chapter emphasises the elicited career stories using verbatim examples (Alexander et al., 2010). Narratives will be broken up, using the STF to identify the interaction of personal and collective stories that continually create and recreate career decisions and identities (Van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008).

#### 6.2. Individual interview findings

The 12 individual interviews were analysed for overarching themes that supported the data elicited with the *MSCI* booklet. Although the themes identified in Chapter 5 were confirmed, the data below expands only on specific themes to which the sample attached significance, so as to avoid repetition. Table 6.1. presents an overview of the extracted themes and subthemes with examples of verbatim responses. Individual career counselling sessions aimed to give adolescents an opportunity to reflect and re-evaluate past choices. Regret or justification is incorporated to utilise these experiences and gain a better self-understanding (Maree, 2012).

#### 6.3. Individual level influences

The individual interviews revealed two main themes, namely 1) *self-efficacy* and 2) *reflection*. The respondents dealt with individual influences such as gaining insight and conceptualising themselves-in-context.

**6.3.1. Self-efficacy.** The present research used self-efficacy to describe motivating beliefs that participants held about their abilities, personal efforts and agency in reaching career ideals. The expectations or beliefs that individuals hold about successfully attempting and mastering a given task have been found to have a significant impact on career decision-

making behaviours (Maree, 2012). Previous research provided examples of improved positive self-talk after actively engaging in career development processes. This was mirrored in the sample (Osborn & Reardon, 2006). The theme of self-efficacy contained two significant subthemes, namely 1) *strengthened self-efficacy beliefs* and 2) *sense of responsibility*.

The subtheme of *strengthened self-efficacy beliefs* was indicated by 91.6% of the sample. This was illustrated in participant 2's discovery that she "has confidence" even though she is shy. Similarly, participant 9 said: "But if I, I tell myself that I can make it, ja I can." Participant 1 described traversing self-doubt and reaching a positive self-concept: "I learned to be confident when I do something." She also clarified that her self-efficacy beliefs had been reinforced. She gained an agentive identity with the belief that she could prioritise and sacrifice factors that detracted her focus from her career goal: "In life I learn more about how to make a right choices and the how to do sacrifices in life in order to fulfil things." Participant 7 depicted his realisation of the importance of being confident and approaching people for career information: "I'm shy but when it comes to talk like I'm attending exhibitions, I must ask about that career of being an economist." In contrast, participant 4 described that positive self-talk was a challenge he was tackling: "It's what I'm trying to control now by telling myself positive all the time. Because even now I face difficult situation you know...so it's hard."

The adolescents in this sample all realised the need for further education in order to have a spectrum of career opportunities available to them. Participants had now become aware of their general lack of clarity about the details of their ideal career pathway, and that personal agency was needed to solidify this avenue. Participant 5 said that she learnt: "there are things that I could get more information about the career that I want to do." She also recognised how fear of engaging in the process of asking people about career choices made her doubt her ability to succeed. Physiological and affective states, such as fear, can lower career self-efficacy expectations (Watson & Stead, 2006b). The *MSCI* seemed to have provided a mixture of both social and verbal persuasion that helped participant 5 become constructively assertive in career planning behaviour. Participant 4 comprehended that his previous lack of planning was problematic and would not help him anticipate obstacles:

*"Ja I learn about planning first your ... career before you start entering it... You can write something down if you want to be something so you can write it down what you are going to face you know. So I think it helped me a lot because I have also ... my planning of my career at home."*

Furthermore, participant 4 determined that self-awareness and confidence were essential in the pursuit of career-related activities. He expressed the need to explore his personal abilities before formulating any further career goals within existing barriers: *“I think I can start here so that I can realise my obstacles and my weakness you know.”* Career self-efficacy expectations were seen in this sample to determine whether or not a person will initiate career behaviour, the effort he/she is willing to expend and how long this behaviour will be sustained in the face of obstacles (Bandura, cited in Nauta, Kahn, Angell, & Cantarelli, 2002). Direct experiences of personal success were used by the participants to strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs and agency (Watson & Stead, 2006b). Participant 8 illustrated how observed experiences of success form self-efficacy outcomes generalised to other career-related tasks and result in increased self-esteem and confidence: *“So when I get that bursary I started to open my mind that, ok it is it. So I have to work hard and get this thing.”*

An individual’s personal agency is essential in constructing career outcomes, yet this sample did not need help in assuming responsibility for creating their own career stories. An overwhelming *sense of responsibility* was evident as it was the second subtheme cited by all the respondents. Participant 11 claimed that: *“Everything lies with me...I have to consider what contributes most towards my career...I have to make sure that if it happens it depends on me.”* Participant 8 also described his responsibility not to “delay” or wait until it’s too late: *“Because you’ll end up messing up things. So I’ve learned that. No I can prove myself.”* Participant 4 claimed he could only blame himself: *“I don’t believe on blaming someone. Not ...ja. I don’t want to put negative things on my way you know.”* Participant 9 explained that it was his responsibility to construct his career path and that the *MSCI* confirmed this belief for him: *“It’s asking more of me so I get to find where I am. I have to evaluate myself more on if I want this career am I going to do it, am I going to meet this career.”*

The overwhelming belief that personal effort and hard work enable success was visible in the sample. This reflects the ‘meritocracy myth’ based on the notion that sheer hard work, regardless of social and political structural barriers, can enable an individual to achieve what has evaded others (McName & Miller, cited in Swartz, 2011). The personal attribution of unjust social or environmental circumstances hindering self-development is a problematic trait that could undermine psychological well-being. If the individual internally assigns failure that was uncontrollable, self-esteem may be reduced and further career endeavours hindered (Janeiro, 2009).

The adolescents had doubts about whether it was possible to achieve their career ideals when illegal activities offered lucrative short-term solutions. There were numerous examples of young graduates who had failed to secure a job and returned to Kayamandi unemployed. These vicarious learning examples instilled anxiety in the sample of “not being able to make it” and could reduce self-efficacy expectations (Watson & Stead, 2006b). Nonetheless, participants exhibited an unwavering belief in the ability of personal agency to provide alternative routes from their current reality.

Participants seemed to refuse to consider options other than gaining further education. Participant 2 explained that she did not have a plan B and did not want to consider any substitutes. She wanted to go to university, as she heard that: *“a lot of people saying if you don’t get in straight after school you will never do it.”* The same attitude was expressed by four other participants. A change in career ideas was taken as an indication of personal failure, as participant 9 exclaimed: *“Whoa! It can never change. I’ll battle it out.”* A career path change was related to a lack of effort, rather than a shift in priorities or interests. Participant 3 realised the importance of occupational choices reflecting an individual’s interests and abilities, which needed to influence his future decision-making processes:

*“I was able to see what thing must I look for before I can make my decision... I didn’t know you must understand yourself. Understand your abilities and interests, so that you can make the right choice.”*

Ten participants indicated that they had made career decisions without accurate career information or self-reflection. Yet personal responsibility was still assumed for individual success in a specific career against the backdrop of a large number of barriers associated with a disadvantaged background. The researcher inferred that this decision-making behaviour could result in learned helplessness. However, reflection processes could enable individuals to anticipate challenges and avoid waiting for occupational opportunities (Stead, 1996).

Table 6.1

*A Description of the Individual and Social Level Themes Extracted from Individual Interviews*

Levels	Themes	Sub-themes	n	Percentage	Verbatim examples
Individual	1. Self-efficacy	• Strengthened self-efficacy	11	91.6%	<i>"Has confidence"; "I tell myself "; "I can make it"; "I can."</i>
		• Sense of responsibility	12	100%	<i>"It depends on me"; "Lies with me"; "I need to work hard."</i>
	2. Reflection processes	• Opportunities to think	12	100%	<i>"I didn't even think about that"; "Got me thinking."</i>
		• Self-awareness gained	12	100%	<i>"I haven't asked"; "Choosing careers but we don't know what that career really entails."</i>
Social	1. Family	• Parents' lack of involvement	12	100%	<i>"None of them is educated"; "Things parents should know."</i>
		• Siblings	4	33.3%	<i>"She's just supporting"; "My brother was talking about."</i>
	2. School	• LO teachers	12	100%	<i>"It's my miss"; "Our teachers: Ms Ndzamela &amp; Mrs Gosani"</i>
		• School marks	7	58.3%	<i>"My marks in"; "my teacher said I'm good at"; "At school I think I'm good at."</i>
	3. Lack of role models	• Chance encounters	8	66.7%	<i>"The people that I've met"; "I've met also."</i>
		• Media role models	8	66.7%	<i>"Generations"; "Muvhango"; "On television"; "TV."</i>
	4. Friends	• Support structure	10	83.3%	<i>"We can help each other"; "My supporter"; "Friends that help you stick"; "Give me advice."</i>
		• Negative influence	12	100%	<i>"I don't want to listen to friends"; "Enemies"; "I won't make it."</i>
	5. Cultural influences	• Narratives of suffering	12	100%	<i>"Those suffering"; "Tears and blood"; "Struggle"; "Our parents are suffering"; "It's all about people."</i>
		• Cultural gender conceptualisations	5	41.6%	<i>"Since I am a man"; "Head of the home"; "He's talking everybody Listens."</i>
• Resistance to western values		12	100%	<i>"The Xhosa people"; "Not forget where you come from."</i>	



**6.3.2. Reflection.** An individual's immediate environment, such as socialisation experiences at home, determines his or her familiarity with learning experiences and engagement with opportunities for reflection (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). As an important facet of experiential learning, reflection refers to the ability to think about what has been experienced and learnt (Rooth, 2000). This meaning-making process is based on personal insights, creating the possibility of skills acquisition or sustained change in behaviour. Two subthemes emerged surrounding reflection processes: *1) opportunities for reflection* and *2) self-awareness*.

Previous findings have noted that black adolescents were unaware of the need to consider personal factors when occupations were chosen, and this was also found in the current sample (Stead, 1996). Instead, materialistic indicators of success resulted in prestigious career choices. These improved self-worth, which previous monetary deprivation had denied (Swartz, 2011). An individual's limited self-reflection may have significant negative implications for career decisions, future work satisfaction and well-being.

Disadvantaged adolescents are deprived of opportunities to 'discover,' construct themselves and explore 'lesser known' career opportunities (Maree, 2012). Participant 11 explained that the *MSCI* had provided a chance for him to learn about: "*some things that I didn't know by myself. Things that I value and my interests and my abilities got me thinking. I didn't have a chance to think about them before but now I had a chance to think about what I liked the most.*" Although limited opportunities for high-order cognitive reflection existed, career decision-making and life-planning processes rely on these reflective processes (Rooth, 2000).

*Opportunities for reflection* was unearthed as a subtheme. Cognitive engagement with personal questions was initially not viewed as beneficial, because no immediate answers were provided. Participant 11 expressed that, contrary to his expectations: "*The book didn't give me answers. It gave me questions.*" Although the insight hidden in the process of reflection was not visible at first, later comments indicated that sudden increases in self-awareness and the assimilation of diverse information sources had resulted. Participant 6 explained how he had reconciled his two interests and had: "*changed course. I also had an interest in tourism but I think the most interest I have is in radio.*" In addition, participant 2 explained that she had now considered working overseas because of the *MSCI* booklet, which made "*me think about if I could work overseas.*" Participant 11 described the opportunity for reflection that

the MSCI had given him: *“I thought about it [going overseas]. The thing is I didn’t think about some other things before and this book gave me an opportunity to do so.”*

New ideas and perceptions for all 12 participants had resulted from the opportunity to reflect. These insights ranged from minor, such as participant 5’s description that the MSCI helped her to discover that: *“I’ve got a direction,”* to significant reflection processes that included participant 4’s conceptualisation of learning as a life-long process: *“And then as days, as years go on you learned something,”* which he viewed as having an impact on his personal career constructions. A profound shift was illustrated in participant 7’s cognitive processing abilities surrounding his career choice:

*“Ja like I learn that when choosing a career it’s not an easy task. You must think and also ... have a proper investigation, find more about the career and also hunting, supporting from families and also the communities. Then I can achieve my career if I’m participating with like the support in my families and also the communities.”*

Reflection on previous career ideas stimulated insight into career development processes. Specifically, certain subject choices were seen to have changed career trajectories. Participant 11 described his career decision-making process up until this point and depicted the landmarks that illustrated the cognitive terrain that he had traversed:

*“The first choice that I had to make is choosing the subjects from Grade 9. Then I chose the Commerce subject. Our teachers told us and our class we were not that good at Maths. Most of us so our teachers told us to change to Math lit, but I didn’t change it. Most of our classmates did that but only two of us didn’t change. So that was another choice that I had to make and the last choice that I had to make was choosing what I want to do. Amongst Auditing, Financial Accountancy and Chartered Accountancy and I chose Chartered Accountancy.”*

Through respondents’ narration of past career choices, the second subtheme of *self-awareness* became evident. Self-awareness had been cultivated of how each respondent’s individual interests and abilities led to the current career path he/she had arrived at. Commonalities were viewed in narratives, such as disliking a subject that siblings or parents had recommended, and then choosing a subject that was better understood and enjoyed. Participant 12 explained how he chose commerce over science:

*“At my home like, my brother was doing science and my sister is doing science and... I didn’t decide to do science but they influence me, said that if you are good at maths, you have to do science because science is more maths. But, for me, I wanted to do commerce*

*because I'm also doing maths in commerce. And for me, I wanted to be ... to be one of the people that are in finances, not in science. I know I have a problem with science because I cannot understand if I cannot believe."*

Participant 2 portrayed a similar process. Her sister was studying accounting, so she took accounting only to discover that her sister's interest was not her own. She changed to tourism instead: *"Now I see the difference you know and see my abilities something that I interested in."*

The subtheme of *self-awareness* indicates an increase in an individual's ability to explore career choices and to plan. Self-awareness allows adolescents to think about the role that perceived barriers, resources and coping strategies play (Luzzo, 2000). However, the reflection skills that allow for the effective integration of self-knowledge in occupational knowledge were previously found to be lacking in black adolescents (Stead, 1996). Reflection can enable the effective integration of self-concepts, occupations and family lives in search for a meaningful personal career choice. The *MSCI* facilitated reflection processes in this group of participants, not only about themselves, but also about the resources needed and the available support networks that they had never thought to use.

The importance of engaging in dialogues with individuals who were studying the same course as the participants had chosen was not recognised by the participants in the sample. The awareness of communicating with people to ascertain available resources only began to surface in thinking processes: *"I think that's a good idea I'll need to meet him. And also speak to all of the people there...while you're studying during holidays or whatever already work in a company"* (P. 8). Resources that could enable the exchanging of practical skills or information were overlooked as well as potential informal mentoring experiences. The dialogue below shows that certain social networking opportunities and resources had gone unnoticed:

**Anouk:** *Ok, are there any people that you can ask about being a Chartered Accountant? So you said you had some friends at different Universities. Do they know anyone who's enrolled in your course?*

**Participant 11:** *I didn't ask them.*

The awareness of formerly unrecognised resources was acknowledged by participant 7: *"Or what's around you that you didn't realise is around you. And also the support through communities."* The perception of information gaps also increased career consciousness. Participants identified information that was still lacking, such as academic grades that

matched entry requirements for a certain course or the realities of a specific career.

Participant 5 stated his need for comprehensive information: *“I have to find exactly what tourism management means and what a tourism management do. And where should I do it. And which subjects should I do there.”* Critical thinking was stimulated by processes of self-reflection, resulting in the detection of missing sources of information and resources needed. Participant 12’s insight pinpointed specific career information he needed to obtain: *“I have to research more about my career how like...How they spend their time?”*

Irrational beliefs were also questioned, as participant 2 described how she realised that: *“I can see now because I was just sitting waiting for the September but time is ticking.”*

Although these adolescents were seen to have a wide range of career ideas, the cognitive processes needed to plan steps in establishing a career path and finding channels for career information were lacking. Thus valuable resources may have been overlooked. Participant 3 recounted: *“I didn’t even thought about after high school.”* His thinking processes did not include what would happen after matric, as his current focus was on exams. Participant 8 conveyed that it was important to acknowledge self-limitations, when making career choices: *“I have learned that and there are things like, saying that, when you want a career, but you know that ok, this career is not for me.”* Therefore, active engagement in cognitively linking life stories and career choices was facilitated in order to demonstrate that a continuous process of cognitive restructuring is involved in future career planning (Maree, 2012).

**6.3.3. Summary of individual influences.** The theoretical construct of career maturity includes attitudinal and cognitive dimensions. Planning and exploration form part of the attitudinal component and competency in decision-making, whereas a supply of occupational information constitutes the cognitive dimension (Super, 1990). According to this definition, the sample of participants would score lower on measures of career maturity. A disadvantaged background would reduce opportunities to develop cognitive processes, such as prospective/future thinking, which has been linked directly to career exploration and planning in Grade 12 (Janeiro, 2009).

Inextricably linked to career maturity are other concepts, such as career adaptability and career resilience (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007). The findings above indicated that these disadvantaged adolescents had limitations in terms of self-insight into and self-knowledge of abilities, talents and interests. The outcome of these limitations is an unclear vocational identity. This reduces the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, diminishes

self-confidence and motivation to take risks in order to achieve career success (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007)

At an individual level, these participants faced a lack of opportunities for reflection, which can be attributed to their disadvantaged environment and low socio-economic status. A lack of high-order cognitive reflective processes (i.e., poor planning) is indicative of limited facilitated reflection opportunities and not of a lack of cognitive abilities (Alexander, 1990). Reflection is an important component of gaining self-awareness by collecting personal information and deciding which abilities are translated into a vocational concept (Rooth, 2000). The individual influences evident in this sample of black adolescents supported previous research findings, as the participants initially were unaware of personal factors that they needed to consider when occupations were chosen (Stead, 1996).

#### **6.4. Social level influences**

Influences in the social context play a more visible role for adolescents than those in the environmental-societal system (McIlveen et al., 2003; McMahon, 2005). The cornerstone of *ubuntu* is the belief that ‘people are people through others.’ This explains the importance attached to the social level of influences in career decision-making processes. In the past, career development approaches were individualistic in nature and excluded the web of social interactions in which individuals exist. The section below examines the contribution of social contexts in career choices. The following themes of social level career influences were emphasised by the participants: **1) family; 2) school; 3) friends; 4) lack of role models; and 5) cultural influences.**

**6.4.1. Family.** Respondents viewed their families as a primary socialisation agent. Family helps to introduce values and cultural beliefs, such as respect for others and the difference between right and wrong (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011). A collective effort is essential for continued survival, and families were a source of lowered self-esteem and heartache, as well as a source of support and pride (Banks-Wallace, 1998). Poverty has been linked to inattentive parental care or neglect. A significant portion of parents who live in poverty lack the personal and social resources to effectively address their children’s needs (Halpern cited in Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). Two subthemes were extracted from the overarching theme of family influences: **1) lack of parental involvement in career planning** and **2) supportive siblings.**

The subtheme of *lack of parental involvement in career planning* was indicated by all 12 participants. Parents were discussed as supportive and encouraging, but had no career information to share with their children (Seabi et al., 2010). The parents of this sample were seen to be unable to provide assistance with career choices in an ever-changing technological environment, as many parents were still in low-level, unskilled or semi-skilled positions. Therefore, career development was characterised by insufficient career planning support as well as limited financial resources (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Seabi et al., 2010). Limited financial means often caused adolescents to consider entering the job market to help earn an additional income for their family, to the detriment of pursuing further education (e.g., Participant 6) (Munsaka, 2009).

In spite of this, all the participants remained interested in pursuing further training opportunities, rather than entering the job market after they had matriculated. Parents' positive attitudes to education were seen to be a significant influence on this group and resulted in a great value being placed on tertiary learning. This was observed in the following excerpts: *"My parents support me every day"* (P. 1), *"I mean like my family is backing like supporting me"* (P. 8.) and *"You can say my parents they just motivate me in what I want"* (P. 3).

Alexander et al. (2010) noted that adolescents have limited face-to face interactions with adults. Thus adult members of society were not accessible to provide children with guidance in making future life-planning decisions (i.e., social capital) (Coleman, cited in Munsaka, 2009). Participant 6 explained that he talked to his parents about the *MSCI* booklet, but: *"they just have no idea what I'm talking about. So I just find useless to tell them or ask them."* Participant 12 shared the same sentiment: *"Oh, my family. None of them is educated so they don't know much about those careers."* Participant 9 revealed that: *"Hayi, they don't know what IT is."* Adolescents presented the career information they had gathered to their parents, who had very different ideas of what a worthwhile career was, as indicated below:

*"Ja my parents always supporting me when it comes to take a decision of career but I told them that no being a police is a, it's not a good way. ... So when you go and find that those things and you tell them, they become supportive to you although they don't know that much. Cause most of our parents in our culture they know things like teaching, nursing and being a mayor"* (P. 7).

All 12 participants' parents were seen as moral influences that were symbolic and inspirational (Swartz, 2011). Participants admired their parents and did not ascribe any blame

to mothers who had children with different men. Participant 4 expressed that he was grateful for the supportive structure his siblings had formed to help one another in the absence of a father:

*“I live with my mother with my single parents you know although I have my father but I know him when I get old you know. I can't blame him you know because he do his own mistakes. What I said to him I said thanks for bringing me here in earth you know for the fact that I'm here in earth for, for a reason of them, of my mother and my father ne. So I can't blame him for not being responsible for me ...now I have my sister and my brother ne, she have his own father, I have my own father and my brother have also his own father. But if we are staying in our same room no one will say hayi man, your father do this for you and no man. We know that we live with our single mother and all of us grow in a same situation so no one could blame other or blame my mother. So I think what I do I can support my sister if she want to get some help you know because now here I staying with my sister, my mother is in the Eastern Cape and my father you know. Then my father is also married with other women but when I go there I feel comfortable and welcome but I don't like to go there to bother them in their marriage.”*

Parents were cited by all 12 participants to be significant influences or role models, based on their work ethic and sacrifices they made for their families. Participant 12 described his family situation, with his mother being the breadwinner, working as a dishwasher in a restaurant in Stellenbosch:

**Participant 12:** *For me I have to get finance. I have to. Because my brother, the one he's doing ... He's in CPUT. My elder brother. He's doing his second year now. He's ...he got bursary also. And my sister got the one from Stellenbosch. Got bursary from Stellenbosch. So, my mother cannot like help us. Cannot be able to support us because ... she's working but in ... you know [name of restaurant withheld].*

**Anouk:** *Where is that?*

**Participant 12:** *The restaurant in town.*

**Anouk:** *Oh ok.*

**Participant 12:** *It's a very small restaurant and she's very sort of dishwasher so...She cannot even afford to pay ... to pay to like buy like other things for us so...I don't think she...She cannot be able to give us the money to go and go to university. So, we have to try and find bursaries.*

A scenario resulted in which adolescents explained to their parents, who did not have formal education above Grade 4, what specific careers entailed. Career information was seen

to be an assemblage of factual and stereotypical snippets collected from various sources, such as friends, teachers and TV, resulting in dialogues such as the one below:

*“My mother. She was confused about tourism. She asking me tourism then I say yes, then she ask me what are tourism management... I don't want to be ... like Sam in Generations because he was travelling overseas and then he become a bar... bartender. She was confused that maybe I'll end up in that situation” (P. 2).*

Moreover, six participants had migrated from the Eastern Cape, either with their family (P. 12), or without their parents (P. 11, P. 7, P. 8, P. 9 and P. 4). Although their family arrangements may be diverse, the participants all shared the same concern that they did not have a person with whom they could critically discuss career options. Engaging in dialogue with strangers could result in jealousy and competitiveness. This can be seen when participant 4 divulged: *“I don't want to miss it if I can tell everybody that I want to do this and maybe...That someone else will take the idea.”* Previous research found that adolescents who lacked role models should be encouraged to strengthen relationships and seek mentoring relationships to obtain support. However, jealousy may undermine these social networking processes (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002).

Ideally, parents, guardians or siblings acting as caregivers should be included in career counselling interventions or development tasks (Stead, 1996) to aid dialogues that could be helpful in guiding career choices. The second subtheme of *supportive siblings* was mentioned by four participants (33.3%). Siblings helped with application forms and encouraged career choices, as some were studying to become professionals such as accountants (P. 2). Participant 12 mentioned: *“I only first knew about it when my brother...was talking about actuarial science.”* Participant 5, who lived with her older sister, said that her sister had no career insight, but was encouraging: *“She's just supporting whatever I say.”*

In addition, siblings attempt to create opportunities for each other. According to participant 10, his move to the Western Cape was based on what his sister had told him: *“Let's open opportunities for you and come to us and so I came here to study... They believe that there are many opportunities here and there are many varsities, so I can be brought education and they can take care of me as my parents did.”* Participant 4 claimed that his older sister was as supportive as she could be, even though she had other priorities: *“Because she also busy with her own marriage.”* If siblings were living in campus residences or were too preoccupied, participants often did not consider asking them and turned to school as another channel of available information.



**6.4.2. School.** Makupula High School was seen as an arena that provided a multitude of resources. Teachers attempted to instil resilience in their learners to overcome adversity in their development (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011). The influential role that this educational environment plays in adolescent career development is documented by significant increases in career maturity by grade (Watson & Van Aarde, 1986). The dependence, viewed in this sample of adolescents at Makupula High School, supports previous research that indicated learners relied on township schools as a resource in planning and constructing their future (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011). In reality, township schools have overcrowded classes, broken equipment, a lack of computer facilities and limited teacher-to-learner interaction. Two subthemes extracted from the overarching theme of school included: *1) LO teachers* and *2) school subjects*.

The LO teachers were described by all 12 participants as valuable and helpful sources of information. Thus *LO teachers* emerged as an important subtheme. LO teachers faced numerous time constraints, yet the researcher observed how they attempted to maintain the strength of these participants' self-efficacy beliefs. Participant 2 explained the significant influence that her LO teacher had on her career choice: *"It's my miss, she encourage me. I like tourism and she like tourism and teach it."* Participant 4 mentioned: *"Miss said she will organise me some bursaries if I want to."* Participants 3, 5 and 8 conveyed that this teacher even faxed municipality bursary forms. Participant 7 recounted that he went to his teacher and told her about: *"a vision that I will become an economist,"* and she informed him what this career path entailed because he had asked her.

Furthermore, one of the LO teachers had organised a job-shadowing experience for five learners at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in September. This was their first real observational learning experience in chartered accountancy, auditing and actuarial science occupations. The researcher often overheard the LO teachers explaining that not having enough money was not a valid reason not to try to apply, and that money could be found to finance studies. However, in the overcrowded environment found in Makupula High School, the learners who were too shy or too scared to ask did not receive the extra attention that outspoken or interested learners did.

The LO class time was stipulated as the only space where careers were discussed. Due to the set syllabus that teachers had to work through, career concerns were not explored in-depth or individually. The assignments set by LO teachers played an important role in career development processes, as Participant 9 pointed out:

*“The fact that I have found that I want to do IT. There’s a project that we were given that we have to find ... career things so I found that oh this is a career that I want. I was just saying IT but she said meant for me I think it is ... computer operating and control something like that.”*

In addition, ***school subjects*** as a subtheme was endorsed by seven participants (58.3%). Subjects provided instances to discern abilities through observational learning as well as through feedback from teachers. Participant 12 explained that: *“they have seen my marks in maths. And they believe that if it’s maths all the way then I will definitely do it.”* This arena for observing personal abilities and the rewards of hard work was seen to have an impact on self-confidence and self-esteem, as seen in participant 7’s comment: *“I’m doing Grade 10 economics a subject, economic subject I saw that no man I’m good at.”* Participant 3 repeated what he had heard from his teachers regarding his abilities: *“Like my teacher said I’m good at talking, to talk with people. I’m not that shy person. I think my vocabulary is better. At school I think I’m good at business and business studies.”* In contrast, school marks also indicated barriers to further education, and low performance in English prohibited university entrance: *“Other people tell me in other place like university or college they don’t need the person who get, got code two [40%] in English. So I don’t know what I’m going to do”* (P. 1).

**6.4.3. Friends.** Peers are seen to play a central role in adolescents’ lives. Far more time is spent in the company of peers than with any other influential parties, resulting in peer pressure (Sullivan, 1953). Peer networks have previously been described as an important source of academic support for students (Parker & Asher, cited in Munsaka, 2009). The findings of this research confirmed that friendship groups were seen as both enablers or support structures and negative influences (Shefer, 2011). Therefore two subthemes were extracted, indicating that friends were viewed as: **1) support structures** and **2) negative influences that needed to be ignored.**

Firstly, friends were described as ***support structures*** by 10 participants (83.3%). The exchange of ideas, resources, support and information was facilitated, resulting in pro-social behaviours. The male participants in the sample were all friends and tackled challenging educational tasks together. The narrative below indicates the role that participant 9’s friends played in helping him improve his maths marks: *“If we are talking about different careers if someone has a problem, ja we can help each other out. I was struggling with maths but they helped me a lot.”* Participant 5 realised the important support structures that she was embedded in: *“I’ve learned that there are people that are closer to me they’re also my*

supporters. *Such as my parents and also the friends.*” Similarly, participant 8 described his experience of the social web of friendship:

*“Friends too they give me advice on how, which career to take and ja how much do ... how can the requirements needed, that ja you see things like that. That’s what I learned. And how to choose the friends that help you stick ... that will help you to reach your goal. That will not say to you, you cannot reach it. You cannot make it. That will support you every time and that will give you the good impression every time like, support you about your career.”*

In contrast, negative effects of peer pressure include substance abuse, violence, unwanted pregnancy, risky sexual behaviour, gang membership and lack of academic motivation (Shefer, 2011). All 12 participants acknowledged the negative influence that friends had. The MSCi presented a unique opportunity to analyse other’s negative comments and selectively accept remarks. Therefore, the subtheme of friends as ***negative influences that needed to be ignored*** emerged. In the sample, five participants mentioned they needed to *“Ignore them [friends]”* (P. 4.) and realised: *“not to listen to my friends. Learn to work as a group in order to fulfil the dream. Because when you find something finds the enemies sometimes”* (P. 1).

Participant 9 described his positive self-talk in countering negative comments: *“I found because people are actually telling me that oh it’s so difficult eh you won’t make it. I told myself that if I will listen to those people I won’t make it for real.”* Negative influences consisted mainly of the communication of discouraging messages, specifically that it was not possible for participants to succeed: *“You can’t do it”* (P. 7). These participants’ contemplation that they could be different from anyone else in the community was dissuaded, as participant 1 recounted: *“They said I’m wasting my time because maybe at the end of the year I will fail so...”*

Also, the distinction between what participants wanted for themselves and what feasible alternatives their friends saw for them was indicated in participant 5’s narrative: *“They used to say I must be a cooker, ja. Because I’m good at cooking. Some they use to say that I must be uhm a hairdresser. But I don’t like both of it.”* Participant 6 used his self-efficacy to shield himself from the critical comments that he had encountered: *“I know what to accept from other people although, not to take the negative things...but to take them as an opportunity for me to succeed.”* Participant 12 explained how negative comments about the difficulty of the course affected him and made him doubt himself:

*“I said I’ll go for it because I love maths and I know my abilities of maths. I’ll definitely do that course. But, at the same time, if like people are making me to become scared of the course and it’s like what if I take this course and... I can see the reaction of the people when I’m mentioning this course and most of them they say that we were also good at maths at school. This is totally different from math that we know.”*

Negative influences have the potential to compromise self-efficacy beliefs and expectations. In addition, peer pressure has the potential to pull these participants in contradictory moral directions. Friends were also the source of illegal activities and instigated others to get involved in substance abuse or other money-making schemes. For example, participant 4 described his experience of resisting this pervading pressure:

*“Not even getting fraud because I know I can commit fraud. Ja. But I don't want to. Most of my friends asking me why man let's do this and this you know I say I'm not comfortable my friend you know. Do your own thing I'll do my own thing you know.”*

The range of negative influences described above, add to already existing challenging circumstances in Kayamandi. Without identifiable role models who endured the same conditions to create stories of hope and success, a barren realm of desperate strivings remains.

**6.4.4. Lack of role models.** Two subthemes emerged within the overarching theme of a lack of role models, which were 1) *chance encounters* forming informal mentoring opportunities and 2) *media role models* used as substitutes for accessible role models. All the participants mentioned that there were no visible examples in Kayamandi of pathways to career success, such as role models. Participant 12 confirmed that: *“I’ve just collected information to the library and into the internet. I haven’t met anyone who’s like doing actual science and who’s in actuarial science.”* Restricted funds and access may prevent rural and peri-urban adolescents from building positive support networks that serve to strengthen their resilience (Markstrom, Marshall, & Tryon cited in Kerperlman & Mosher, 2004). However, participant 12 and participant 11 had attended a South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) camp to which the top two learners of each school had been invited. Participant 12 explained how his confidence and self-efficacy beliefs were reinforced, as he met other learners who:

*“Were like me. Love to talk and stay with others. We’re all in the same level...we’ve done a test there of maths and none of them get below 80%. We started from 80% upwards and there was a lot of 100% into that class.”*

The happenstance meetings of other adolescents from Kayamandi who were studying at higher learning institutions is explored in the first theme of *chance encounters*. Many training opportunities were located further towards Cape Town. Consequently, students who could be potential mentors lived in student residences and were not visible in the community. Chance brought eight participants of the sample (66.7%) into contact with a person who had been a valuable source of career information, insight and friendship.

Participant 6 had a chance encounter with a UWC student who was trying to help him by getting an application form for him. Participant 12 had met a student who had been helping him since grade 10 with applications and questions, although she did not have specific information about actuarial science. Participant 5 met a student in Khayelitsha who was in her third year of tourism management at CPUT and was going to help her search for bursaries. However, often all the essential questions about course details were not engaged with in these relationships.

Similarly, participant 7 met a friend from Zimbabwe who stayed in Woodstock and said: *“He know exactly what he want, and he is also brilliant. He help me a lot...Through ictimunication, attending libraries.”* Participant 3 had met a family friend who: *“was doing business management at UNISA. Ja. He’s the reason that I’m...I chose this, this subject that I’m doing right now.”* Lastly, participant 8 explained: *“So I meet a sister and she was eh ... accountant. She gave me all the things and gave me the bursary and it was my first time grabbing the bursary.”*

Therefore, the participants in the sample were not aware of anyone from their community who attended university or further occupational training courses, except through chance encounters. This was seen to instil doubt about whether they could “make it” (Chung, 2002; Smith et al., 2009). There were many examples of university graduate students who had returned to Kayamandi unemployed, thus daily examples of educational and occupational obstacles were observed by family and community members (Welch & Hodges, cited in Kerpelman & Mosher, 2004).

*Media role models* formed the second subtheme. Career information and role models were supplied by media sources such as TV, radio and newspaper (Watson & McMahon, 2006). Role models were informed by local TV programmes and eight participants (66.7%) cited the importance attached to TV as an influence. Soap operas, such as *Generations*, *Muvhango* and *Ekasi: Our stories*, provided glimpses of occupational realities. In this manner, career

stereotypes were created and, in the absence of other visible career realities, career decisions were based on these career ideals. Media role models' stories were read or heard on TV or radio, as explained by participant 3: *"No, I hear a thing about this on television."* Participant 10 described his change in career choice, based on the commercialised image of businessmen earning a lucrative salary, as portrayed on TV:

*"To tell you the truth...I wanted to do like science. I didn't want to do like commercial subjects. But as like I was growing up when I was doing my Grade 9 I just wanted to do like commercial subjects. I just like look at the TV and see the business people ja they were like they were getting a lot of money but ja like it changed, the feeling changed, the dream changed. I wanted to do commercial subjects."*

Furthermore, a lack of funds left adolescents isolated within the Kayamandi context and culture. The outside world was presented mainly through media sources. Infrequent visits to Stellenbosch were based on shopping excursions, looking for information for school projects, part-time and holiday work.

**6.4.5. Cultural influences.** Cultural grounding provides a foundation upon which an understanding of the world is built, affecting perceptions of career choices and behaviours (Banks-Wallace, 1998). Career development is impacted by different cultural values, such as believing: *"in working with people. I believe that a person is a person because of other people"* (P. 8). The importance attached to a constellation of life roles, including the work role, is affected by culture (Maree, 2010a).

It was initially observed from participants' worldviews that elements and values of isiXhosa culture were taken for granted and were difficult to conceptualise. Further probing was met with detailed descriptions that were spun from cultural values. These included: dignity, honesty, integrity, hard work, wanting respect and to be respected as well as being influenced by and influencing other people. Participant 8 described cultural values that revolved around pooling resources amongst community members: *"To go to the people give back to the community, don't like be selfish wasting like things, like I'm talking about money now, like share with your family and others."* Three subthemes were extracted from the overarching theme of cultural influences: **1) narratives of suffering; 2) cultural conceptualisations of gender, and 3) resistance to western values.**

Values are believed to arise from people's needs and are important motivators of behaviour (Zunker cited in Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). The value of seeking a better life arose from the township environment. Most significantly, the value attached to *narratives of suffering* emerged, with all 12 respondents referring to this subtheme. Suffering was linked to the struggle that was fought by the participants' parents. The blood spilt in resisting Apartheid was not to be wasted. Participants wanted to utilise the possibilities gained through the Apartheid struggle. For example, participant 9 explained that:

*“Being a Xhosa person I think from the struggle that our parents have gone through that’s what I’m telling myself if they made it they have made us free. If I’m not going to make it for myself for what they... Our parents are suffering, suffered for many years and now there are only few that are earning under those suffering, under those tears and blood. That build South Africa.”*

According to Theron (in press), these narratives of suffering that are shared amongst family and community members perform protective functions and result in resilience. Resilience processes in non-Eurocentric contexts have been hypothesised to be based on the protective layer formed by extended family. Narratives of past suffering are told to encourage perseverance and individual mastery, as the individual's educational success is conceptualised to benefit the whole family (Theron & Theron, 2012). Learned helplessness could be prevented by a cultural reframing of setbacks, not interpreting them as personal failure, but rather as meaningful events (Utsey, Bolden, Lanier, & Williams, 2007). The protective mechanisms that underpinned resilience in this sample were based on individual agency, constructive meaning-making of hardship faced and supportive extended family networks (Theron, in press).

The significant relationships in the community needed to be maintained, thus social activities within the community were valued. A lifestyle was envisioned where enough time for the upkeep of social connections was incorporated, as described by participant 5, whose ideal job would be: *“not working for more than five hours a day.”* The value attached to investing time in social interaction and community involvement manifested itself in career choices, as clarified by participant 10: *“Ja, it’s all about people, it’s all about people unlike in science.”* Also, the cultural importance of socialising, partying or “freaking” during a youthful age was emphasised in order to prevent misdemeanours when adulthood was reached. This was explained by participant 4:

*“If you are young ne, you can do the things that you’re supposed to be whereas you’ve hit the stage of eldersness you know so you can be in the place of being a elder. What I heard is that when I get old and doing the things those kids you know maybe my kids will see me drunk whereas I’m papa so they need, they will do the same thing because it’s right for me. Sometimes I don’t like to, to go have some drinks in club you know. I just go there and buy some Cokes and play some pool you know, just being in the vibe you know.”*

Gender differences in career decision-making processes were anticipated and ***cultural conceptualisations of gender*** emerged as the second subtheme. Disparities between genders did not manifest in occupations contemplated (see Chapter 4), as the male participants considered tourism management just as the female participants did. However, the male is expected to be the breadwinner in the patriarchal African culture. In reality, households and families are fragmented, with grandmothers or single mothers often supporting their families. Although gender was only highlighted by one participant in the *MSCI*, the interviews revealed that being a male was an important influence, mentioned by five respondents (41.6%). The significance attached to male identity was explained by participant 8:

*“Since like in our culture when you are a male. It’s like the head of the home. So, when I’m at the job my word will be valuable at the job. It’s not like I’m saying that the female voice is not heard. But, since I am a man - and you can see on the Generations... when he’s talking everybody listens. So it’s since I am a male, my opinion will be considered in the decision-making.”*

Future-orientated behaviours were observed more in male participants, with time frames allocated to career developmental tasks. In contrast, the three female respondents had only thought of immediate career concerns such as training opportunities for the next year. In addition, they had considered a limited range of career options and lacked assertiveness to ask teachers for advice: *“Ha aha me I’m, I’m too shy to ask teachers”* (P. 5). None of the female respondents was going to participate in a work-shadowing experience, and they were unaware what work-shadowing was: *“I don’t know it is unfamiliar to me”* (P. 2). The assertiveness of the male respondents had resulted in the organisation of a work-shadowing opportunity by one of the LO teachers. The career behaviour observed in the male respondents supports previous studies, which found that black male youths had more positive career-related self-efficacy expectations and considered a greater number of high-paying careers (Seane cited in De Bruin & Bernard-Phera, 2002). Their female counterparts indicated



limited career ideas and less self-efficacy expectations, which can be conceptualised as a gender barrier to career choices.

The third subtheme, *resistance to western values*, was stated by all 12 participants. Although cultural attitudes and beliefs are deeply engrained, Apartheid served to accentuate differences between communities and cultures at the expense of their similarities. A western lifestyle is inherently tied to being white. Individuality, independence and competitiveness are emphasised as western attributes (Stead, 1996). The incorporation of western elements into isiXhosa culture was met with opposition and suspicion by participants. Jealousy and competitiveness over limited resources in the Kayamandi community caused participants to be defensive about speaking to others about their career ambitions. Fear of people sabotaging their career hopes by giving them false information prevented these participants from forming the social networks they needed.

Individuals were believed to be subjected to western values when attending training institutes and facilities near the city of Cape Town. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

*“Ja Ja, for me to not forget where you come from and who you are. It’s like, ja, that’s the big thing. When I’m there, being accountant, like is not like to look at my people, like saying ok, now I’m a good person. I have my money. So I can leave the Xhosa people. I want to be there and stay there in the Eastern Cape with them. And being that and I’m going to be that level of them. Not saying that ok, I’m educated, I have my money, I’m rich, now I’m not going to be here. I’m going to be overseas or there and there. I want to be there” (P.8).*

Ideally, different cultural influences should not be mutually exclusive. Instead, a contemporary cultural approach should recognise dynamic diversity and change, where adolescents can negotiate work and career paths (Swartz, 2002). The movement to areas where training and career opportunities exist could reduce the reinforced boundaries between cultural groups and decrease resistance to being ‘western.’ An Africentric narrative of becoming ‘too western’ was seen to limit the opportunities considered. Cultural pressure was experienced by participants to keep in touch with their roots and their disadvantaged community. However, the educational challenges and distances travelled to get an education will undoubtedly alter the participants’ outlooks and mindsets. This could result in Kayamandi community members rejecting these individuals for their self-development and cognitive growth.

As a developmental acquisition, the participants face the challenge of revising familial and cultural narratives. Africentric narratives that may limit their career development need to be shed and new, successful narratives have to be cultivated. Adolescents' career choices and options observed in the sample supported recent findings that show how rural adolescents are impacted by geographic location, stereotyping, family loyalty and cultural obligations (Durey, McNamara, & Larson cited in McIlveen et al., 2012).

**6.4.6. Summary of social influences.** The social level systems influences, including family, school and culture, play a major role in the conceptualisation of career ideals. Supportive parents were seen to be unable to contribute constructively to career decision-making processes due to their lack of formal schooling (Seabi et al., 2010). Family members such as siblings encouraged further educational mastery. Role models were not visible in the Kayamandi community, yet chance encounters created valuable mentoring relationships. School was seen to be an important resource, as adolescents spent a significant amount of time in this environment (McMahon et al., 2000). In the classroom, LO teachers supplied career information, and school subjects provided mastery examples for the forming of self-efficacy beliefs and expectations.

Friends were cited as dual entities. They provided positive influences, such as tackling career and educational challenges collectively, but also offered negative messages that participants would “never make it.” Peer pressure resulted in contradictory moral directions in which contested and illegal terrain was negotiated. Due to the lack of career information, the media, specifically TV, emerged as an important contributor to career information and as a creator of unrealistic career stereotypes.

Resiliency processes were seen to be encouraged by collective narratives of suffering and extended familial networks (Theron, in press). Africentric narratives were seen as beneficial to reframe setbacks as opportunities. These narratives also created cultural labels and jealousy associated with materialistic success and ‘westernness’, which could deter individuals from fulfilling their ambitions.

## **6.5. Environmental-societal influences**

Career processes are shaped by unseen forces. These include location, specific services, financial costs and the availability of opportunities/job/tuition, which are often a reflection of opportunity structures and power relations in society (Naicker, 1994a). Socio-economic status (SES) determines the type of facilities and social services available, such as schools, libraries

and clinics as well as the opportunities that present themselves (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). As indicated in Table 6.2, three environmental-societal influences were extracted, namely 1) *Kayamandi*, 2) *Stellenbosch* and 3) *ideas of overseas*.

**6.5.1. Kayamandi.** The township was seen by the participants to be a dual entity that offered opportunities for the four participants from the Eastern Cape and barriers for the other participants. Thus the two subthemes extracted from the overarching theme of Kayamandi were 1) *perceived Kayamandi resources* and 2) *perceived Kayamandi barriers*.

Table 6.2.

*The Environmental-Societal Level Themes Extracted from Individual Interviews*

Themes	Sub-themes	Frequency	Percentages	Verbatim examples
1. Kayamandi	• Perceived resources	5	41.7%	"Kuyasa"; "career exhibitions"; "Corridor (small business complex)"; "find more opportunities"; "easy to go to Cape Town"; "because some of people they know me."
	• Perceived barriers	7	58.3%	"Crime"; "alcohol and drugs"; "unemployed"; "people of Kayamandi."
2. Stellenbosch	• Perceived resources	4	33.3%	"There's a lot there"; "opening days"; "often visit this University"; "for projects or research."
	• Perceived language barriers	8	66.7%	"Academic Afrikaans compulsory"; "it must be only Afrikaans-speaking people."
3. Overseas	• Leave South Africa	3	25.0%	"I can also go into overseas"; "I could do my career in other countries."
	• Stay with family	9	75.0%	"Never. I can't leave my family"; "hardest part is that family"; "I don't want to be away from my family."

The first subtheme, of *perceived Kayamandi resources*, was indicated by five participants (41.7%). All the participants mentioned attending career exhibitions in Kayamandi, organised

by Khuyasa in conjunction with Stellenbosch University. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (e.g., Khuyasa) provided facilities, information, income and self-development in the Kayamandi context, which otherwise was associated with crime, violence and substance abuse.

Career exhibitions were described as the only channel to obtain detailed career information and application forms, as expressed by participant 7: “*Career exhibition that is taking place here in Kayamandi then I attend and ask what is an economist in laws and finance.*” Municipal bursaries were mentioned as accessible financial aid in Kayamandi. Participant 11 saw further potential in Kayamandi when he said: “*A whole lot more opportunities there are. I mean there’s Kuyasa and there is Corridor.*” Opportunities could also be accessed due to social contacts: “*because some of people they know me so I get them through there*” (P. 4).

In contrast, participant 12 saw no formal work opportunities in Kayamandi other than being involved in programmes run by NGOs and a community initiative called “Keep them Safe.” Nonetheless, the potential that Kayamandi had to offer was believed to be best utilised before looking beyond to Cape Town, since “*if I go start in Cape Town in the meantime five years I’ll be back to Kayamandi*” (P. 4). Accessibility of Cape Town was not problematic, as seen from the following excerpts: “*Let’s say I’m staying here other than the town is nearby, I can find more opportunities*” (P.11), and “*It is easy for me to go to Cape Town*” (P. 9). Interestingly, expansion into Stellenbosch was not mentioned.

***Perceived Kayamandi barriers***, as the second subtheme, was mentioned by seven participants (58.3%). Barriers included: “*crime and that cause the unemployed*” (P. 4). Participant 7 explained how he changed his idea of becoming a police officer because he was scared of: “*becom[ing] enemies with the members of the community.*” When discussing inherent challenges in the Kayamandi community, this participant disclosed: “*It’s the people of Kayamandi. Ja. It’s like even in this weekend they are consisting of ending of the month and they will be busy drinking. Drugs are also oh they have big effect, both of them alcohol and drugs.*”

However, participant 4 provided the most eloquent description of the conditions in the township:

*“I decided to sell them [sweets] at field because I was used to play football even when I’m young and now. I’m used to play some of friends who selled me some sweets so I will offer say him some money you know but when I get back to my home maybe my neighbour would know that I, I’m getting something you know, so can you borrow me some money to go to work, I’ll pay you and the most weakness I have I can’t collect my money to some people you know. Ja some of them because they were, they were related to me. They would say I will give you money for going to school maybe sleep over here let’s say I’ll buy you some tots you know so what else do you want. When I told them that I’m still a child you know maybe I’ll bring it back when I’m get old you know. So I decided to stop because will get me full of beers so even at school so I can’t behave. No ja but I move onto Western Cape I stayed there. I even start selling sweets you know because I decided I’m at that school so I want to go sell something else you know. So my mother buy me some computer and I ... I used to work, to be busy with my computer and if maybe my neighbour would want some CV I would type for them or some photocopy because my, my aunty buy me some printing you know.”*

A picture is painted of small entrepreneurs guarding their money against relatives who would not be able to pay them back. The exchange currency of daily transactions involves alcohol, which indicates the priorities of other community members.

**6.5.2. Stellenbosch.** The close proximity of Stellenbosch to Kayamandi was believed to encourage the utilisation of resources such as Stellenbosch University and Boland College. However, Stellenbosch was viewed as consisting of a number of resources as well as barriers. Two subthemes were extracted: *1) perceived Stellenbosch resources* and *2) perceived Stellenbosch language barriers*.

Formal work opportunities were perceived to be available in Stellenbosch by four participants (33.3%). The first subtheme, of *perceived Stellenbosch resources*, revolved around the University and support structures offered, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

*“There’s a lot there. At Stellenbosch University we go for opening days like when we do projects or research. We usually go there like there when they ask you to do career something, career assignment. Whereby you have to ask the people that are doing what you want. We’ll often visit this University” (P. 11).*

Afrikaans as a medium presented a great barrier, as indicated by eight respondents (66.7%), showing the importance attached to *perceived Stellenbosch language barriers* as a second subtheme. Participants believed there would be less Afrikaans in Stellenbosch than there was in reality because: *“here in Kayamandi they always say that everything is not in Afrikaans...”* (P. 6). This was problematic, as the inhabitants of Kayamandi were not proficient in Afrikaans. Participant 11 explained: *“We tried applying at Stellenbosch but someone told us that, in order to do BComm Accounting you must have academic Afrikaans and it’s compulsory. Then we withdrew from there.”* Stellenbosch University’s language policy describes that students are allowed into the university without Afrikaans at the postgraduate level, but not at undergraduate level.

The language policy elicited a range of emotions from participants. It was believed to be a way to uphold Afrikaans culture and was unfair to others. Participant 12 explained: *“It’s close to my place. Because I’m living here in Kayamandi and this is Stellenbosch. So, it will be advantageous for me to stay here. I won’t be far from my family. And now I have to go very far.”* Further contradictions in the language policy were mentioned by participant 12. His sister, who matriculated from Kayamandi High School, had a bursary to study medicine. The language policy in the Faculty of Health Sciences was not enforced as strictly as it was in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. This was interpreted as:

*“They don’t want us to do B.Comm Accounting but they can allow us to do other courses. It must be only Afrikaans speaking people... they want their son to grow up and run their businesses, not us to grow up and run our own businesses.”*

This interpretation was seen as problematic, because it emphasised past discriminatory practices that reserved occupations for specific population groups. These restrictions were lifted with the abolishment of Apartheid. A free democracy with equal opportunities was envisioned by Nelson Mandela, yet somehow resources were viewed as selectively guarded by Stellenbosch University’s language policy.

Furthermore, an underlying hostility was perceived in the Grade 12 group when they heard that Stellenbosch University (SU) was running career interventions for the Career Life-Planning Project. Participant 12 also claimed that learners were suspicious of SU representatives, who gave them false information: *“Because we were in the career exhibition and they said we must apply, apply and if you have good marks, and we go there and only to find out that there’s no such thing. We can’t apply.”*

The language policy had been debated in 2011 and altered to include home language or first additional language in the entry criteria for the various faculties. Nonetheless, the admission requirements for the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences for 2013 stipulated English/Afrikaans Home Language or Afrikaans/English first additional language. The disclaimer stated that the first year was offered in the parallel medium of English/Afrikaans instruction. Students who only met one of these language requirements would be admitted into the programme on the condition that Afrikaans language development modules were taken and passed in the first year. Unfortunately, the SU representatives providing career information seemed to be unaware of these entry criteria. This resulted in disappointment and participants' refusal to consider Stellenbosch as an option for training or work opportunities.

**6.5.3. Overseas ideas.** Confusion surrounded overseas' opportunities. Participant 11 decided, after much contemplation, that he did not want to go overseas: "*Before I didn't know if I want or did not want to go overseas but now I do.*" He wanted the choice to work there for three years and then come back to Kayamandi. The intention was to explore the world and find out: "*how the other countries work on business.*" Participant 12 also mentioned that this was a new idea that he had not considered before the MSCI, whereas now: "*I was thinking oh, I can also go into overseas.*"

Going overseas was a new consideration. Most of the participants had not schematically resolved this opportunity with their Africentric worldviews. However, all participants agreed unanimously on wanting to go overseas for a holiday. The opportunity to leave South Africa was contested, as it challenged cultural values of family and resistance to a western lifestyle. Thus two subthemes emerged, namely **1) wanting to leave South Africa** and **2) wanting to stay with family.**

Firstly, only three participants (25%) indicated an interest in leaving South Africa for longer than a holiday, but even they were pulled in different directions on this issue. For example, participant 5 stated: "*I want to do my career, ja, I could do my career in other countries. Ja I can be able to do it.*" However, later in the interview she said that she wanted to live in her own house with her family, which seemed unlikely to be overseas. When asked about the contradiction, she admitted that if she were overseas: "*Yho! I won't be able to communicate with them [her family]*" and actually she was uncertain: "*I'm just in between.*" Participant 7 stated that he loved the idea of travelling: "*I don't see myself stayed here huh aha. I want to travel I want to see the world.*" The contradiction crept in again when he saw

himself: *“in the Eastern Cape. I see myself, having family, home people and also looking my families you see being in the families’ houses. So it’s my turn to come back to my mum.”*

Participant 2 explained that she was thinking about whether she would like to work overseas. She actually wanted to stay in Kayamandi, even though she was not sure what part-time employment opportunities were accessible to her in a tourism direction. Participant 3 claimed that he would never consider going overseas:

*“Never. I can’t leave my family behind. It’s not the ideal to go overseas. I like to go to Jo’burg. I think in Jo’burg there are so many opportunities. Gauteng not only in Jo’burg. There’s less opportunities here in Cape Town. As long I’m in the country.”*

Participant 8 only wanted to visit Germany due to what he had seen on TV: *“It’s not like I want to live there. Or to study there. It’s like I want to just go and see it because in 2006 World Cup I was excited to see it on TV so I wanted to go there.”*

The majority of participants (n = 9; 75%) wanted to stay in South Africa. Participant 12 explained: *“No. I thought it was like going to work for one of the big companies here in South Africa but, now...I thought that I work here and try to do my own businesses and that is it. I haven’t thought of going to like...to work into another country.”* It was inferred that the participants had not considered this option because there were no examples of people in their social networks who had gone overseas. Participant 12 supported this inference by exclaiming that he knew only one person overseas: *“I know one. I have a friend. He’s in England.”* Family attachments were viewed as paramount and most participants reasoned that they did not want to be away from their families.

The notion of giving back to the community was another reason for staying in South Africa. If two communities were involved, such as in the case of the learners who had migrated from the Eastern Cape, complex attachments and obligations to two communities were faced. Participant 11 explained that, above all, he was interested in a better life that entailed: *“not being able to worry about where will I be tomorrow. Will I be able to put bread on the table and some things like that, being satisfied with life.”* However, he was from the Eastern Cape and wanted to return to and improve his home town. A prevalent Africentric cultural value is to support the families who had enabled their success. The extract from the interview with participant 8 illustrated this value, which resulted in him wanting to fulfil cultural obligations in two different communities:



**Participant 8:** *I'm gonna ... I think when I'm done I want to work in Eastern Cape shops, like there, there are companies they like ... They prepare their reports. It's not that they don't prepare but, I think that they don't have someone that will keep the record, like the internal controls ... But here, we stay, I will buy a house here like, here in Kayamandi because I don't want to leave Kayamandi. Kayamandi is like my ... my life. Yes. It's not like I grew here. I grew in Gauteng, but ... when I reached Kayamandi like, my mind has opened. So I see many things. So I wanted to bring, I want to bring back to my community.*

**Anouk:** *So you talking about Kayamandi community?*

**Participant 8:** *Yes.*

**Anouk:** *Or you talking about Eastern Cape community?*

**Participant 8:** *Ja. I'm talking about both of them.*

**Anouk:** *Both of them?*

**Participant 8:** *Yes. Like I will live Eastern Cape and ... but I will like to work in Eastern Cape, so that I will live there and expand my home and buy my car and stay there. But I will come in Kayamandi as I've ... Like this school has made me like a person that ... a good person. So that's why I'm coming here. And I have never thought that I'm be the first Grade 12 of the school. Because I knew that there were many schools there and those schools had their Grade 12, the past Grade 12's. Ja, the first Grade 12 and I've made it here.*

The Africentric cultural narrative above posed complex challenges, as respondents assumed that they could stay in close proximity to their families. In reality, job opportunities often pull families apart. Participants were unaware of fluctuating movements within the dynamic world-of-work they were aiming to enter as professionals. The *MSCI* introduced ideas of changing locations in accepting job opportunities. Participant 9 reconciled himself to the cultural dissonance that accompanied accepting a job that would take him away from his family with the explanation: “*if, if I can find a job that is actually paying me a lot of money I think I can leave them and know that each and every month there is an, actually a real amount that is meant for them.*”

Further probing examination of why movement out of the Kayamandi township was viewed as problematic unearthed a fear of assimilation. Participant 9 pointed out that the reluctance to leave Kayamandi was due to the importance attached to being a role model to those who suffered like he did and to help them:

*“Ja. I don't wanna leave this place. The reason is that if I leave here I will forget about those people who are suffering like I was so I want to help them. I didn't have a chance*

*that those people here can say those people to help me with career choice ... always do that, no you are good at this so you have to do this. I didn't have those kind of people. Now I want to change that. I wanna be a person for those youngsters to help them to knowing what they want. So I just wanna help this country be a better place."*

Africentric cultural values were apparent in this narrative of wanting to help community members. The notion of suffering was used as a basis for Africentric narratives of perseverance and collective mastery, to inform meaning-making processes and result in a racial identity (Theron & Theron, 2012). Forgetting the suffering which had shaped the participants' development and life experiences seemed unfathomable. Participant 8 described that he wanted to stay in a black settlement like Kayamandi where inhabitants were: "*people like me who understand where I grew up.*" Participant 4 claimed:

*"I heard some things people get changed when they get there because everything is in front of them. Do your own thing you know. So ... rather than going out that will change my life first of all, I'll get some new friends and maybe they will have a negative influence according to me so if I stay here..."*

Participants' movement to new areas to pursue education caused their Africentric cultural narratives to be threatened. Staying in Kayamandi was viewed less negatively than having new friends and everything accessible. Cautionary tales of becoming too western and forgetting cultural obligations had been internalised by the participants. Africentric narratives had been meaningfully integrated into career stories to illustrate how community members had in the past been led astray from their cultural and community roots in the pursuit of success. Therefore, constraining Africentric narratives could put pressure on these adolescents to limit them from seizing career opportunities.

**6.5.4. Summary of environmental-societal influences.** The disadvantaged context and history of these adolescents played a determining role in their career development. A story-telling approach to career counselling was perceived as a tool to describe the social prejudices within the Kayamandi community and the broader Stellenbosch community. The participants became aware of contradictions in the values they held. Thus a chance was presented to reconstruct ideas about social influences, poverty and the remnants of social injustice that were influential in their career behaviour.

Resources and opportunities were seen to be provided in Kayamandi through NGOs. However, the general perception was that job opportunities could not be found in Kayamandi. Stellenbosch, although in close proximity, was not viewed very favourably. Work

opportunities were acknowledged, but accessibility to Stellenbosch University was restricted by a language policy in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. Instead, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Gauteng were seen to contain an accessible plethora of resources, training institutes and work options. Overseas opportunities were linked cognitively to the luxurious lifestyles depicted on TV. Movement overseas or away from home seemed irreconcilable with Africentric values of family and community ties. Future lifestyle images incorporated elements of materialistic success and then a return to their community (either Kayamandi or the Eastern Cape). This may not be reflective of job opportunity structures and markets.

**6.5.5. MSCl feedback.** The narrative process utilised in this research was viewed as beneficial by all the participants. The booklet was found to be useful and was termed an “*eye-opening experience*” (P. 11 & P. 12). Ongoing career conversations such as informal mentoring sessions were requested, which indicated that the participants valued this research experience. Participants claimed that they had learnt about their interests, decision-making approaches and occupational information needed to aid career choices. The same findings were found in a previous study with an adolescent group at risk of dropping out of school (Osborn & Reardon, 2006). As individuals explained their career influences and told their career stories, they developed an understanding of what was important in making career decisions and why this was so meaningful to them (McMahon et al., 2005b).

As seen in Table 6.3., three subthemes were extracted from the overarching theme of *MSCl feedback*: 1) *Perceived level of difficulty*, 2) *language barriers* and 3) *MSCl as useful*. The first subtheme that emerged, *perceived level of difficulty*, suggested that the *MSCl* provided a cognitive challenge for eight participants (66.7%) in conceptualising their present career situations as well as anticipating their future career concerns. Participants viewed the process of reflection that the *MSCl* posed as complex, with questions and tasks never considered before. Participant 6 described his experience of the *MSCl* as: “*It have some tricky questions.*” However, this confusion was only initial, as participant 5 stated: “*I don’t remember those of other things that I didn’t understand. Ja now I’m fine, now I’m fine.*” Similarly, participant 8 recounted his initial confusion: “*At first I didn’t but as like you returned it to me like ja and now I knew what I can do too.*”

The second subtheme of *language barriers* related to uncertainty around specific words for four participants (33.3%). For example, the word “confirm” was cited as problematic. This was interpreted to indicate language difficulties and questions were then made more

specific. Participants responded better when the question was rephrased as follows: “*What has been confirmed for you about your career?*” Other elements that caused confusion were linked to language difficulties. The researcher suggests a description of terms for people who are additional English language speakers, with lists of examples that could be included (i.e., values, abilities, etc.). Reflection processes would be aided by respondents discovering new ideas to link to their personal information. Additional values that were newly identified could thus be included in the circular systems of influences. Also, all the participants mentioned a perceived shortage of space: “*There should be more space between each one so you can write more*” (P. 4). This created difficulty in transferring data into the circular diagrams.

Table 6.3.

*Themes Elicited from MSCI Feedback According to Individual Interviews*

Themes	Frequency	Percentage	Verbatim Examples
1. Perceived level of difficulty	8	66.7%	“ <i>Tricky questions</i> ”; “ <i>at first I didn't really understand</i> ”; “ <i>now I knew what I can do to</i> ”; “ <i>not what I expected.</i> ”
2. Language barriers	4	33.3%	“ <i>Not understanding confirm</i> ”; “ <i>more space.</i> ”
3. MSCI as useful reflection tool	12	100%	“ <i>Think more of our careers</i> ”; “ <i>discover things that we never knew of that we have to consider</i> ”; “ <i>things that I didn't know about me.</i> ”

The examples that appeared in the MSCI booklet (e.g., *How I cope: Leaving things to the last minute*) posed a problem. The participants thought that they had to agree with the examples when it was not how they saw themselves. Previous findings indicated confusion about the examples and led learners to rewrite the given examples when the concept was not understood (Maree et al., 2006). Participant 8 said that learners copied each other in filling out career-related questionnaires. Instead, honesty would help them gain assistance in choosing suitable careers:

*“Where they are saying you want to be something...most learners will like to be something that they can have lot of money you know. It's best to stick with your career. Let's say maybe if you tell me the right career I'll be helping you to get some assistance. So that he must be maybe some of them they are copying with their friends I want to be a*

*businesswoman, I want to be in Germany. Because they know in Germany they have lot of money you know so maybe by giving them the question that is specific if you, if you want assistance of listing their careers, ne."*

Nevertheless, all twelve respondents perceived ***the MSCI as a useful reflection tool***, which formed the third subtheme. Participants had various positive responses, ranging from finding the booklet "Great" (P. 2) to "surprise[ing]" (P. 12). The reflection processes that were facilitated through the *MSCI* were acknowledged by all the participants. The booklet provided information about: "*learn[ing] to make the right choices when, when I want to pursue my dream*" (P. 1). Further insight into the career decision-making process was described by participant 3: "*You must have values. Values you must interest like and also the personal qualities you see sort of like that. And follow them yes.*" Whilst reflection processes may be commonplace in middle-class schools, here a genuine lack was perceived that made the *MSCI* useful to this sample of participants.

The respondents learnt about the beliefs that formed the lenses through which they viewed their context and career choices. Participant 8 explained his experience: "*It had opened my ... my mind and it had given me a plot, an experience about how I can choose my career.*" Participant 9 said that: "*it makes us to think more of our careers and to even like discover things that we never knew of that we have to consider...now I've seen most of the things that influence me. Like the book, my friends and TV. It gave me a bigger picture. Of my career.*" Self-insight and self-awareness seem to have been stimulated, as claimed by participant 10: "*It did help me with some things that I didn't know about me so...Like the people around me how they influence me like in the area that we living here.*" Participant 5 claimed: "*Now I can even see overseas.*"

The *MSCI* was seen to set many processes in motion, as more people were spoken to and additional information was gathered after completion of the *MSCI*. The LO teachers also confirmed this finding, as they had been flooded with queries and application forms after the research process concluded. Furthermore, participant 8 described that the *MSCI* made him aware of a change that was needed in his attitude. He needed to self-regulate his sense of instant gratification and prioritise: "*I was like grabbing things. My attitude. To do things there. So, I learned that ok, I'm not do that thing now, I'll study hard.*" However, the greatest insight gained by all the participants seemed to be how their environment and the people around them influenced their career decision-making processes, as can be seen in the extract below:

*“Environment, I learn more about the environment those people who can support me like the bursaries, municipality bursaries. And also the job opportunities for i-ipart time jobs and also the externalities and internal those overseas work, you see, working other area”*  
(P. 7).

Participant 7 discovered a whole new dimension of opportunities in his career narrative and many new avenues for implementing his vocational identity. These findings are supported by previous findings that indicated that adolescents who reported more planning and exploratory career attitudes had more favourable future time attitudes, higher self-esteem levels and internal attribution (Janeiro, 2009).

**6.5.6. Researcher’s observations.** Many factors interfered with the individual interview process. Firstly, extra classes were held for the matriculants after school, and the researcher had to wait for hours to speak to the participants. During this time, informal interviews and conversations were held with the teachers, secretaries or ground staff to obtain information and establish a presence at the school. In addition, the classrooms housed many other activities, such as school maintenance, night school or singing/dancing/drama practise. The movement of these groups of people often caused interference as well as the need for relocation. The interviewing and transcribing process was made quite difficult through frequent interruptions.

These interferences were interpreted as forming part of the contextual barriers present in this sample of adolescents’ career development processes. The researcher experienced feelings of frustration, helplessness and self-doubt about whether the research process would ever be completed. These elicited feelings were analysed for transference and counter-transference elements to identify conflicts and themes illuminating the nature of the participants’ career realities and challenges (Gabbard, 2006).

Transference can be defined as an enactment of an earlier dynamic in a present relationship to whitewash the present via the past (Watkins, 1983). The participants reacted symbolically to the perceived reality of the researcher’s presence during the career counselling session (Geller, 2005). The researcher inferred that her white racial identity caused her to be viewed as an ‘expert’, and overwhelming expectations of solutions and advice arose during the interviews (Watkins, 1983).

Residual psychological models of learned helplessness instilled by Apartheid surfaced. Participants wanted to be helped by the researcher, who was expected to actively gather

information for them (Jones, 2004). Therefore, a stance was taken by the researcher to support individual agency and engage in dialogues that could support tasks that needed to be undertaken, rather than succumbing to the temptation to ‘rescue’ victims. The acknowledgement of diverse enablers and barriers in career development processes refuses to “perpetuate the fantasy that ‘victims’ [disadvantaged adolescents] are simply powerless” (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000, p. 125).

Nevertheless, the effects that discrimination, ethnic identity and unemployment have on career development processes in this sample are undeniable (Watson & Stead, 2006b). Instances of social injustice and structural inequalities have profound effects on career development processes, often resulting in wasted human potential (Nicholas et al., 2006). Social action is required to remedy this situation, with various role players needing to collaborate with the South African government to endorse various career-related experiences (Prilleltensky cited in Nicholas et al., 2006).

Municipal funding and government involvement are needed for career education strategies to create channels of world-of-work information, role models that learners can identify with, field trips, guest speakers and job shadowing opportunities (Cilliers, 1993; Leonard & Vriend, 1975). Whilst NGOs and SU community projects are already tackling this problem, far greater involvement is needed on a sustainable level that does not rely on the fluctuating student population. All the participants mentioned Khuyasa as enabling access to career information via the internet, which indicates the necessity for such services. However, only a limited amount of places with internet access are available. Inevitably there are far too many people who need to use these services, resulting in queues and time constraints in accessing information.

Further technological expansion is required, including internet access as well as computer training. Computer illiteracy is a reality faced by many Kayamandi adolescents. This would be a stumbling block at tertiary institutions, as e-mail and electronic portals containing course information are relied on. Internet-enabled cell phones were cited in this sample as a substitute that aided access to career knowledge when other information was lacking.

Due to the difficulties of internet accessibility, paper versions of career information and application forms are needed. Ideally, information should be housed in an office in Kayamandi where trained career counsellors would be available to engage in face-to-face dialogues with individuals seeking opportunities for career self-development. These career

counsellors would be gatekeepers of resources that the municipality and government would have built for this specific population group.

Career counsellors should be responsible for dealing with the developmental aspects of career decisions, including career knowledge, aspirations, choices, revision and planning (Leonard & Vriend, 1975). Avenues could then be provided through which it is possible to engage in continuing career exploration and commitment (Van Niekerk & Van Daalen, 1991; Watson & Stead, 2006b). Opportunities therefore could be provided to revise the erroneous perception that township youth, particularly black adolescents, are poor at career planning and less “career mature” (Alexander, 1990). These attributes are not internal to the individuals themselves, but shaped by their socio-economic contexts (Nicholas et al., 2006).

## **6.6. Focus group**

Further clues to the enabling and constraining influences inherent in the career stories of Kayamandi adolescents were established by the focus group. The focus group was conducted two weeks after the final individual interviews and took place shortly before the matric dance. Ten participants out of the twelve took part in the focus group and discussed career influences from their personal experiences (Powell & Single, 1996). The dynamics and the observations noted during the group interaction allowed deductions to be drawn from this small-scale interaction and insight to be gained into the participants’ realities (Weinberg, 1993).

The group seemed unwilling at first to share their career ideas or development experiences with the other group members. The researcher altered the interview schedule, which was also used for the individual interviews (Appendix K), to create a more relaxed atmosphere. Although participants sat in a circle during the focus group, knew each other and seemed talkative, their career development processes were said to be “*Top secret*” (P. 3). Initially, each respondent was made to speak in turn until the conversation became more informal and comments were inserted randomly. The view that career plans were private or personal was linked to the anticipation of negative community reactions mentioned previously.

**6.6.1. Focus group aims.** The intention of the focus group is to allow accountability for the interpretations generated by the researcher (Holloway & Biley, 2011). Semi-structured questions were asked in order to determine the learners’ perceptions of the *MSCI*, their career influences, as well as enabling and prohibiting factors. The researcher hoped to consolidate overarching themes that emerged during the *MSCI* and individual interviews. Furthermore,



constructive feedback on the *MSCI* could be channelled into rethinking disadvantaged adolescents' career counselling needs and addressing them respectfully. The group discussion was able to provide a direct comparison of opinions within the sample of participants. Although members of a focus group can influence each other to lean towards a particular viewpoint, the focus group format highlighted lingering career myths hindering further career development processes.

**6.6.2. Presentation of focus group data.** This section provides an overview of the dominant themes that were elicited during the focus group conversation to unearth previously unheard career stories of young people who live in township contexts (Swartz, 2011). Firstly, the *materialistic meanings* that this sample attached to career choices will be discussed. *Career myths* underlie participants' behaviour, as they had not translated their personal insights into applying to tertiary institutions, although they had engaged in a self-reflective career process. *Feedback from the MSCI* will be explored as an overarching theme, consisting of various subthemes including *1) self-insight; 2) awareness of tasks; 3) people as influences; 4) integration of interests and values; 5) changes over time; 6) an integrated career picture and 7) criticisms of the MSCI*. Lastly, two other dominant themes will be explored, namely *8) enablers* of and *9) barriers* to career development, which are inextricably interconnected and will be presented in tabular form (see page 122).

**6.6.3. Materialistic meanings.** The impoverished context of Kayamandi provides few opportunities for enhancing self-esteem. This could manifest in the participants' desire to acquire fashionable items, socially desirable jobs, managerial positions, luxurious homes and cars (Prahala cited in Swartz, 2011). The focus group consolidated the participants' unanimous belief that their education would enable entry into white collar work and a different lifestyle. They would have property for "*My own home*" (P. 11), and the future would lead to changes of which "*one of them is money*" (P. 3). Further ideas revolved around money-making, where money was viewed as a precursor to other life roles, such as having a partner or building a family. Participant 12 explained: "*First like have my money of my own, no woman. Money wasted.*"

An individual's likes and interests were not always taken into consideration when attaching value to careers. Instead, the amount that an individual earned was viewed as more important than whether the individual was suited to that occupation. The rating of higher or lower status careers was explained by participant 12:

*“There are some careers that people thought are good and there are some careers people that think that are lower levels career. So if you like you sort of, of a person, you said that you love to become a teacher one day, and most the people will criticise and say that a teacher is not earning much and there is no life in teaching.”*

This contrasts with previous research studies (Dullabh, 2004; Watson et al., 1995), which found that social and investigative occupations were chosen by black adolescents. A desperate ambition existed in the sample to overcome the challenges that had formed part of their narratives for so long and to show: *“that they are somebody”* (P. 7). Thus the protagonist in their career stories was an individual *“that will make it”* (P. 12), with the intention of helping their families to lead a better life and provide role models for the youth of their communities.

Paradoxically, this western lifestyle and money were both desired and feared by the sample, as described in their *MSCI* booklets. The respondents acknowledged that they would have to leave the township for training: *“We have to travel to other places and leave our communities behind”* (P. 11). An Africentric narrative was evident in the sample, where it was collectively believed that the western lifestyle would remove them from their roots, that their morals would be corroded and that they would forget: *“where they came from and who they were doing this for”* (P. 9).

However, during the focus group, participants began to question how they would continue to keep their friends and communities close if job opportunities could be far away from Kayamandi and take up most of their time. Participant 12 explained this complex scenario and his insight:

*“I have that vision of what I want to become one day and how is that going to be, how is that going to benefit me ... I never thought of how can that career like bring about my relationship within me and my family, but now I've realised that I have to try ... if I take that career path, I will be travelling a lot, actually I won't stay at home most of the times. So I see that, but I've accepted ... that ok I can take that career and I can still be right with my family I think. Because I think if I can make it, I mustn't say that, if I can make it, I will make it.”*

This realisation was important, because constructive adaptation to the dire Kayamandi context has been theorised to result from protective mechanisms associated with Africentricism. Theron and Theron (2012) explain that resilience is shaped through Africentric values that are assembled from stories of suffering and support from the extended

family. Positive meaning-making and a sense of mastery in the face of setbacks is encouraged. Thus the respondents were anxious about leaving the world they knew and understood. A western lifestyle was anticipated, in which their Africentric meaning-making processes may not be beneficial or as strongly reinforced as they were by community members in Kayamandi.

**6.6.4. Career myths.** Beliefs held about the world-of-work affect aspirations and actions. However, inaccurate information can result in career myths that can have a negative impact on career development. The focus group brought to light irrational beliefs held by members of the sample that prevented them from applying to tertiary institutions. Although the whole sample had undergone cognitive and career development processes, these irrational beliefs only became apparent at the end of the research process. Career misconceptions will be grouped according to Stead and Watson’s (1993) career myths, namely: *1) test myths; 2) misconceptions of exactitude; 3) self-esteem myths; and 4) career anxiety myths.* Respondents’ career myths predominantly revolved around the first two types, as described in Table 6.4., and are discussed below.

Table 6.4.

*An Indication of Career Myths held by the Sample*

Career myths category	Beliefs held
1) Test myths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abilities and careers can be matched.</li> <li>• Career counselling normally follows a matching approach.</li> </ul>
2) Misconceptions of exactitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying is difficult.</li> <li>• You can’t apply without being sure about a career because you can’t change choices.</li> <li>• You need to wait for your best results to apply.</li> <li>• Even if application deadlines are closed you can be selected if you apply late with good results.</li> <li>• A career choice is for life.</li> </ul>

Note. Adapted from “The Career Myths scale: its validity and applicability” by G.B. Stead, M.B. Watson, 1993, *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 16, p.93. Copyright 1993 by Kluwer Academic Publishers.

**6.6.4.1. Test myths.** All the respondents wanted to be told what they needed to know, instead of engaging in a facilitated process of self-exploration, demonstrating residual traditional career counselling expectations. The belief that an individual’s traits should be

matched to an occupation through an assessment, forms the basis of this career myth (Stead & Watson, 1993). Measurements or lists of traits linked to different occupational task descriptions were thought to be the most helpful in indicating the best career. The excerpt below indicates the unmet expectation being voiced of what career counselling normally entails, with ‘testing and telling’ approaches being alluded to here:

***Participant 12:** The requirements for the career. And the characteristics, sorts of those things you know when you do the research on those big career books. They usually have the characteristics of a person and it where should you refer the book that is of this career and how can you go about to find the finance of this career so all of those things.*

***Participant 3:** So that you can cover your abilities that, they are fitting in that career now. So when there's no, when there's no information about career, you won't know if your ability doesn't have it.*

***Anouk:** If you have that information, where it says characteristics that a person should be for a job, do you think you can tell that still if you would like the job or not without trying?*

***Participant 12:** But it will depend. You can, for I once compared like I want to be a CA first. So I've once looked into those career and I saw the characteristics they were exactly as those that I have and there were a very few that I don't have and I thought that I will have them along the way. But then eventually I've come across again, with some career, actuary. Now then I've discovered this one has the most characteristic that the other one, that I saw so you see now comparing the ability, my abilities on the characteristics that one should have to, to follow this career path, now I was able to say that my first choice is actuary and CA could be my second choice.*

These findings emphasise the need for the limitations of testing procedures to be explained. Test scores may provide a direction and high school learners need to be made aware that these are not final answers (Stead & Watson, 1993). Participant 12's expectations were unmet by the research process. Therefore he investigated abilities and traits linked to occupations he was interested in, using his love for calculations and maths as a guide. This participant was the first at finding out information, asking questions and persisting until the task was completed. Participant 12 provided the most insight into career myths, as he had been trying to speak to his classmates to clarify misconceptions. He had also discovered how resistant these beliefs were and saw the obstacles they create in career decision-making and planning.

**6.6.4.2. Misconceptions of exactitude.** Another assumption that created obstacles to career development was perfectionism in choosing a career, which prevented necessary tasks from being completed. Three respondents held misconceptions of exactitude, with the result that they did not apply to any tertiary institutions although the first deadline had passed. Upon further questioning there were five main reasons why their applications had not been completed. The first was a perceived information gap about the *application procedure* itself. Participants seemed not to know how to approach this complicated task. Participant 12 explained that this attitude was mirrored in the entire Grade 12 group: “*A lot of guys at our school, I don’t think others haven’t applied yet because there is no information for them how to apply.*” Secondly, it was believed that an application to an educational institution needed *certainty in a career choice*. It was believed that an individual should take enough time to make this choice because no changes could be made.

Thirdly, participants 2, 3 and 6 indicated that they were *waiting for their final results* and would apply with improved marks. Participant 12 explained that the main problem was that other learners did not realise better results could be sent once the application had been processed and was already on the university system:

*“They are waiting for the good results, so that they can apply to the university. They are not aware that university you can apply with your bad results, but now they will check your performance.”*

The fourth reason was based on the inaccurate perception that *applications would be considered even if deadlines had passed*. The tertiary institutions’ capacities are severely underestimated. The expectation was that, once the final results had been received, the universities would still have places available. Participant 12 explained: “*If you are academically good if you’ve applied when they’ve closed they will consider your application.*” This could explain the stampede at the University of Johannesburg in 2011, when late applications were processed.

Lastly, the fifth career myth is based on the idea that a *career choice is for life*. Participant 9 explained this belief by saying that his career ideas recently had changed towards IT, whereas in the past he thought: “*because I was doing a business thing, I must go to under a business career.*” A modified career idea acknowledges the compromise that is integral in addressing changing circumstances. It is a rarity that a career choice is perfectly congruent with interests, abilities, personality, needs and values (Stead & Watson, 1993). A career

choice is inextricably linked to personal and environmental factors that will alter individuals' perceptions of the world-of-work throughout their lives (McMahon et al., 2005a).

Career myths are abundant in contexts such as Kayamandi, due to the lack of accessible information, internet access as well as career counselling services. The main sources of information are the school context, assignments and the LO teachers' personal efforts. Parents have knowledge about blue collar work, but not about the range of career possibilities available or the procedures of applying to training institutions. Acceptable career beliefs can be reduced to unacceptable myths by rapid fluctuating economic markets and socio-political changes (Stead & Watson, 1993).

**6.6.5. Feedback on the MSCI.** The focus group provided an overview of what the respondents had reflected on. Thoughts could be compared about the career development process they had undergone, as well as the benefits of the *MSCI*.

Table 6.5. presents the focus group themes and subthemes discussed in this section. These were conceptualised and incorporated by the sample of respondents into self-concepts and career consciousness.

Table 6.5.

*Dominant Themes Elicited Based on Reflection on the MSCI in the Focus Group*

MSCI Feedback Themes	Sub-themes
1) Self-insight gained	Integration of interests and values
2) Awareness of influences	School, family and friends
3) Awareness of tasks	Time management and sacrifices needed
4) Integrated career picture	Changes over time
5) Criticisms of MSCI	Repetitive questions, confusion about circles

As can be seen above, there were five overarching themes that emerged: **1) *self-insight***; **2) *awareness of influences***; **3) *continuous tasks***; **4) *integrated career picture***; and **5) *criticisms of the MSCI***. These themes are discussed to gain a comprehensive view of the applicability and efficiency of the *MSCI* in a context-specific sample, such as Kayamandi adolescents.

**6.6.5.1. Self-insight.** All ten participants present during the focus group claimed that the *MSCI* had helped them to develop greater insight into their personal abilities, interests and had clarified their personal goals. Thus the *integration of interests* as a subtheme was stimulated. Participant 3 explained that: “*for me it tells me to know myself better. To know what I want.*” Furthermore, participant 11 delved into the process of self-exploration that the booklet facilitated by stating that: “*It gave me a key to open some doors within the great I, the great me.*” He highlighted that identifying personal attributes gave him an indication of what he could achieve, which is supported by Super’s career development theory. The self-information gathered was seen to be assembled into a relevant self-concept linked to the implementation of a career choice (Super et al., 1996). Participant 2 demonstrated this vocational identity formation process by stating that the *MSCI* booklet helped her to: “*see that what I’m good at and what are my interests and hope to see that my career that I will choose, it will fit or it will not fit.*”

*Integration of values* emerged as a subtheme of self-knowledge. Participants seemed to have a distinct divide between what values they carried and what careers they considered. Participant 9 explained the gap between his beliefs and his career choice, as he realised he needed to apply the insight he had gained: “*I have to know what are the values for this career that I’m going to choose. I am actually going according to it.*” This “belief-behaviour” gap has been documented in township adolescents’ behaviours (Swartz, 2011). The participants’ focus had been on the role that money played in specific careers, both for necessity and prestige.

The township context is expected to cause a preoccupation with money and thought processes that demand a focus on survival. A lack of active engagement with reflection processes, such as the inability to reconcile multiple or contradictory beliefs, is hypothesised to be present in disadvantaged contexts (Swartz, 2011). Participant 12 explained his reflective processes through which he used the *MSCI* booklet to question what he thought he knew in order to gain a deeper understanding of his career choice: “*There are things that I thought I like, I loved, but I actually don’t. So ja the booklet gave me some answers. It was an answer mechanism.*” The integration of diverse beliefs into a self-concept is vital for identity formation. The successful integration of interests and values results in career maturity and career commitment.

**6.6.5.2. An awareness of influences.** Participant 11 said that the identification of influences helped him realise “*the possibilities of me being where I want to be. And I realised*

*also to acknowledge the things that influence me.*” Participant 3 realised that his career development was mainly impacted through: *“my subject that I’m doing at school.”* The importance of **school** was further highlighted in career development processes by participant 12: *“At school we will be given projects where we have to go research about career path.”*

The most significant influence for participant 12 was his **family**, and this sentiment was echoed by all the respondents. The sacrifices and hard work that held their families together through extreme circumstances motivated them. They cherished the love and support they received from their parents. The positive influence of *“the people around me, how they inspire me. Family members. Ja and friends too”* was elaborated on by participant 10.

**Friends** as a subtheme formed part of the social level of influences. Friends were acknowledged by the focus group participants to play a dual role, as empowering and discouraging influences. The reluctance to speak about career ideas in front of and to others could therefore be explained. A certain career path would be discouraged by friends. This could be due to the lack of perceived prestige, false career information held (i.e., career myths or stereotypes), jealousy as well as competitiveness for ways “to make it.” Participant 11 described feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy that were raised through these negative influences:

*“The other thing that discourages us from our career ideas is our mind sets and confidence. When you hear about something and you love it and then when they tell you exactly what it’s all about then you start not trusting yourself and you lack confidence, you think that you can’t make it, so that is the other thing.”*

As can be seen from the excerpt above, negative influences and self-doubt had an impact on self-efficacy beliefs. There are many unemployed individuals in Kayamandi. This may have had a further negative effect on self-esteem and career self-efficacy beliefs as well as on other adjustment issues (Janeiro, 2009; Skorikov, 2007a). Therefore, the *MSCI* assisted this group of disadvantaged adolescents to collect and process relevant personal information needed for developing a “career consciousness” and to strengthen their career self-efficacy beliefs (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006).

**6.6.5.3. Awareness of tasks.** The personal negotiation of life roles and career choices requires each individual to undergo extensive meaning-making processes and tasks. In this case, the *MSCI* booklet and action plan formed a set of structured tasks that were self-exploratory and part of career decision-making. Participant 3 observed the following: *“Oh,*



*the booklet it gave me a task of doing the research about myself so that I can consider things that I'm good at ja and I need to find more about the path that I would want to choose next year.*" This created an awareness of the tasks involved in any career choice. Research was a necessity to find out what a career entails, eligibility criteria to pursue the career, daily activities performed in that career, training needed, bursary options, etc.

Moreover, ***awareness of time*** was explored as a subtheme. Recognition was created of how time needed to be allocated for specific tasks while other tasks had to be sacrificed. Participant 10 explained that he realised which sacrifices needed to be made: "*Sort of thing to sacrifice time. To hang out with friends.*" Participant 12 expanded on this idea of sacrifice by stating: "*Can go and socialise and stay with friends and do everything, but you may choose careers that will take all your time and you have a little time to spend.*" This notion of working many hours a day was difficult to accept, as they valued their social lives and partying was accepted as a social norm.

However, as the first generation wanting to attend a tertiary institute, these participants had no real concept of time demands and course work loads. Participant 12 seemed to have the most insight: "*The career path that I want to choose is more, long hours...I'll be more like studying. Every time I will be studying.*" He had spoken to actuaries during a job-shadowing opportunity that his LO teachers had organised at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). The narratives collected during his job shadowing experience provided him with actuaries' experiences, which included sleeping as little as three hours a night whilst studying. Observational learning provided him with the opportunity to reconceptualise his career choice of becoming an actuarial scientist to include time pressure and to strategise the volume of tasks that lay ahead of him (McMahon et al., 2010).

**6.6.5.4. Integrated career picture.** Career stories needed to be deconstructed to create awareness of how time, chance, learning experiences and self-observations were intertwined in systems of career development (McMahon et al., 2010). All the participants had expressed a sense of disbelief at how many influences had previously affected their career decisions without their knowledge. Participant 12 embodied this successful incorporation of interrelated elements by describing ***how changes over time*** would affect his career concerns:

*"I think as time goes by you learn new things, so we experience like we see life differently. It might happen that in future there are some few things that we change. I'll consider some few things that I haven't considered yet. I think I've also discovered some new things that I never knew about, about the career path I'm going to take and since*

*like I've seen the bigger picture of what I want to become and I've also thought about the lifestyle that I will living if I choose that career path and it also put in consideration of like thinking about the family, how will it affect me with my family."*

The initial preoccupation with social status or financial gain in this sample was replaced with a search for career satisfaction other than remuneration (Maree & Beck, 2004).

**6.6.5.5. Criticisms of the MSCI.** The researcher attempted to elicit constructive criticism about the booklet, as it appeared from the way they had completed it that they had experienced cognitive difficulties. Township adolescents have far less opportunities than their middle class peers to apply high-order levels of cognitive reasoning abilities (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). Therefore they have fewer opportunities for incorporating contradictory information into a critical whole, or displaying critical consciousness, which may explain why the *MSCI* was perceived as confusing at first. In describing their criticisms of the *MSCI*, the themes deduced were: **1) repetitive questions** and **2) confusion about circles**. The overall feedback gained from the individual interviews was primarily positive in nature.

**Repetitive questions**, as the first subtheme, referred to the last pages of the reflection exercise. A question was phrased in different ways to promote reflection and prompt other insights. Participant 11 stated: *"There are some questions I didn't understand that."* Participant 12 elaborated further by saying: *"There was some questions that are the same. I have same answers to some few questions. You were asking the same things."*

The second theme was **confusion regarding the circles**, in relation to which participant 3 stated: *"Ja it was confusing like the last pages."* The biggest confusion seemed to stem from a lack of understanding of why important influences had to be transferred into one circle. Also, the researcher had encouraged the participants not only to put asterisks next to the significant influences, but really to brainstorm. They were encouraged to explore the complexities of their career constructions and add other ideas that came to mind. However, this seemed to have initially added to the confusion, as participant 12 claimed that: *"the booklet it says that you must take those, that are relevant and now when you came you said that we must write...."* Although the relevance of the cognitive processes started by this booklet may not have been apparent initially, the participants liked the general format. Participant 12 said: *"I think it's best when it's in one booklet because it seems more simpler and it seems that it will take less time."*

The difficulty experienced with the reflective questions and the transference of influences to an integrated circle may lead back to the lack of facilitated reflection experiences available to this disadvantaged group. Participants 11 and 12 suggested that career decision-making processes could be aided by “mentors” in the community that: “*are informing, giving information you know how is this career...like you.*”

**6.6.6. Enablers and barriers.** The focus group participants had identified enablers and barriers in the previous phases of data collection. The table below provides a summary of the themes and subthemes of enablers and barriers extracted from the narrative exercise, the *MSCI* and the individual interviews.

Table 6.6.

*A Summary of Themes and Subthemes of Barriers and Enablers*

	Negative career influences (i.e., barriers)	Positive career influences (i.e., enablers)
1) Kayamandi environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No role models/ mentors</li> <li>• Lack of exposure</li> <li>• Lack of resources (e.g., internet &amp; finances)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School</li> <li>• Teachers</li> </ul>
2) Racial identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Language barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beliefs of suffering</li> <li>• Cultural values</li> </ul>
3) Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are unskilled workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation to lead a better life</li> </ul>
4) Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instil a lack of confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate about &amp; support career decisions</li> </ul>

As can be seen in Table 6.6., the enablers and barriers were intertwined. An influence is recognised as having both positive and negative effects on career development. The other enablers and barriers were mentioned previously, in the individual interviews. However, the only theme expanded on further was racial identity, which was seen to be closely linked to isiXhosa cultural values and identity. Africentric culture was discussed to the extent that this worldview informed positive adjustment as well as pathways of resiliency (Theron, in press).

In contrast, the shadow of discrimination associated with an Africentric identity was explored unintentionally during the focus group. A group member needed to go to the bathroom on the Stellenbosch campus and the discussion below followed:

*Participant 12: He might be arrested in there.*

*Anouk: For what?*

*Participant 2: He's too black.*

*Anouk: Do you guys feel too black?*

*Participant 12: We've been here you know, one day there was someone Mr. Coppers he said I must meet him here, and we were like, we getting into that way and while we were there we saw a security he was coloured security and he said that hey I see you going down up and down here, what are you doing here, and we said, we are looking for someone. And he said who's that someone and he called the other guys through the phone and said that I find those who are... I found those people who are passing through that green car, and he was talking, using Afrikaans and I understand Afrikaans very well and he said that was ... don't you even think of running because I've got other guys on that side, if you think to run they will catch you and I was like what?!*

*Anouk: But you mustn't forget there's been a lot of incidences on campus recently hey, so they are trying to be more careful, and I think in the process they think everybody is suspicious, if that makes sense to you.*

*Participant 12: Ja I know but, the things is I find it, for me it was kind of, I was very disappointed because I know, they are securities that is there job but they must ask what are we like, what are we doing here, we told them we are looking for someone and they was like ... he was like, don't you even think of running, we like thieves to him.*

Individuals identify themselves in collective terms based on their immediate groupings. Therefore other groups are hypothesised to be regarded with inter-group suspicion and hostility in order to guard collective interests, such as towards this group of disadvantaged black adolescents (Cubizolles, 2011). Unfortunately, the incident above illustrates that, although Apartheid has been replaced by democracy, social, racial and economic stereotypes and divides continue to be found. Even though structural restrictions have been removed, economic and psychological barriers remain intact, and future interventions will be needed to remove discrimination.

**6.6.7. Researcher's observations.** The researcher's influence (i.e., reactivity) in the focus group was only visible when she had to actively lead questioning in a particular direction. The respondents viewed the researcher as a friendly mentor and not as a strict authority figure. This meant that conversations were almost on a peer-to-peer basis and perhaps more genuine than if the difference in power had been enforced more strictly. In fact, the relaxed group atmosphere (Kritzinger, 1995) required the researcher to be assertive and use specific open-ended questions to keep the discussion focused (Fern, 2001). The researcher's reflection

on and observation of the group's interaction, as well as the experience of tuning into the participants' subjectivities, are discussed below.

The focus group incorporated a trip to Stellenbosch University. The researcher had organised that the group could enter the library, walk on the campus grounds, look at the facilities and go to MFM, the radio station. Thus the role of a student could be assumed for an afternoon. The focus group was held on the lawn in front of the student centre and was conducted after everyone had finished their picnic lunch. The aim was for the respondents to explore the tertiary terrain they had been traversing cognitively in their career narratives. The researcher attempted to answer all their questions, and encouraged the respondents to speak to students they saw and ask questions about campus life.

During this outing it became apparent that the discrimination described by participant 12 during the focus group was valid. The researcher had assumed that security was hyper-vigilant after an incident in which a Stellenbosch student had died on campus. Video footage revealed he had been chased by a black man, and police investigations were under way. However, after the focus group had been concluded, the white female researcher was stopped by campus security, as she was in the company of eight black males and two black females. Two coloured security officers asked her what they were doing and spoke harsh words that no one should look for trouble. The researcher replied that they were on campus for educational purposes. She politely thanked them for their concern, told them that these were Stellenbosch applicants and ushered the group on.

This incident raised complex questions and caused the respondents to be quite fearful. The atmosphere had been one of expecting the worst, even abuse of some kind. The researcher had been surprised as respondents had been singing a moment before, which had attracted the attention of the security staff. Thereafter a heavy silence ensued. An empowering approach was taken, in which the researcher attempted to joke about the situation and light-heartedly exclaimed that security was normally scarcely visible. The respondents seemed surprised at the researcher's complacent attitude. Participant 12 started a discussion about the suspicions attached to being black and in a group, and the challenges of racial interaction in Stellenbosch. Bias towards other ethnic and cultural groups was discussed as a problem that manifested in various forms, from xenophobia to wariness of certain language population groups (i.e., Afrikaans students sceptical of English-speaking students) (Painter, 2005). The unanimous concern expressed was that respondents were apprehensive about the way people would treat them at university level, with their township background and with non-mother

tongue English. They anticipated hostile reactions like the one we had experienced together, as well as uncaring administration staff, unhelpful lecturers and distrustful peers.

The researcher took this honest disclosure as an indication of the group solidarity of the cohort and realised that these concerns had been overlooked thus far in the career counselling sessions of the research process. In an attempt to do brief solution-focused counselling, the researcher asked the respondents how they would act if those situations arose. The respondents indicated that they would probably keep quiet and stop asking questions altogether. An emphasis was placed on a plan of action, just as the *MSCI* booklet had divided tasks into steps, the same strategy should be used in everyday scenarios. If the person they encountered was hostile or unfriendly, the respondents were advised not to assume responsibility for that individual's reaction.

Instead, personal agency and mastery of the response to the situation were encouraged. The respondents were advised to take time to re-assess the situation, what the goal was and how a new strategy could accomplish the same task. However, a very serious aggressive encounter should be reported. The researcher also explained that tertiary institutions had centres and mentors in residences who dealt with adjustment problems and other personal concerns, which should be used until respondents had found their own ways of coping.

The researcher had the sense that this type of informal mentoring, as vicarious career learning experiences, was sorely needed and very enriching for the participants. Participants seemed surprised that someone would be interested in meeting with them on a continuous basis, speak about their career ideas and want to help them. The sessions were always eagerly anticipated and absorbed by both parties. The focus group experience brought the broader social context of these participants' career decisions to the forefront. The researcher gained vast insight into participants' subjectivities through this engagement and realised the increasing importance of context-specific studies.

### **6.7. Research process challenges**

Various obstacles were encountered during the fieldwork. This section will describe some of the challenging scenarios encountered from the researcher's point of view. However, throughout all of the unpredictability and constant changes, the commitment never wavered from the school, the participants and myself. In trying to understand the career development processes of the Kayamandi adolescents, I inevitably drew comparisons with my own experiences in navigating adolescence. However, I learnt quickly that the "other" could not

be made familiar by placing past understandings into this context (Wolcott, 1999). Instead, I had to be patient and observe the community, just as the community members were observing me. Perhaps the greatest gift that Kayamandi gave me was the ability to suspend disbelief, wait quietly and listen with an open heart to the stirrings of another soul. This section will provide a brief discussion of my observations during the entire research process, and will be presented using four main themes, namely: *1) language barriers; 2) differing cultural lenses; 3) communication difficulties; and 4) unpredictable timetables.*

**6.7.1. Group dynamics.** A power dynamic/differential exists in any situation in which researchers ask questions and expect participants to respond appropriately, which is exacerbated when participants are culturally dissimilar (Painter & Baldwin, 2004). As the researcher, I was racially, linguistically and educationally dissimilar to the participants. This was the most difficult methodological limit to address, as I am white, female, English speaking, of German descent and a Stellenbosch University Master's student. Unfortunately, I am not fluent in isiXhosa and this caused much uncertainty, as translations had to be relied on. Trust had to be developed that this language divide could be surmounted by a receptive attitude and simplified English. Over time, a relationship was built with both the teachers and the learners, in which clearer insight was gained into the Kayamandi context. My opinions were humbled and a deep respect was cultivated for the learners, who made sacrifices to be part of this research process. This renewed my determination each time an obstacle was encountered.

I considered my multilingual identity an advantage over being viewed primarily as Afrikaans speaking, as this could have created more difficult intergroup dynamics because of Apartheid scars. In order to overcome language difficulties, a narrative exercise and a translator were included in the study. The narrative exercise showed some language mistakes, but was viewed as a comprehensible self-expression and sufficient for English additional-language speakers. Group formats have previously been found to be beneficial in disadvantaged contexts to establish rapport and operate within norms the participants understood from a school context (Maree et al., 2006). Therefore the *MSCI* was completed in a group setting, as the participants initially seemed reluctant to work with the researcher on a one-on-one basis. The *MSCI* is adaptable enough to accommodate group settings, in which processes of shared reflection and interaction were facilitated before the individual interviews began (McMahon et al., 2004).

The translator had also grown up in a township, and I hoped that the learners would identify with this hard-working young woman, who was doing a Bachelor of Science degree at SU. The translator was present for two sessions. However, a stifling silence was present when an interactive group session was desired. I was uncertain what group dynamic was under way at the time. Elements were removed from a group session to establish how a better research atmosphere could be created. The translator was removed to determine if her presence had any impact on comprehension or atmosphere. Immediately one of the participants asked where she was and I apologised for her absence. The males of the sample explained how they were in silent awe of her beauty. To my amusement, visible hostility was exhibited by the females towards the outside rival for attention, and this disclosure led to the start of a good research relationship.

The decision therefore was made to work without a translator, which led to the creation of a positive group climate. Although relying on responses in an additional language was not ideal, the participants indicated that further training institutions used English and they would be grateful for the opportunity to speak more English. The data collection process was conducted in English, so the responses may not be truly reflective of the nuances expressed by participants, or ambiguous meanings may have been decoded incorrectly (Cubizolles, 2011). English as a medium of communication affected the validity and coherence of the results. A mutual understanding was achieved by rewording interview schedule questions instead of using complicated terminology.

**6.7.2. Cultural lenses.** Examples of the exploitation of vulnerable communities by white researchers and institutions are an unfortunate reality, one which I did not want to be seen as part of. The racial stigma of the past was a shadow in the room, and there was an atmosphere of fear and mistrust from the adolescents towards myself at first. However, as insider knowledge was slowly amassed about community values and norms, certain cultural disparities began to emerge. As a researcher, I was critically self-aware in attempting to deconstruct the power dynamics in the research process to facilitate communication and expressiveness (McIlveen & Patton, 2006).

As a relationship was built, assumptions were transferred and projected. For example, I am a strong-willed woman and hold beliefs about female emancipation. The males dominated the *MSCI* group session and focus group, thus I encouraged the minority representation of women to speak their opinions. Patriarchal societies have specific ideas about how power and control are central to the meanings attached to masculinity (Wood & Jewkes cited in Shefer,



2011). Adolescent girls are taught a level of passivity, which was illustrated by the female participants speaking when asked to, and not otherwise.

As a previous safety precaution, the Division of Community Interaction of Stellenbosch University had hired police escorts to be present when researchers interviewed community members while conducting a Kayamandi needs analysis (Du Plessis et al., 2012). This was regarded as unnecessary, but my safety concerns made me carry both pepper spray and a tazer, as I generally travelled in and out of Kayamandi alone. However, I did not experience any threats during my research or community involvement, and no other safety measures were taken on my part.

Inherited tensions continue to divide South African society today. Social justice and liberation psychology advocate that experiences of powerlessness are absorbed, resulting in internalised oppression (Swartz, 2002). These tensions stem from the cultivated belief that individuals belonging to oppressed groups are inferior to those of the dominant culture, which has serious implications for psychological well-being (Moane cited in Smith et al., 2009). Jealousy and hostility are expressed towards the Stellenbosch community, which is Afrikaans-speaking and suspicious of black people. This aversion is hypothesised to result from competing interests, self-promotion and limited resources and information.

According to Cubizolles (2011), the Stellenbosch community struggles to think of itself as a single entity, as communities defend their narrow interests. Furthermore, Kayamandi has a projected image of being rural because of the farmlands that surround the township. Although the township is in fact peri-urban, this rural image ultimately is accepted and causes an additional pejorative connotation. The need to belong to a group is seen in the sample, whether this be residential, racial or ethnic, and is still a powerful factor that governs social affinities. Individuals identify themselves in collective terms based on their immediate groupings, which is a past habit of focusing on their own group's interests at the expense of other groups and communities (Cubizolles, 2011). Each group, such as the Kayamandi community, has its own symbolic values, sense of identity as well as economic and financial factors. The different communities of Stellenbosch are thus shaped separately and the unification of the municipality of Stellenbosch therefore is prevented.

Various individuals from different communities do collaborate, many of them with goodwill, but they are liable to withdraw into their respective communities when their identity is threatened. Kayamandi adolescents pursuing tertiary education at Stellenbosch

University may undergo severe identity questioning in assuming a minority group status. This has been documented in other rural samples that wish to return home upon completion of their studies, dissociating themselves from the urban community (McIlveen et al., 2012).

**6.7.3. Communication difficulties.** In isiXhosa culture, face-to-face communication is valued. It is also the most practical means of maintaining contact with important role players who are in close proximity. Unfortunately, I live in Gordon's Bay and had to drive to Stellenbosch every day, spending the morning working in the writing centre and the afternoons working with the Makupula learners. This essentially meant that, although I was present at the school every day, changes to the school schedule were always anticipated. Cell phone communication is expensive and computer illiteracy rates are very high, which meant that communication was a real barrier. I used faxes, short message services (sms), or phoned the teachers an hour before to confirm appointments. Within the sample, I appointed a leader who was smsed every day to confirm appointments. He was given airtime to compensate for his expenses.

If I did not sms or call, I never received any news. I wanted to understand this indirect form of resistance, yet the teachers could give me no conclusive explanations. A myriad of reasons were cited, the most common assumption being that an unforeseen event had prevented my attendance and that I would return on another day. Whilst this attitude caused much frustration initially, it was in fact an important reflection of the continuous change of plans in the Kayamandi context. Verbal communication was seen to be the best form of communication as well as the most reliable.

Teachers were interviewed as the primary source of information on the history of Makupula High School. There was a lack of written sources of information on the origins of Makupula High School. There were no archives, and the story has only been passed on verbally. Not all teachers knew the unabridged version and I was not certain of the extent of information that could already have been lost (Cubizolles, 2011). I compiled a written review of the development of the educational initiatives in Kayamandi (see Chapter 2). It was shared with the school as a manner of confirming the validity of my interpretations of the informal interviews. The teachers revised the document and it was altered until it was deemed an accurate reflection of past events. This was seen as a positive example of collaborative research and communication, resulting in the official documentation of the creation of Makupula High School. The LO teachers also attended community forums as part of the Career Life-Planning Project, which allowed for another level of social engagement.

**6.7.4. Unpredictable timetables.** The way in which data was collected had to be changed often because of the erratic school schedule. At the beginning of the research project, lunch time was suggested as the preferred time for the research activities. However, the school ran a WCED feeding scheme. The importance of this initiative was respected and a time after school was then suggested. The matric participants had many commitments, however, as they were involved in leadership positions, sports clubs, extramurals and even had to fetch siblings from school. This provided a limited amount of time to engage in career development processes. The school timetable changes daily and important after-school activities often clashed with our appointments. Furthermore, due to poor school attendance by the learners, tests were randomly scheduled in class periods to ensure that the learners were present for the whole school day.

New challenges were encountered every day. For example, ad hoc donations of seasonal fruit from the surrounding farms caused chaos. More energy was spent trying to get into the queue early than listening in the last class period. There was a fruit day once a week. This was taken into consideration in the planning and sessions resumed after the fruit had been obtained. However, extra classes were organised by the WCED after school, during which external teachers worked with the matrics to aid exam preparation. The learners found out in the last period what subject and time the class would begin, which caused timetable clashes. Commitment to the research project was shown when the entire group waited in the agreed room, even though an extra class was about to start. The vice-principal went to find out where the missing learners were. They explained that I had made an appointment with them and they wanted to honour their commitment. I had to make concessions and a new time was scheduled. A fixed schedule or routine seemed impossible to uphold. The unstable influences of the township context within which the Makupula learners develop, learn and make career decisions were emphasised throughout the research process (Dass-Brailford, 2005).

## **6.8. Chapter summary**

The individual voices and narratives conveyed throughout this chapter were explored using the STF. The focus was on the continuous integration of influences at individual, social and environmental-societal levels in the career identities and decisions of an under-researched population group (McMahon et al., 2008). *Individual interview* findings incorporated self-efficacy beliefs and reflection processes at the individual level. Parents, school, friends and cultural influences were described at the social level. At the environmental-societal level, Kayamandi and Stellenbosch were discussed as enabling and disabling environments and

the theme of being able to go overseas was considered. In addition, *MSCI* feedback was divided into confusing and useful elements. Lastly, the *focus group* data was presented to confirm themes previously mentioned. Two new themes emerged, of career myths and racial identity. The researcher's observations were included after each section, and the chapter concluded with a discussion of research challenges engaged with throughout the research process.

The next chapter will encapsulate the prominent research findings and summarise the usefulness of the *MSCI*. The research process will culminate in a discussion of the limitations, recommendations, and provide a conclusion.

## CHAPTER 7

### LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 7.1. Introduction

Recently, career behaviour has been re-conceptualised as a meaningful construction built on personal values, situated in social contexts with indigenous understandings. This stands in contrast to previous career practices, which narrowly matched traits and occupations (Stead & Watson, 1998). Nonetheless, major gaps remain in the understanding of career development and career adaptability. Career behaviour across various population groups, including marginalised groups such as disadvantaged adolescents or unemployed youth in township settings, needs to be understood better (Watson & Van Aarde, 1986).

This qualitative research study examined the career influences on disadvantaged adolescents to address the lacuna of knowledge of these adolescents' career development processes (Maree, 2010a; Seabi et al., 2010). The Systems Theory Framework (STF) was employed as a framework connecting theory, research and practice in an effort to expand established career research (McMahon et al., 2004; Patton & McMahon, 2006). The final chapter reviews the applicability and efficacy of the *MSCI* to facilitate the career development of black adolescents. Concluding remarks include prominent individual, social environmental-societal system and process influences. Recommendations will be made for future careers research, and limitations will be discussed.

#### 7.2. Contextualising research findings

The present research is pioneering in its examination of career identities and influences in black disadvantaged adolescents in a context-specific location (viz., Kayamandi township). This study is unique because it gives voice to adolescents struggling to emerge from the shadow of the Apartheid legacy, with their career opportunities freed from past inequities. The interaction between contextual factors and socio-political changes affecting the career development of disadvantaged adolescents was made clear in the present study (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Stead & Watson, 1998). The career challenges facing these disadvantaged adolescents, struggling to enter a weak national economy, tertiary institutions and higher-status occupations, have not been voiced (Stead, 1996; Stead & Watson, 2006). The present study achieved a comprehensive exploration of the personal framing and negotiation of contextual barriers in choosing career realities using the STF as a framework (Severy, 2008).

The *MSCI* provided an opportunity to analyse the complex array of influences and barriers involved in career planning in disadvantaged contexts. Cultural and racial identity emerged as one of the most significant influences on these individuals' career development. Cultural mechanisms of resiliency have only been researched recently (Theron & Theron, 2012). The present findings shed light on the cultural terrain of Africentric narratives and systems of meaning-making in a context of coping with poverty, suffering and hardship. In the post-Apartheid context, cultural understandings are essential to enable a respectful exploration of career opportunities and planning in an adolescent group that faces formidable career adjustment difficulties (Janeiro, 2009; Stead, 1996).

### **7.3. Applicability of the *MSCI***

The present study represents pioneering research in examining adolescents within a specific context. Also, the STF was utilised to reveal significant post-Apartheid complexities that disadvantaged adolescents face in career development. The findings of this research could be compared to findings of three previous studies, yet the findings remain distinctive. Dullabh (2004) utilised the *MSCI* in a children's home with English-speaking adolescents who had suffered early deprivation experiences. Kuit (2006) used the *MSCI* on middle socio-economic Grade 11 English-speaking adolescents. Lastly, McMahon et al. (cited in MacMahon & Watson, 2009) conducted a study on disadvantaged adolescents. Prominent influences were financial aid and family, in terms of significant others, such as designated house parents (McMahon et al. cited in MacMahon & Watson, 2009).

The results of the above studies indicated the usefulness of this career development tool. Content and process influences of the STF were evident in the adolescents' reflections on their career systems (McMahon & Watson, 2009). The usefulness of the *MSCI* as a reflection tool is mirrored in the present study. Although the participants were non-mother tongue English speakers, these marginalised individuals were able to reconstruct their career stories (McMahon et al., 2004; Patton & McMahon, 2006).

As suggested in the Facilitator's Guide, the *MSCI* was administered with a preliminary exercise that assisted the development of systemic thinking, the completion of the *MSCI* and reflection on the *MSCI* diagram (McMahon & Watson, 2009). This was followed by individual career counselling sessions based on the completed *MSCI*, and semi-structured interview questions were used. Individual sessions allowed the participants to describe

systemic social and environmental-societal influences that either enabled or hindered the individual from realising his/her career ideal.

An agentive identity was developed through these individual sessions, and the present research reflects Kuit's (2006) findings. Participants were also assisted to develop a verbal action plan that resulted in recursive engagement with peers, teachers, parents and siblings as a means to explore career options. The *MSCI* allowed awareness of career-related experiences to be generated according to the varying importance of identified subsystems of influences in the present research sample. In this way, prominent influences were made visible. These adolescents realised how their career development could be constructed in a different manner, with the personal meaning-making processes elicited by the *MSCI*.

Environmental-societal influences were acknowledged in Kuit's study (2006). Significant influences were cited as financial costs of further education, the desire to go overseas, geographic location of training, and availability of future work. The present study found financial concerns to be paramount due to the dire socio-economic conditions in the township. In addition, cultural beliefs and values were found to be crucial influences, both positive and negative, that resulted in importance being attached to family and community networks. As a result, no real desire to work overseas was evident. Moving away from home was fraught with contradictions in terms of cultural meanings associated with traditional versus western lifestyles. Also, there was no real conceptualisation of the availability of future work opportunities.

The present study also generated recursive findings showing the significance of participants' anticipated future lifestyle and the absence of past and present influences (Kuit, 2006; McMahan et al. cited in McMahan & Watson, 2009). However, these findings remain unique because cultural identities are seen to inform the career development processes of black rural disadvantaged adolescents. Career choices and realities that disadvantaged adolescents face in navigating career paths were presented. Self-knowledge, occupational ideas and constraining contextual influences were described in career decision-making (Ladany et al., 1997).

The reflection processes inherent in career choices were also examined in the sample, which had limited school-based opportunities for reflection. Contextual variables such as gender, culture and socio-economic circumstances, which have an impact on career maturity and career decision-making constructs, were documented in this research (McMahan et al.,

2005a; Naicker, 1994a). Theoretical variables of career planning, decision-making and exploration were investigated. Associated underlying meanings could be investigated to determine their relevance for disadvantaged youth in order to assist adolescents to transcend their historically disadvantaged circumstances (Stead, 1996; Super, 1990).

#### **7.4. Summary of levels of influences**

The narratives of a sample of Grade 12 Makupula High School learners were elicited through the *MSCI*, which is derived from the STF framework, in order to explore their career influences. Below is a review of prominent career influences at individual, social and environmental-societal levels. In addition, process influences, including recursive present, past and future elements, have also been incorporated. Participants' perceptions of the *MSCI* as a career reflection exercise will also be summarised.

**7.4.1. Individual level influences.** A labyrinth of career uncertainty, career options, entry requirements, different training options and a lack of accessible career information was navigated. Limited information about the world-of-work contributed to these participants being more susceptible to career myths and other false information that impeded their career development paths (e.g., career myths about the application process, as described in the focus group). Occupational choices were not based on a personal process of matching abilities and careers, as the participants had shown limited awareness of their personal interests and abilities.

Perceptions formed by a township background and black racial identity, which included hardship and suffering, enabled self-efficacy beliefs. In contrast, the township background also presented barriers, such as discrimination. Strong self-efficacy beliefs were observed in the sample. Themes of personal responsibility, ability and hard work were cited and believed to enable success, even under formidable circumstances. Poor future planning and limited critical thinking can be attributed to low socio-economic status that limits reflection opportunities. The *MSCI* facilitated an opportunity for self-awareness and insight that the participants had not been exposed to previously.

**7.4.2. Social level influences.** Prominent social influences on the participants' career development and vocational identity were identified. Parents were identified as a motivational and supportive career influence, which is supported by previous research (Seabi et al., 2010). Secondly, Makupula High School (LO teachers and school marks attained) formed an important arena of resources, support and information. Thirdly, peers were



emphasised as creating informal academic support structures as well as detracting from pro-social behaviour (Shefer, 2011). In the absence of local role models, chance encounters with other students created informal mentoring relationships that allowed career information to be shared. Role models in the media were identified by the sample, with commercialised TV career portrayals informing career aspirations.

Other social resources in the Kayamandi community, such as social contacts or networks, were not utilised by the participants to gain information. This was due to the need to protect themselves against unwanted negativity and jealousy from community members. Cultural narratives of the suffering shared by family members meant that the participants viewed setbacks as opportunities and believed that their disadvantaged background gave them the strength to succeed. These findings are especially important to provide an example of research that is contextually and culturally embedded (McMahon & Watson, 2009).

Cultural and racial influences on disadvantaged adolescents' post-Apartheid career decision-making processes have not been documented previously. The present study achieved a comprehensive analysis of these influences in the sample of black peri-urban adolescents. Further comparative research is needed to determine whether the cultural pressures of maintaining a racial and cultural identity result in constraining narratives. Studies are needed to establish if family and community proximity is imposed, or whether a longitudinal revision of this decision occurs.

**7.4.3. Environmental-societal level influences.** Participants conceptualised their local area as well as the broader Stellenbosch area in terms of resources and barriers. The identification of resources was a prominent influence in the Kayamandi context and included programmes run by NGOs, municipal bursaries and the surrounding educational institutions. Accessible work opportunities were described, although mostly in the informal sector. Accessibility and transport to Cape Town were also cited. In contrast, Kayamandi barriers emerged as a significant influence, including crime, poverty, drugs, substance abuse, illegal activities and contested moral terrain.

The present research is novel because the previously identified dynamic between Kayamandi and Stellenbosch was elucidated. Approximately two thirds of the participants saw Afrikaans as a significant barrier to utilising potential resources in the Stellenbosch University and community. The language policy was viewed as a method of constraining the population groups that could study in certain fields.

Working overseas was another disputed theme, with most participants only wanting to make use of employment options in South Africa. During the individual interviews, some participants expressed a desire to visit countries seen on TV. However, the majority of the respondents (75%) indicated a strong wish to stay near to their families whilst working. Therefore, the irreconcilability of traditional and western worlds manifested itself as a future career influence. Africentric cultural practices may conceal personal strivings, whereas ‘western’ training may oppose cultural norms, resulting in dissonance and a lack of non-western support in career trajectories (LeVine cited in Dass-Brailsford, 2005). The study highlighted cultural irreconcilability in the sample of disadvantaged black adolescents, an aspect that has not been investigated previously.

**7.4.4. Process influences.** The recursiveness between all parts of the individual’s systems of career influence as well as past, present and future influences were examined (McMahon & Watson, 2008). No past or present influences were mentioned by the participants; instead, all the participants anticipated an improved lifestyle. Cultural resistance to western values was perceived in respondents. The *MSCI* emphasised that training and job opportunities could remove participants from their Africentric webs of meaning and resiliency. For example, working overseas and combining family and work (both future-oriented themes) created disparities between the participants’ ambitions and their community bonds. The experience of being between two worlds (traditional and western) has been documented in previous research on rural Australian adolescents (McIlveen et al., 2012). The reconciliation of these two dimensions of meaning results in a clear vocational identity. The belief that western values cause individuals to forget their community ties and “who they were doing this for” contributed to the majority of the sample choosing to stay close to their families.

**7.4.5. *MSCI* feedback.** The *MSCI*, as a reflection exercise, provided a cognitive challenge for the participants. The present research findings demonstrated that new cognitive processes had been initiated. Decision-making skills, insight and personal awareness of the creation of new career behaviours were newly developed in a disadvantaged sample that initially demonstrated poor future planning skills and difficulties in career decision-making.

Due to the *MSCI* being administered in English, language concerns revolved around the wording of reflective questions, and rephrasing enabled comprehension. In addition, a lack of writing space on the answer sheet was mentioned. The ideal page layout was the *Thinking About My Past, Present and Future* page. Furthermore, a list of values, interests and abilities should be included for non-mother tongue English speakers. Personal information could then

be identified that might have been lacking previously and that might have prevented learners from rewriting examples they may not have understood properly.

This was the first instance of the *MSCI* being used with isiXhosa learners as far as the researcher is aware. Although language concerns were raised, the *MSCI* was viewed by the participants as being a useful reflection tool. Insight and awareness were gained into the career decision-making process. Discrepancies between values, beliefs and career choices were identified. Awareness was created of career tasks, and an integrated career picture was obtained through the constellation of career influences for each participant. Therefore, a myriad of career influences were incorporated by the participants into self-concepts and career consciousness. The impact of other people on the participants' career choices was also delineated. Most importantly, the *MSCI* opened possibilities that had never been considered as stepping stones in a formidable career journey.

### **7.5. Limitations**

The findings were generated from a purposive qualitative sample, consisting of 12 matriculants from Makupula High School in Kayamandi township. As only one high school was utilised in this study, the structure and conditions of that particular school could have had an impact on the findings of the study, reflecting the unique system and conditions employed by the school. Therefore the research findings, while very informative, cannot be generalised to the Kayamandi population, nor to disadvantaged adolescents in other townships. However, the findings of this research study open possibilities for further studies in similar contexts, using the same or other theoretical underpinnings.

Gender and cultural variables are exploratory and descriptive and would need further analysis before any conclusions are drawn. However, the present research has demonstrated the complexity inherent in adolescent career decision-making processes, especially in low socio-economic environments that provide multiple examples of vocational barriers. Africentric narratives of resilience that were uncovered in this research warrant further attention in career research as significant enabling and constraining influences in career choices.

The administration of the career measure in English to an isiXhosa-speaking sample is a limitation. Ideally the *MSCI* should be administered in isiXhosa; however, until the measure is available in isiXhosa, English is the only alternative. An informal test of language proficiency was completed prior to sample selection to ensure adequate language proficiency

(the narrative exercise fulfilled this function). Tertiary educational institutions use English as the language of instruction, and these adolescents demonstrated confidence in speaking English. A translator was employed initially, but this service was not viewed as facilitative to the research process given the participants' English proficiency. Complex terminology was simplified to elicit understanding; this may have affected the validity and coherence of the findings, with subtle nuances being overlooked (Cubizolles, 2011).

Furthermore, constructivist career counselling approaches expect of career educators and researchers to take a stand on issues that may have an adverse impact on career development, which was not a realistic goal within this research (McMahon et al., 2003). The research could do little to advocate for change in the community itself, which was considered a limitation. The learners were granted opportunities for reflection and career development during the career counselling sessions, which they might otherwise not have received. As structural barriers, poverty or oppressions could not be removed, the researcher created a supportive environment (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Hirschi, 2009). Nevertheless, the career development processes introduced at the school signify a constructive engagement with the career needs of the learners at the school. The participants' narratives draw attention to socio-economic influences that include discrimination and inequity, which manifest in career development processes.

## **7.6. Recommendations**

The restricted availability of career assessments in English and Afrikaans resulted in the need for assessments to be created in the indigenous languages of South Africa. The benefits of an isiXhosa version of the *MSCI* are undeniable. A version was being developed as this research was being completed (Prof. M. Watson, personal communication, August, 17, 2012). However, the researcher would like to highlight the practical need to develop English proficiency, as tertiary institutions and work environments consider English to be a prerequisite. The researcher recommends creating a simplified version of the *MSCI* for additional English language speakers. English language skills could be fostered in isiXhosa adolescents or other disadvantaged or minority populations, who inevitably will have to speak English until educational and economic environments acknowledge indigenous languages.

The *MSCI* should ideally be incorporated into the Life Orientation curriculum throughout the academic year, especially with the Grade 12 group. The *career flower* (see Appendix L)

should be administered at the beginning of the year as a precursory exercise to the in-depth exploration of the *MSCI*. This would aid better utilisation of the visual-spatial layout used in the *MSCI*. In addition, lists of abilities, interests, values, beliefs and coping strategies should be compiled for learners to highlight those that apply to them. Self-awareness of skills would therefore be stimulated. These additional support measures are necessary because of the learners' specific language or learning support needs, as well as the lack of background in career counselling in their disadvantaged context (McMahon et al., 2005b).

After the *MSCI* activity, facilitative career growth sessions should be held to facilitate informal conversations and thereby help the participants to gain confidence in their English language skills. Group dialogues could be held in which occupational and career information is shared, and reasons are given why previous occupations were disregarded (Osborn & Reardon, 2006). Social networks could also be strengthened between peers. These have previously been linked to academic support structures and the exchange of accurate career information (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011).

### **7.7. The way forward for narrative career counselling**

As part of the postmodern career counselling endeavour, this study aimed to address the needs of disadvantaged population groups that were previously overlooked (McMahon & Patton, 2002). Although considerable gains have been made in both theory and practice, diversity has remained an elusive concept divorced from real-life career counselling situations, particularly in developing countries like South Africa (Maree, 2012). In the South African context, traditional positivist models of career counselling are still practised acontextually. This is reflected in the research respondents' expectations of a trait-and-factor approach. The value of a narrative approach was demonstrated in this study, as the respondents described diverse elements of self-awareness and insights gained. Longitudinal and comparative research should be conducted on the use of the *MSCI* in other under-researched groups and diverse cultural groups in the South African context.

In using the *MSCI* as a qualitative career measure, the struggles and psychological victories of other individuals are seen to be intricately linked to subjective experiences of development in the search for an occupational direction (Orbach, 2005). The research findings indicated that these disadvantaged adolescents struggled with limited self-insight and self-knowledge of their abilities, talents and interests, which constrain adaptive career processes. Career adaptability, resilience or self-efficacy have been linked to the emergence

of a vocational identity, which is reflective of prospective/future thinking, career exploration and planning (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007; Janeiro, 2009). Therefore, disadvantaged adolescents need support to adapt to changing circumstances, retain self-confidence and become motivated to take career risks (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007).

## **7.8. Conclusion**

These participants' narratives demonstrated the resilience of the human spirit in searching for meaning amidst adversity. In the face of powerful oppositions, such as poverty, discrimination and rejection, a career direction was sought to overcome adversity.

Respondents' voices were heard and located contextually. These career realities were shaped by local facilitative and risk factors as well as by Africentric values (Maree et al., 2006).

Individual, social, environmental-societal system levels and recursive elements were examined to address the lack of knowledge of career development processes in this marginalised group. The *MSCI*, in utilising the STF framework, was seen to be valuable in examining the constellation of influences with an impact on disadvantaged adolescents. As a result, research and application were bridged, where respondents perceived the measure to be beneficial in their career constructions.

Disadvantaged black adolescents are exposed to a multitude of career opportunities that were not accessible to their parents (Hickson & White, 1989). However, the task of choosing a career remains formally unaided, and there is a desperate need for career counselling (Nel & De Bruin cited in Watson et al., 1997; Watson et al., 1995). These research findings are presented as pioneering research on post-Apartheid career influences on and cultural narratives of disadvantaged black peri-urban adolescents to guide indigenous theoretical models. The call for culturally-sensitive and relevant career interventions is addressed in this research to create career routes to reduce marginalised status (Maree et al., 2006; Naicker, 1994a; Stead & Watson, 1998, 2006; Watson & Stead, 2002). The *MSCI* was found to provide a valuable opportunity for improving insight, self-knowledge, resilience and creating empowering career narratives.

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## APPENDIX A



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

### Dear Makupula Grade 12 learner! Molo mfundi webanga leshumi!

Thank you for choosing to participate in this research study!

Enkosi ngukukhethe ukuthatha inxaheba kwesisifundo.

This study is about exploring your career ideas and influences that make up your career story! You will be asked to complete a booklet that examines different aspects that influence your career choice. By participating you may gain insight that may help with your own career choice.

Esisifundo simalunga nokujongana nengcinga unazo ngemfundo yakho . Uzakucelwa ukuba uphendule imibuzo malunga nezinto ezithi zichaphazele izigqibo uthi uzithathe ngemfundo yakho . Ngokuthatha inxaxheba ungafumana ulwazi olunothi likuncede ekukhetheni imfundo ekufaneleyo.

To be able to participate in this study, please give the researcher a copy of the consent form that was signed by your parents or guardians to allow you take part in this research! Please also hand in the copy of the assent form that you signed.

Ukuze ukwazi ukuqhubeka uthathe inxaxheba kumele unike umphandi elaphepha lemvume esuka kumzali wakho kwakunye nemvume suka kuwe.

You will be given a demographic questionnaire that will ask general questions about your age, race, gender, parents' occupations and educational levels etc

. Uzokufumana iphepha elinemibuzo malunga neminyaka yakho, ukuba uyintombi okanye umfana, intlanga oyiyo kwakunye nemisebenzi yabazali bakho kwane mfundo yabo.

There will be a first session of 40 minutes during which a *My System of Career Influences (MSCI)* booklet will be completed during your lunch break. On another day a second session of 40 minutes will be held where you will be asked questions what you may have learnt so far about your career influences.

Ngelanga lokuqala uyakuthatha imizuzu emashumi amane ngexesha lakho lokuphumla ugcalisa i ncwadi ye *My System of Career Influences (MSCI)*. Kwelilandelayo ilanga uyakubuzwa imibuzo malunga nezinto ozifundileyo ekuphenduleni lemibuzo kulencwadi.



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Thereafter you may be picked to be part of a group where 6 learners will discuss the same questions to see if any other ideas have been left out. This focus group will also take 40 minutes in a third lunch time period.

Ukuba ufuna ukwazi ngeziphumo zoluphando ungaqhakamshelana nam ku 0722228740 okanye nge- email ku [14568527@sun.ac.za](mailto:14568527@sun.ac.za).

If you want feedback on the interview results or the final outcomes of this study, please contact me on my cell at 0722228740 or email me (Anouk) on [14568527@sun.ac.za](mailto:14568527@sun.ac.za).

Ukuba ufuna ukwazi ngeziphumo zoluphando ungaqhakamshelana nam ku 0722228740 okanye nge- email ku [14568527@sun.ac.za](mailto:14568527@sun.ac.za)

For further career counselling, please contact the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) at [cdc@sun.ac.za](mailto:cdc@sun.ac.za) or (021) 808 4707 or alternatively the Career Information Centre in Kayamandi at [bthandeki@cic.org.za](mailto:bthandeki@cic.org.za) or (021) 795 612 885.

Ukuba unqwenela ukufumana iingcebiso malunga nezemfundo ungalufuma Kwiziko Lwengcebiso Ngezemfundo Nenqubela Ngezemfundo (021) 808 4707 okanye [cdc@sun.ac.za](mailto:cdc@sun.ac.za) okanye Kwiziko Lolwazi Ngezemfundo e Kayamandi ku**[bthandeki@cic.org.za](mailto:bthandeki@cic.org.za)** okanye (021) 795 612 885.

*These career counselling sessions are provided free to you because you are a participant in this research study. Ezingcebiso malunga ngemfundo yakho awuzibataleli kuba ungumthathi nxanxeba koluphando.*

Thank you for choosing to contribute to this research study!

Enkosi ngokuthetha uku nceda koluphando

Anouk Albien

Master Student, Psychology Department, Stellenbosch University

## APPENDIX B



### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM/ *Iphepha lencukacha malunga noluphando kwanye nelokufumana imvume kumthathi nxaxheba.***



**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT/ *IGAMA LESISIFUNDO:***

**Exploring the career influences of Kayamandi Grade 12 adolescents using the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development.**

*Ukujongana neezinto ezinefuthe elisiseko elithi lakhe ubomi bemfundo okanye umsebenzi zabafundi base khayamandi abakwibanga leshumi kusebenziswa indlela yokujongana nezizinto ebizwa ngokuba yi-Systems Theory Framework of Career Development.*

**RESEARCHER'S NAME/ *Igama lomphandi:*** Anouk Jasmine Albien.

**ADDRESS/ *Idilesi yomphandi:*** 82 Fairview Golf Village, St Andrew's Drive, Gordon's Bay 7140.

**CONTACT NUMBER/ *Incukacha zokuqhakamshelana nompahndi:*** 072 222 8740 or Stellenbosch Psychology Department at (021) 808 3461.

**What is RESEARCH? / *Kuyintoni ukuphanda?***

**Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about various things such as disease, illness, or in this case, career ideas. Research also helps us to find better ways of helping or treating children who are sick or helping children make better career decisions in finding their way in the job world.**

*Ukuphanda yindlela esifumana ngayo ulwazi olutsha malunga nendlela izinto (nabantu) ezisebenza ngayo. Senza izifundo zokuphanda ukuze sifumane ulwazi malunga nezigulo ezithile okanye*



*ngengcinga ngezefundo okanye ngomsebenzi. Uphando luyasanceda ukuba sikwazi ukufumana indlela zokunyanga abantwana abanezigulo okanye sancede abafundi abakumabanga aphezulu bathathe izigqibo ezingcono malunga nezefundo okanye nezomsebenzi kwilizwe lempangelo.*

**What is this research project all about? / *lungantoni oluphando?***

*This research is about the ideas that you may have about career planning and you will be asked about previous work experience, advice you have received from others, different life roles, past role-models, your ideal career, your interests and opportunities that exist in your area.*

*Oluphndo lumalunga ne ngcinga ongabe unazo malunga nemfundo yakho kwakunye namalungiselelo onawo. Uzakubuzwa ngezinto ezimalunga ngamava onawo omsebenzi obukhe wawenza, iinngcebiso okhe uzifumane ebantwini malunga neemfundo yakho , imisebenzi obuthe wanayo apha ebomini, abantu abakhe bayimizekelo yakho, izifundo okanye umsebenzi ocinga ukufanele, izinto onomdla kuzo kwaye namathuba emfundo akhoyo kwindawo ohlala kuyo.*

**Why have I been invited to take part in this research project? / *kutheni ndimemiwe ukuba ndithathe inxaxheba koluphando?***

*You have been invited to take part because you are in Grade 12 and are considering career options as you are leaving school soon. This means that you are weighing up options based on different influences and this research is trying to find out the influences that lead you to make a specific career decision.*

*Umenywa ukuba uthathe inxaxheba koluphando ngokuba ungumfundi webanga leshumi kwaye ukwixesha aphokhona uzakuthelekisa izifundo okanye imisebenzi ehlukeyo. Oku kuthetha ukuba ukwixesha apho ujonga iindlela ezahlukeyo malunga neezifundo zakho kwaye oluphando luzama ukufumana iizinto zinefuthe elisiseko ekuthatheni isigqibo malunga ngobomibakho bemfundo okanye bomsebenzi.*

**Who is doing the research? / *Ngubani owenza oluphando?***

*My name is Anouk Albein, I am a Master's Psychology student at Stellenbosch University and am trying to research high school students' ideas about the career world to help them make better decisions when they leave school.*

*Igama lam ndingu Anouk Albein, ndingumfundi kwi univesithi yase Stellenbosch ndifunda isidanga se-Masters kulwazigqondo(masters in psychology). Ndizama ukuphanda ngengcinga abafundi abakumabanga aphezulu abanazo malunga ngobomi babo bemfundo okanye bomsebenzi emva kokuba bephumile esikolweni ukuze ndikwazi ukubanceda bathathe iizigqibo ezingcono xabephuma esikolweni.*

**What will happen to me in this study? / *Yintoni ezokwenzeka kum kwesisifundo?***

*Firstly, you will be asked to bring back the form with your parent's signature to let us know that you are given permission to take part in this research. Then we will ask you to sign this form so we can be sure that you have understood what the study is about and give us your permission to participate as*

well as record your answers. There is a questionnaire that you need to fill out, asking you about your name, age and what your parents do for living. After that you will be given a My System of Career Influences (MSCI) booklet that the researcher and isiXhosa facilitator will help you to fill out about your career ideas, with step-by-step instructions, examples and even diagrams to represent your career influences. This is the end of the first session of 40 minutes, which will take place during your lunch break.

*Okokuqala, sizokucela ukuba usibuyisele elaphephana lesiqinisekiso semvume esuka kumzali wakho. Sizakucela u sayine i phepha lithile ukuze siqinisekise ukuba uyasiqonda ukuba esisifundo singantoni, usinike nemvume yokuba uthathe inxaheba kwesisifundo nokuba si-rikhode impendulo zakho. Kukho imibuzo malunga nawe(umzekelo, igama lakho, iminyaka yakho nokuba abazali bakho benza ntoni) ekufuneka uyiphendulile.Emvakoko uyakunikwa incwadi ebizwa ukuba yi-My System of Career Influences(MSCI) ozokuthi uyiphendule malunga ne ngcinga onazo nobomi bakho bezemfundo, uncedo lokuphendula lemibizo luzobe lufumaneka kumphandi u-Anouk nakumtoliki u-Asanda kwaye neemizekelo ikhona kwakule ncwadi. Esike sisiphelo le langa lokuqala ngexesha lesidlo sasemini ( i-lunch) eliyimizuzu engama-40.*

*The second session will also take place during a lunch break, and follow-up questions will be asked and recorded about how you found completing the booklet. Please answer as honestly as possible, we really do want to hear what you have to say! Thereafter you may be picked to be part of a the third session, where a group of learners will discuss the booklet they have completed, if they think it was a good exercise or not and if they have gained any insight into their unique career influences and ideas.*

*Elesibini i langa nalo lizothatha imizuzu engama-40 ngexesha lesidlo sasemini (i-lunch) apho khona kuzo bakho imibuzo ngokuba ukufumene kunjani ukuphendula lancwadi i-My System of Career Influences kwilanga lokuqala. Sicela uphendule ngokunyanisekileyo kuba sifuna ukwazi yonke into onofuna ukuyithetha. Emvakoko ungabangomnye wabafundi abayi 6 abazokuthi bakhethwe ukuba babuyele kwilanga lwesithathu apho khona abafundi bazothi baxoxe ngezimvo zabo malunga nalancwadi bebeyiphendulile kwilanga lokuqala. Ukuba bacinga iyeyabaluncedo na, ingaba kukhona abathe bakufunda malunga nezinto ezi chapazela izifundo zabo.*

### **Can anything bad happen to me? / *Ikhona into embi enokuthi yenzeke kum?***

*You could feel scared initially, but the researcher and isiXhosa translator will try their best to make you feel comfortable. If you do not understand anything, please ask to have it repeated in either English or isiXhosa because what you think is valuable to us! You could feel anxious or unsure about your future career ideas, and if you need someone to talk to about getting career advice, we will provide you with contact details of people who could help you.*

*Ungaziva usoyika ekuqaleni kodwa umphand u-Anouki nomtoliki bazokuzama kanangangoko banako ukwenza uzive ukhululekile. Ukuba ikhona into ongayiqondiyo ungacela icaciswe ngesi Ngesi okanye ngesiXhosa kuba yonke into oyicingayo ibalulekile kuthi. Ungaziva ungaqinisekanga ngengcinga*

*zakhomalunga nobomi bakho bezemfundo kwaye ukuba udinga ukuthetha nomntu malunga ngalento singakunika incukacha zabantu abanokuthi bakucebise ngezemfundo.*

**Can anything good happen to me? / *Ingaba ikhona into entle enokwenzeka kum?***

You could gain knowledge about yourself by finding out what your interests are, certain ideas that you may not have realised about careers or who has made a lasting impression on you. You could also learn more about making career decisions and why it is so important to take control of your career story. These sessions are provided free to you, under normal circumstances standard career counselling fees would be charged for the same content.

*Ungafumana ulwazi malunga wena, wazi ukuba zintoni izinto ozithandayo, ingcinga ezithile obungakhange uziqonde ukuba unazo ngezemfundo okanye ngabantu abathe bakukhuthaza. Kwaye ungafunda ngokwenza izigqibo ngemfundo yakho nokuba kutheni kubalulekile ukuyithathela ezandleni zakho imfundo yakho. oku kuziswa mahala kuwe nangona nje kwimeko eziqhelekileyo bekunofuneka ubhatale.*

**Will anyone know I am in the study? / *Ukhona umntu onokuyazi ukuba ndithatha inxaxheba koluphando?***

*No one will know that you have participated, and your name and details will be kept secret. Only the researcher, the isiXhosa translator and the Research supervisor will know who you are because they play an important part in the research project.*

*Akekho umntu azukuthi ayazi ukuba uthathe inxaxheba kwesisifundo kuba igama lakho nazo zonke incukacha zakho zizokugcinwa ngokufihlakeleyo. Umphandi nomtoliki we isiXhosa bayakuyazi ukuba ungubani kuba badlala indima ebaluleke khakhulu koluphando.*



**Who can I talk to about the study? *Ndingathetha nabani malunga noluphando?***

*The researcher Anouk / umphandi Anouk: 072 222 8740*

*Research supervisor Prof. Naidoo / umphandi ongentla Prof. Naidoo: (021) 808 3461.*

**What if I do not want to do this? / *Ukuba andifuni ukuyenza lento?***

*You have every right to refuse to take part in this research, even if your parents have agreed that you can participate. You can stop being in this study at any time without getting into trouble.*

*Unalo ilungelo lokwala ukuthatha inxaxheba koluphando nokuba abazali bakho bavumile. Ungakwazi ukuyeka uthatha inxaxheba kwesisifundo nangeliphi na ixesha ngaphandle kokungena engxakini.*

Do you understand what this research study is about and are you willing to take part in it?

*Uyaliqonda ukuba lungantoni na oluphando kwaye uyavuma na ukuthatha inxaxheba?*

YES
<i>EWE</i>

NO
<i>HAYI</i>

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

*Ingaba umphandi uyiphendule yonke imibuzo yakho?*

YES
<i>EWE</i>

NO
<i>HAYI</i>

Do you understand that you can pull out of the study at any time?

*Uyaqondana ukuba ungaphuma kwesisifundo nangeliphi na ixesha?*

YES
<i>EWE</i>

NO
<i>HAYI</i>

---

Signature of Child/  
*Umtyikityo wo mfundi*

---

Date/ *Umhla*

## APPENDIX C

Demographic Questionnaire/ *Imibuzo*

Name/ <i>Igama:</i>			
Date of Birth <i>Umhla wokuzalwa:</i>		Grade/ <i>Ibanga:</i>	
Age/ <i>Iminyaka yakho:</i>		Gender / <i>Mfana okanye ntombazana:</i>	
Career ideas that you have been thinking about/ <i>Ugcinga ngezemfundo okhe ubunazo:</i>	1. 2. 3.	Home Languages/ <i>Ulwimi iwasekhaya:</i>	
Mother's job/ <i>Umsebenzi kamama:</i>		Father's job/ <i>Umsebenzi ka tata:</i>	
Mother's education/ <i>Imfundo kamama:</i>		Father's education/ <i>Imfundo katata:</i>	

## APPENDIX D



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### STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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#### EXPLORING THE CAREER INFLUENCES OF KAYAMANDI GRADE 12 ADOLESCENTS USING THE SYSTEMS THEORY FRAMEWORK OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Dear Parent / *Mzali obekekileyo,*

I am Anouk Albein, a masters student in the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University doing voluntary work at Makupula High School. I ask your permission to allow your child to participate in a research study conducted with matriculants at Makhuphula High School. The present study will help me complete the Psychology Research Masters programme and will result in a research thesis. The study will also have benefits for your child in helping him/her with their career decisions and will help develop future career guidance programmes in Kayamandi.

*Igama lam ndingu Anouk Albein, ndingumfundi kwi Univesithi yase Stellenbosch ndifunda isidanga se-Masters kulwazigqondo, ndenza umsebenzi wamahala ekwisikolo sase Makhuphula. Ndicela imvume yokuba umntana wakho athathe inxaxheba kwisifundo esisebenzisa abafundi be banga leshumi kwesisikolo. Esisifundo sizokundinceda ukuba ndikwazi ukufumana isidanga sam. Esisifundo siyokumnceda umntana wakho ekuthatheni isigqibo malunga nobomi bemfundo okanye bomsebenzi yakhe kwaye, singanceda kubekho nezinye izifundo ezilandelayo ezizakuthi zibancede abafundi.*

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY / *Senzani Esisifundo*

This research will explore the ideas, people and environment that influence the career decisions of Kayamandi adolescents. This will help to gain insight into career development processes to improve future career programmes for Kayamandi high school learners. *Esisifundo sizakuphanda ingcinga ,abantu kwakunye ne ndawo ezithi zibenefuthe elisiseko esakha ubomi bemfundo babafundi besikolo sase khayamandi okanye umsebenzi abanqwenela ukuyenza ebomini babo. Ezizinto ziyokunceda ekwandiseni ulwazi malunga nenqubela ngezemfundo esikolweni sase Khayamandi.*

#### 2. PROCEDURES/ *Inqubo yoluphando*

If you give permission for your child to participate in this study, the following will be asked of you and your child/*ekumnikeni imvumm untwana wakho oku kuyo celwa kuwe kwakunye nomntana wakho:*

- To sign this form to give your child permission to take part in this research.  
*Ukuba utyikitye lenchwadina ukuvumela umntana wakho ukuba athathe inxaxheba koluphando.*
- Your child will sign a form to check if he/she has understood what the study is about, has given permission to participate and has agreed to have the interviews recorded on a tape recorder.  
*Umntana wakho kuyofuneka naye atyikitye enye incwadana ukusazisa ukuba uyaluqonda ukuba lungantoni oluphado kwaye uyavuma ukuthatha inxaxheba koluphando nokuba udliwano- ndlebe lubalwe.*
- A questionnaire will be filled out by your child asking his/her name, age and career ideas.  
*Uzakuphendula imibuzo maluna ngaye (umzekelo igamalakhe, iminyaka yakhe neengcinga anazo malunga nobomi bakhe bemfundo okanye umsebenzi anqwenela ukuwenza.*
- A *My System of Career Influences (MSCI)* booklet will be filled out by your child during his/her lunch break with permission of the principal. The researcher and an isiXhosa facilitator will help your child to fill out the booklet. This booklet contains questions about your child's career ideas, with step-by-step instructions, examples and even diagrams to represent your child's career influences.

*Ngemvume yenqununu yesikolo umntana wakho uyakucelwa ukuba asebenzise ixesha lakhe lesidlo sasemini (i-lunch)a phendule incwadana ebizwa ukuba yi-My System of Career Influences. Umphandi netoliki yesixhosa bazokumnceda ekuphenduleni yonke iimibuzo ekulencwadana.*

- Follow-up questions about how helpful the booklet was or if any new insight has been gained about the career development process, will be asked during another lunch break.

*Kolunye usuku, kwange xesha lokuphumla, kuyakubuzwa imibuzo malunga noncedo uluthelwafumaneka ekuphendule lemibuzo ekulencwadi, ingaba na zikhona izinto ezithe zatyhileka malunga neezemfundo afuna ukuyiqhuba.*

- A group discussion will be held, where learners will discuss the booklet they have completed if they think it was a good exercise and if they have gained any clearer career ideas.

*Kuyokulandela ingxoxo phakathi kwabafundi abathile abayokuthi bakhethwe malunga nale ncwadi nemibuzo ebiphenduliwe kuyo, ukuba bacinga iyeyaluncedo kwingcinga abanazo ngobomi bemfundo zabo.*

### **3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY/ *Izinto eziyingozi kubathathinxaxheba nomphakathi kwakunye nezi zinokuthi zibeluncedo***

There are no risks or discomforts to your child taking part in the study. Your child may benefit by gaining awareness of the career influences, barriers and needs that affect his/her career decisions. The information gained from the learners will result in improved future career guidance programmes to help learners make career decisions. *Akukho nanye into enobungozi azokuthi ayifumane umntana wakho ngokuthatha kwakhe inxaxheba koluphando. Umntana wakho angafumana ulwazi malunga nezinto ezinefuthe elisiseko ezakha ubomi bakhe bemfundo okanye umsebenzi anqwenela ukuwenza ebomini bakhe kwakunye nezithi zime endleleni yakhe ukuthatha ezigqibo ezithile. Lonke ulwazi oluzofumaneka kwaba bafundi luzonceda kubekho iindlela ezingcono zokugada abafundi ukuze bathathe izigqibo ezilungileyo malunga nezifundo zabo okanye imisebenzi abanqwenela ukuyenza.*

### **5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION/ *Ukubhatalwa Kemali Yokuthatha Inxaxheba***

There will be no payment for participating in this study. Your child, by participating in this study, will be receiving free career counselling that would normally be charged at standard career counselling rates. *Awuzi kuzihlawulela ezi ngcebiso malunga nemfundo okanye eyona misebenzi onqwenela ukusingisela kuyo xa sele ugqibile ukufunda, kuba ungumthabathinxaxheba (okanye uthabatha inxaxheba kwesi sifundo sophando).*

### **6. CONFIDENTIALITY, PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL / *Ukufihlakala, ukuthatha inxaxheba kwaye nokufuna ukuyeka.***

Your child's name will not be identified at all in this study. Only my supervisor, Professor Tony Naidoo at the Psychology Department, and the isiXhosa facilitator, Ms Asanda Gwashu, will have access to the information. You can choose whether your child should be in this study or not. If you volunteer your child to be in this study, you may withdraw your child at any time without consequences of any kind. The investigator may withdraw your child from this research if this becomes necessary.

*Igama lomntana wakho alikubizwa xakubhalwa esisifundo, abantu abayokuthi balazi ndim,umphandi, umphandi ongentla kum u-Professor Tony Naidoo, kwakunye netoliki yesixhosa u-Ms Asanda Gwashu. Unako ukukhetha ukuba uyavumana umntana wakho athate inxaxheba koluphando kwaye nokubasowumvumile unalo ilungelo lokumyekisa nanina.*

### **8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS/ *Ukwaziwa kwabaphandi.***

If you have any questions or concerns about the research or would like to receive feedback, please feel free to contact the researcher, Anouk Albien, at [14568527@sun.ac.za](mailto:14568527@sun.ac.za) or 072 222 8740 and the Masters Research supervisor, Professor Naidoo, at [avnaidoo@sun.ac.za](mailto:avnaidoo@sun.ac.za) or (021) 808 3461. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za); 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

*Ukuba ikhona imibuzo malunga noluphando ungakwazi ukuqhakamshelana nomphandi, Anouk Albein, apha kuledilesi ye e-mail [14568527@sun.ac.za](mailto:14568527@sun.ac.za) okanye ku 0722228740, okanye nomphathi wam u-Professor Naidoo nge e-mail apha kuledilesi [avnaidoo@sun.ac.za](mailto:avnaidoo@sun.ac.za) okanye ngocingo ku (021) 808 3461. Ukuba unemibuzo malunga ngamalungelo akho njengo mthathi nxaxheba koluphando ungaqhakamshelana no-Ms Maléne Fouché nge e-mail kuledilesi [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za); 021 808 4622].*

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE/ *Umtyikityo womthathi nxaxheba okanye umeli womthetho.***

The information above is satisfactorily described to me, the participant's parent, in English and Xhosa in this letter, and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated. I, the participant's parent, understand that if I need to ask questions, I need to contact the researcher, and my questions will be answered to my satisfaction.

*Ndonelisekile, nma mzali, nge ngecukacha endizinikiweyo kweliphepha ngaso isi ngesi nesixhosa kwaye ithe yatolikwa kakuhle. Ndiyaqonda ukuba ikhona imibuzo endinayo, ndinako ukuba ndiqhakamshelane nomphandi kwaye imibuzo yam iyakuphendulwa ngokupheleleyo*

*I hereby consent that the participant (i.e. my child) may participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.*

*Ndiyamvumela ukuba athathe inxaxheba umntana wam kwaye ndiliniqiwe eliphepha kuze ndilingcine.*

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (i.e. my child)/ *Igama lomthathi nxaxheba(umntana)*

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Parent/Guardian/ *Igama lomzali***

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature Parent/ Guardian/ *Umtyikityo womzali*

Date/*umhla*

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR /*Umtyikityo womphandi***

I declare that the information in this document was sufficiently explained to \_\_\_\_\_ [*name of the participant/*] and/or [*his/her*] representative \_\_\_\_\_ [*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in *English and isiXhosa*, and *was translated into isiXhosa by Asanda Gwashu.*

Ndiyavuma ukuba ezincukacha zicaciswe kakuhle kum \_\_\_\_\_ [*Igama lomthathi nxaxheba*] kwakunye/okanye

Um-meli wakhe \_\_\_\_\_ [*igama lom meli*]. *Uyewakhuthazwa kwaye wanikwa ixesha elaneleyo lokundibuza iimibuzo . Lentetho ibingesi Ngesi nange isiXhosa, itolikelwe esiXhoseni Ngu Asanda Gwashu.*

*a. albein*

Signature of Investigator/ *Umtyikityo womphandi*

Date/ *Umhla*



## APPENDIX E



### WESTERN CAPE Education Department

Provincial Government of the Western Cape

RES  
EAR  
CH

[awyngaard@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:awyngaard@pgwc.gov.za)  
tel: +27 021 476 9272  
Fax: 0865902282  
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000  
[wced.wcape.gov.za](http://wced.wcape.gov.za)

**REFERENCE:** 20110525-0063  
**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard

Miss Anouk Albien  
82 Fairview Golf Village  
St Andrew's Drive  
Gordon's Bay  
7140

**Dear Miss Anouk Albien**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING THE CAREER INFLUENCES OF KAYAMANDI GRADE 12 ADOLESCENTS USING THE SYSTEMS THEORY FRAMEWORK OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **1 April 2011 till 30 September 2011**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.  
Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard  
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**  
**DATE: 26 May 2011**

MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNOMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE /  
NCEDA UBHALE INOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE IMBALELWANG

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LAER-PARLEMENTSTRAAT, PRIVAATSAK X9114, KAAPSTAD 8000  
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: <http://wced.wcape.gov.za>

**INBELSENTRUM /CALL CENTRE**

INDIENSNEMING- EN SALARISNAVRAE/EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY QUERIES ☎0861 92 33 22  
VEILIGE SKOLE/SAFE SCHOOLS ☎ 0800 45 46 47

## APPENDIX F



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### Appendix F: Letter to Makupula High School Principal

20 March 2011

The Principal  
Makupula High School  
Kayamandi

Dear Mr. C. Ndebe

#### Re: Career influences of Gr. 12 Kayamandi adolescents

I am a Master's Psychology student at Stellenbosch University involved in the Kayamandi career project. I will be conducting research on matriculants and what influences their career choice. The findings will help to develop future career interventions for Kayamandi adolescents.

In order to do this, I am asking you for permission for the following:

- To gain access to the matriculants during a Life Orientation period to ask learners to participate.
- 10 students will be picked upon return of a consent form signed by their parents.
- These 10 students each need to be individually interviewed over two sessions of 40 minutes. As class time is so valuable, your permission is asked for me to interview the 10 participants over lunch breaks between April and September 2011.
- One group session will be conducted at the end of the study.

Attached please see the cover letter, letter of permission to the parents, assent letter to the learners and copy of my proposal.

I have applied to the Western Cape Education Department to conduct research at the Makupula High School and the ethical clearance has been applied for at the University of Stellenbosch's Review Board. Prof Naidoo will be supervising my research.

I will inform you once permission from the WCED has been granted.



Fakulteit Lettere & Wysbegeerte

Faculty of Arts

Departement Sielkunde • Department of Psychology

Universiteitskantoor / University Office

Privaatsak/Private Bag X1 • Matieland, 7602 • Suid-Afrika/South Africa, Tel: +27 (0) 21 8083466, Faks/Fax: +27 (0) 21 808 3584



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Please sign in the area below to indicate your permission for this research to take place at the Makupula High School.

Kind regards,

*a. albin*

Anouk Jasmine Albin  
University of Stellenbosch  
Master's Psychology student  
[14568527@sun.ac.za](mailto:14568527@sun.ac.za)  
072 222 8740

Permission of the Principal of Makupula High School to participate in the research study:  
**Exploring the career influences of Kayamandi Grade 12 adolescents using the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development.**

  
Signature

*14/06/2011*  
Date



Fakulteit Lettere & Wysbegeerte  
Faculty of Arts



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## APPENDIX G



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

30 June 2011

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Reference No. 564/2011

Ms A Albien  
Department of Psychology  
University of Stellenbosch  
**STELLENBOSCH**  
7602

Ms A Albien

### LETTER OF ETHICS CLEARANCE

With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *Exploring the career influences of Kayamandi Grade12 adolescents using the System theory Framework of Career Development*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards



*Sidney Engelbrecht*  
**MR SF ENGELBRECHT**

Secretary: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanoria)



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## APPENDIX J

# My System of Career Influences (MSCI)

### Reflecting on my career decisions

Completing this booklet will help you think about the many influences that are part of the process of making career decisions. For example, how important are your parents, your current school, your grades in school, your friends and where you live to your current thoughts about your career direction?

There are usually many influences that people have to consider before they can make career decisions. Influences can direct people towards or away from a choice, and are not necessarily positive or negative.

Most people find that identifying their own individual influences helps them to understand what is important to them in making decisions.

As you work through this booklet, read the instructions carefully and take your time. When you have completed it, you will be asked to transfer the information from each page onto one diagram. This will help you to see the most important influences for you in relation to making a career decision at this time.

It is important to be aware that you will make many career decisions throughout your life, and that these influences and their level of importance to you will vary over time. From your teenage years onwards, you will make a number of career decisions. For that reason, we encourage you to complete this reflection process more than once.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date first completed \_\_\_\_\_

Date second completed \_\_\_\_\_

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1

No 11

## My present career situation

- 1 What career decisions do you need to make in the future? For example, you may need to choose subjects at school, or you may be thinking about your first part-time job or what you will do when you leave school.

---

---

---

- 2 List the part-time or volunteer work you do, have considered or have done at any time in the past.

a) \_\_\_\_\_ b) \_\_\_\_\_  
c) \_\_\_\_\_ d) \_\_\_\_\_

- 3 Think about life-roles you have other than that of student. These may include roles such as sportsperson, choir member, class captain, youth group member.

a) \_\_\_\_\_ b) \_\_\_\_\_  
c) \_\_\_\_\_ d) \_\_\_\_\_

- 4 List any jobs that you have considered for your future.

a) \_\_\_\_\_ b) \_\_\_\_\_  
c) \_\_\_\_\_ d) \_\_\_\_\_

- 5 List any previous career decisions that you have made (for example, choosing subjects to study, choosing to continue or discontinue activities such as music or sport).

---

---

---

---

- 6 What strategies or approaches have you used in your previous decision making?

---

---

---

---

- 7 Who has helped you or provided advice with your previous career decisions?

---

---

---

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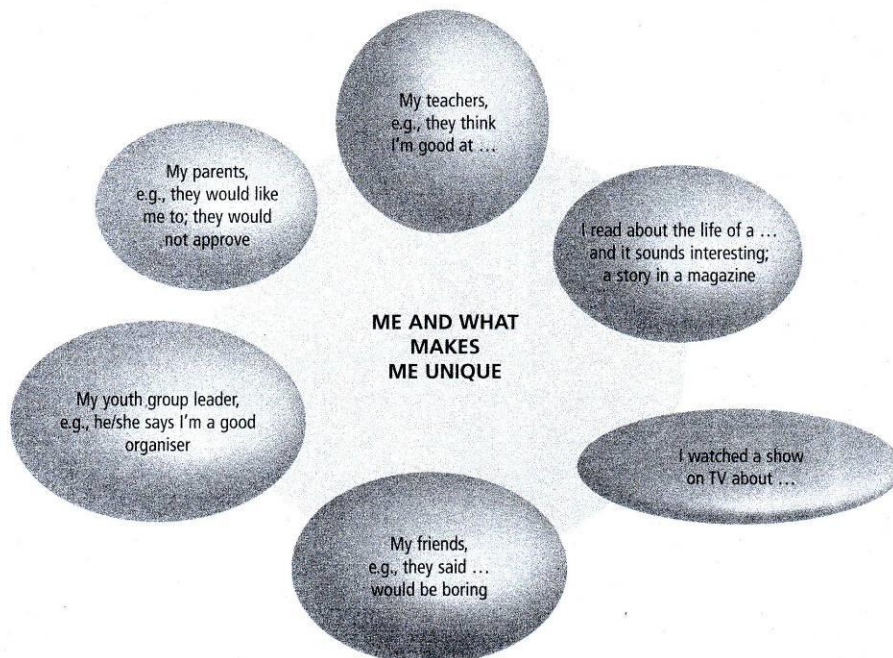


## Thinking about the people around me

When people are making career decisions, sometimes others around them influence their thinking. For example, parents may suggest jobs they think are suitable, you may have talked to someone whose job sounds interesting, or someone such as a sister, brother, or friend may be critical of something you want to do. Sometimes people read about or see or hear something on TV or radio that influences their decision.

On the diagram below are some examples of influences on career decisions. Read them carefully and take time to think about your own life.

- 1 Tick the influences that apply to your next career decision.
- 2 Add any others that you can think of that are not listed.
- 3 Mark with an asterisk (\*) those that you think are really important or are a big influence on you.

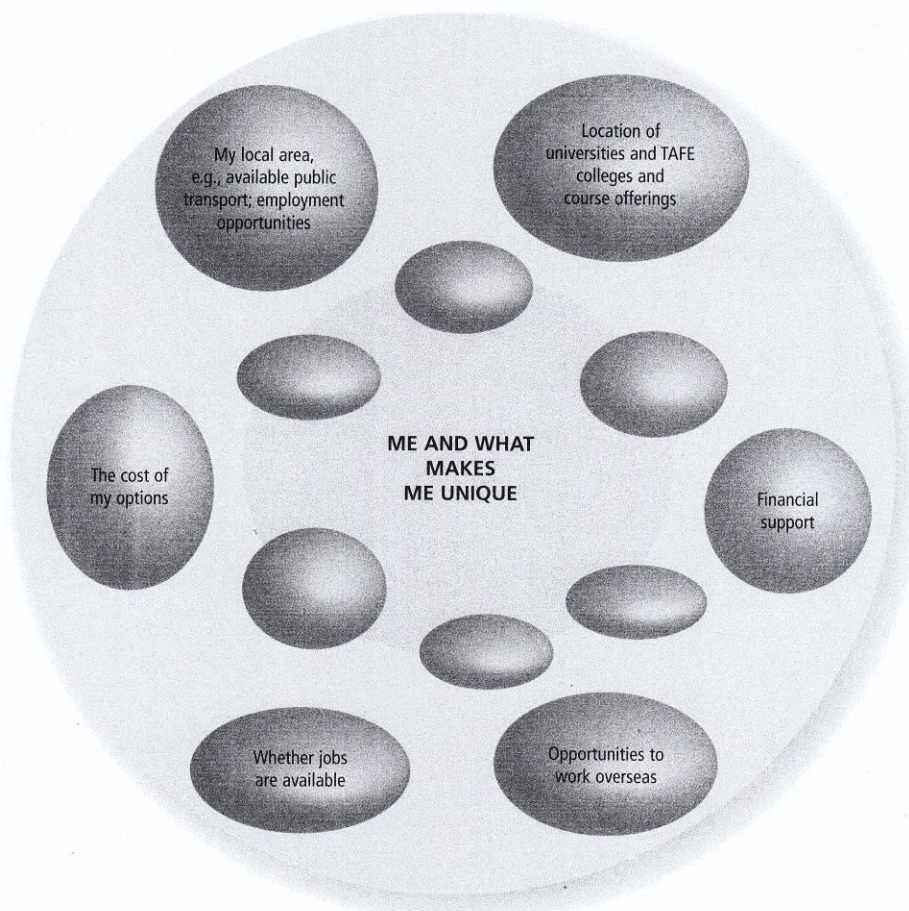


## Thinking about society and my environment

When people are making career decisions, it is sometimes important to consider the influence of the society in which they live and the environment around them. For example, some people live in areas where there are few job opportunities, and for others the cost of a study course or living expenses, or the availability of transport may influence their decision.

On the diagram below are some examples of influences on career decisions. Read the examples carefully and take time to think about your own life.

- 1 Tick the influences that apply to your next career decision.
- 2 Add any others that you can think of that are not listed.
- 3 Mark with an asterisk (\*) those that you think are really important or are a big influence on you.



## Thinking about my past, present and future

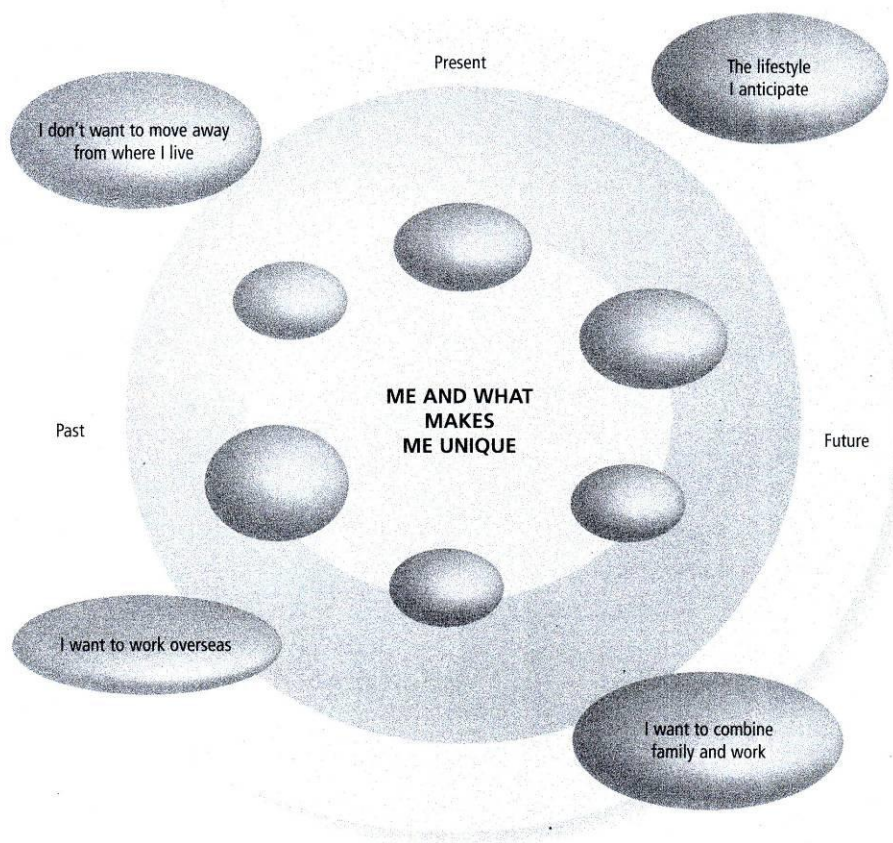
Some of the influences you have already considered may have occurred in the past and yet still affect your career decision. For example, you may have seen a movie years ago that gave you some ideas about an occupation that interests you.

Sometimes decisions may be influenced by future considerations. For example, some people may know that they want to work overseas.

Sometimes career decisions may be affected by things in people's present lives that they want to keep the same or want to change. For example, they may not want to move from where they currently live.

**On the diagram below are some examples of influences on career decisions. Read the examples carefully and take time to think about your own life.**

- 1 Tick the influences that apply to your next career decision.**
- 2 Add any others that you can think of that are not listed.**
- 3 Mark with an asterisk (\*) those that you think are really important or are a big influence on you.**



## Representing My System of Career Influences

Now that you have had a chance to reflect on some influences on your career decision, it is time for you to put them all together on the diagram provided to you on page 8 of this booklet. Below is an example that may help you.

Work in pencil so that you can erase anything you need to. You will need to turn back through the pages you have just completed. You will notice that the diagrams you have already done on pages 3–6 build on each other to provide a comprehensive picture of your System of Career Influences.

Follow these step-by-step instructions to represent your System of Career Influences in one diagram.

### 1 Turn back to page 3.

First of all, think about where you want to place yourself in the diagram. Are you in the centre, off to one side, or in a corner? How

will you represent yourself, for example, as a circle, a square, or some other shape? How big will you be? How will you represent the other influences you identified on this page? Think about how big these influences are? Where will they be in relation to you?

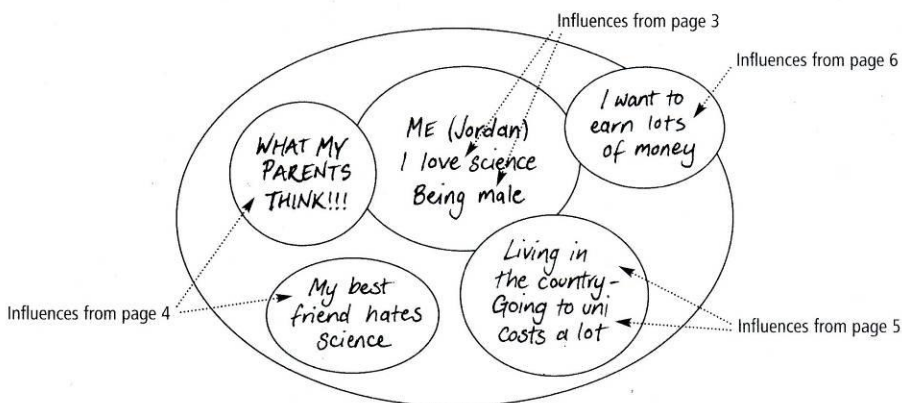
### 2 Go to pages 4, 5, and 6 in turn.

Think about where you will place each influence on your diagram. As you place each influence on your diagram, think about its size and shape. How big or small will it be? How close to or far away from you will it be? What shape will it be? What will be adjacent to it or overlapping it?

3 Once you have finished your diagram, you may use colours, symbols or pictures to complete your diagram.

4 You have now completed a diagram of your System of Career Influences.

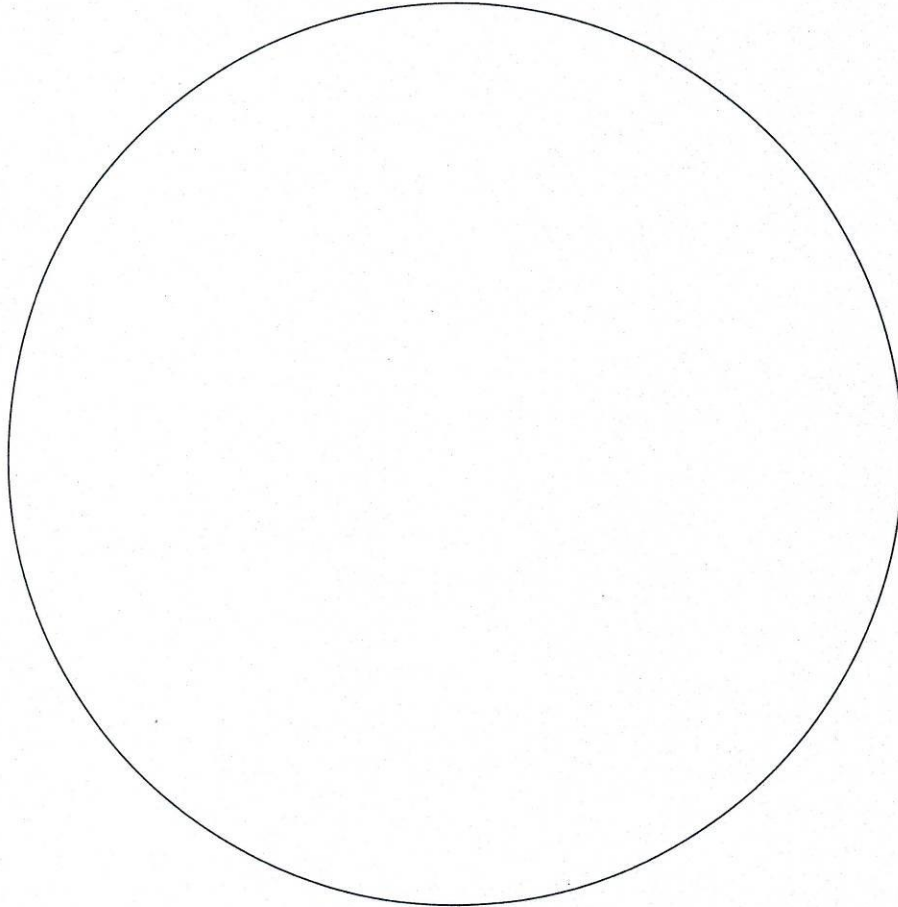
### Example: Jordan's System of Career Influences



Jordan is fifteen years old and chose to represent his System of Career Influences in this way. He has included influences from each page of the workbook. You can see

that Jordan had three influences from page 3 to include in his system, two influences from page 4, two from page 5, and one from page 6.

## My System of Career Influences—1



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of completion \_\_\_\_\_

8

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## Reflecting on My System of Career Influences

Now that you have drawn your System of Career Influences, it is time to reflect on what you have noticed or become aware of. The following questions might guide your thinking as you look at your diagram.

- 
- What stands out most for you?

- 
- What stands out least for you?

- 
- What has surprised you about your System of Career Influences?

- 
- What have you noticed that you were not previously aware of?

- 
- What has been confirmed for you?

- 
- What would you like to change?

- 
- What would you like to remain the same?

- 
- How do you feel as you look at your System of Career Influences?

- 
- Of those influences you located closest to you, which do you think is most important?  
How do you explain its importance?

- 
- Which of these influences have you encountered in previous career decisions?  
How did they help you? If they did not help you, how did you deal with them?
-

## My action plan

Now that you have completed your MSCI diagram and reflected on its meaning to you and the story it tells, it is time to think about what you might do next in your career decision-making process. These questions will help you to plan your next steps.

- 
- Who will you talk to about your System of Career Influences diagram and what would you like to tell them?

- 
- What action or steps will you take now that you have completed your System of Career Influences diagram?

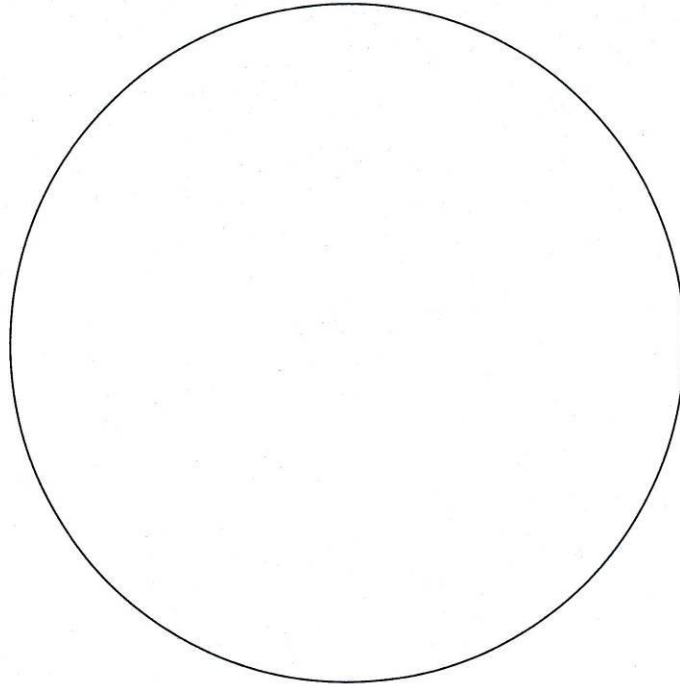
- 
- What information would you like to find out now?

- 
- Who could you speak to for that information?

- 
- What resources could you use to find out more?
-

## My System of Career Influences–2

To complete your second system of career influences diagram, follow the instructions from pages 3 to 7 as you did for your first diagram. When working through these pages, it may be helpful to use a different-coloured pen or pencil.



### Learning about my career influences

- What changes have you noticed between your present System of Career Influences and the System you constructed previously?
- How do you explain those differences?

### My Action Plan

- Who will you talk to about your System of Career Influences diagram and what would you like to tell them?
- What action or steps will you take now that you have completed your Systems of Career Influences diagram?
- What information would you like to find out now?
- Who could you speak to for that information?
- What resources could you use to find out more?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of completion \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX K

### **Individual and focus group interview schedule (Adapted from the MSCI: McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2005c)**

- 1) What are your current career decisions that you have to make?
- 2) Are there any influences that direct you towards or away from a specific career idea? If so what are they?
- 3) Do you think that these career ideas and influences will stay the same in the future?
- 4) In discussing your past career ideas, have they changed at all? If so how and what has caused them to change?
- 5) Can you describe surrounding environmental barriers that make you feel as if your career goals are unreachable?
- 6) Are there any surrounding environmental resources that motivate you and make you feel as if your career goals are possible?
- 7) What did you find the influence of significant others such as parents, teachers, role models and peers are on your personal career ideas?
- 8) Tell me how you would describe your self-awareness before this career exploration? And is your self-awareness different from then? If so how and what do you think contributed to this change?
- 9) What if anything did you think about your career influences before completing the MSCI?
- 10) How, if at all, have your thoughts and feelings changed about your career influences since completing the MSCI?
- 11) How would you describe your overall experience of the MSCI as a career development process?
- 12) Is there something that stands out for you or that you would like to change?
- 13) Is there anything else that you might not have thought about before that occurred to you during this discussion?
- 14) Is there anything you would like to ask me?
- 15) Is there anything anyone would like to add to this discussion that we might have not covered before we end the focus group session?

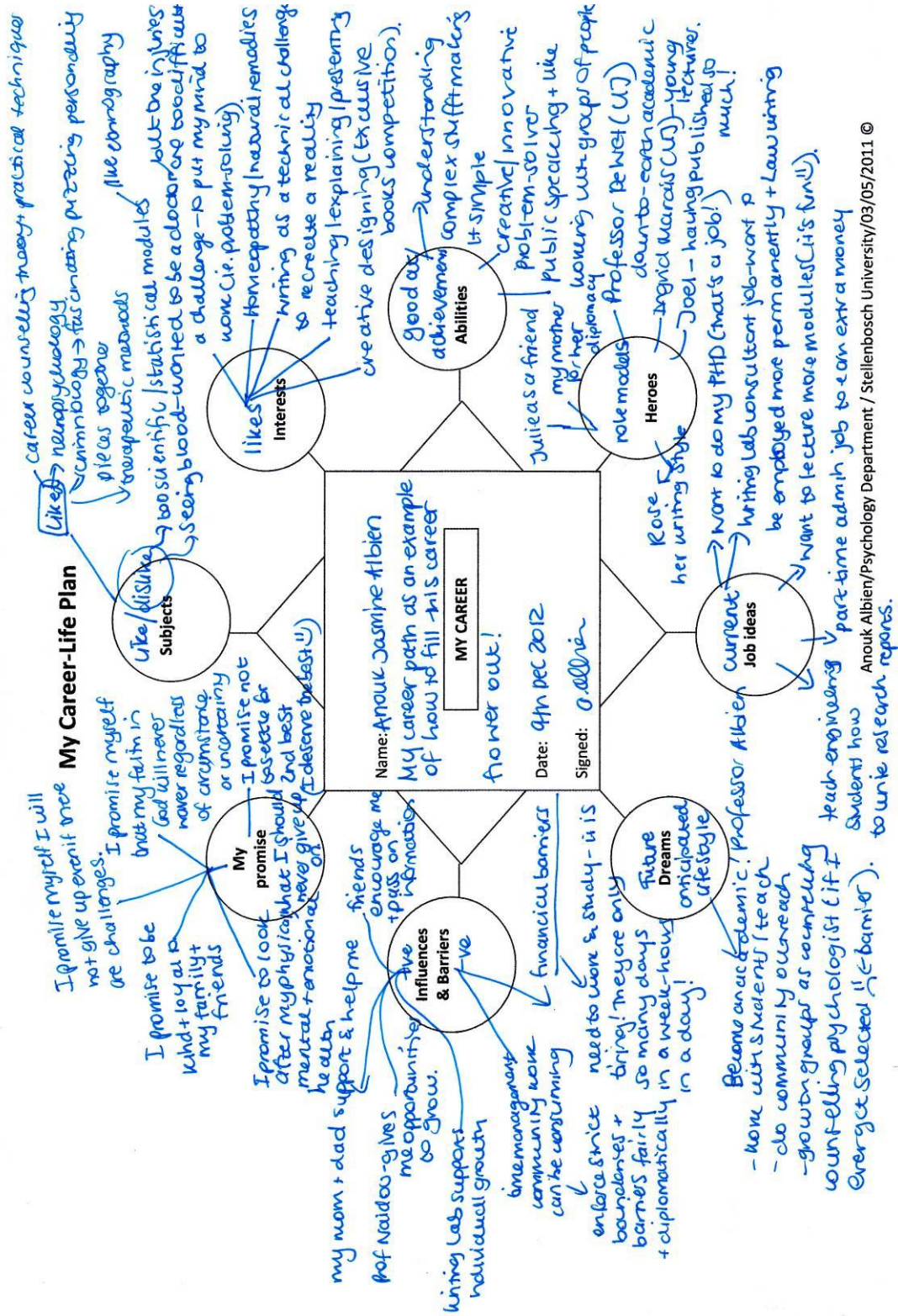
## APPENDIX L

**My Career-Life Plan**

The diagram consists of a central rectangular box with the text **MY CAREER** inside. Below this box are three fields: **Name:**, **Date:**, and **Signed:**. Eight circles are arranged around the central box, each connected to it by a line. Starting from the top and moving clockwise, the circles are labeled: **Subjects**, **Interests**, **Abilities**, **Heroes**, **Job ideas**, **Dreams**, **Influences & Barriers**, and **My promise**.

Anouk Albiën/Psychology Department / Stellenbosch University/03/05/2011 ©

APPENDIX M



## APPENDIX N

### *MSCI* Development Process

The *MSCI* was developed over a time span of four years and consisted of a three-stage cross-national trialling process (McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2000, 2003, 2004; McMahon et al., 2005b). Below the stages are listed with the feedback and refinements that were made during each trial. This has been included to provide an accurate description of the applicability of the *MSCI* for disadvantaged youth in Kayamandi.

**Stage 1: Pilot version of the *MSCI*.** The pilot version of the *MSCI* was trialled on Australian (n = 16) and South African (n = 18) Masters level university students who were enrolled in career development courses (McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2000). The sample consisted of middle-class, English-speaking students where both genders were equally represented. The procedure entailed completing the *MSCI* and a focus group discussing their experiences and critiques of the measure. Data was separately analysed for each nation per question to identify emerging predominant themes, record examples of themes and identify cross-national themes (McMahon et al., 2000).

Elicited themes included incorporating appropriate language, more specific instructions, clearer examples, more space in the layout and developmental applicability. Further clarity was suggested in terms of lucid examples and bullet format instructions, where an adolescent version should have better guidelines to aid completion of the booklet. Overall, a uniform positive response was established that the measure was both useful for providing a career decision-making context and as a pre-and in-process counselling tool (McMahon et al., 2000).

**Stage 2: *MSCI* adolescent version.** A trial was conducted by McMahon, Patton, and Watson (2003) on the *MSCI* adolescent version. The sample consisted of university students enrolled in career development courses at Masters level at an Australian (n = 21) and South African (n = 14) university. These students were middle-class, English-speaking; both genders were equally represented and had experience working with adolescents. In this trial the adolescent version of the *MSCI* was used, where the recommended modifications of Stage 1 were reflected (McMahon et al., 2003). Modifications were made to the layout, the language and the instructions of the pilot version to better suit an adolescent population. Extra questions were added to explore strategies, approaches and sources of influence that adolescents may have used in earlier career decision-making. Only the theme of learning was

added in this stage, as the themes that emerged were the same as in Stage 1 (McMahon et al., 2003). The layout of the *MSCI* received critique, where suggestions were made about line spacing, diagram size, font, the lack of colour and placement of instructions and examples. The adolescent version of the *MSCI* was deemed developmentally appropriate with suitable language, helpful examples and clear instructions. However, a need was expressed for a facilitator's manual that provides guidelines to support career choice learning processes. In summary, the adolescent version of the *MSCI* was found to initiate a process of self-discovery and stimulate an awareness of the relevant career influences involved in any career choice (McMahon et al., 2003).

**Stage 3: Adolescent sample.** The third trial sample was conducted by Dullabh (2004) and consisted of English-speaking South African adolescents from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The sample encompassed 16 participants: 6 males and 10 females. In addition, 7 participants of this sample had been assessed with learning disabilities. Adolescent participants' ages ranged between 13 and 17 years ( $M = 14.6$  years). Four facilitators aided completion of the *MSCI* in phase 1 and recommended that a precursor was needed to introduce learners into the concepts of systemic thinking. Identified shortcomings that needed attention included the perception of self within social and societal contexts which was addressed in the second phase (Dullabh, 2004).

Data from phase 1 and 2 were gathered by means of focus groups with the facilitators, as well as completed *MSCI* booklet and diagrams. Data was analysed according to the themes established in stage 2, facilitators' observations and comparisons of booklets for both phases. Findings from the first phase indicated that participants experienced difficulties in understanding the language, instructions and the concept of systemic career thinking, as learners copied the examples instead of filling them out (Dullabh, 2004). However, the process of completing the *MSCI* was reported as enjoyable.

The *MSCI* booklet was altered for phase 2 with words replaced, examples removed and the administration of the *MSCI* embedded into a facilitative process to introduce concepts of systemic thinking. Findings of phase 2 indicated that the introductory process, which prepared adolescents to complete the *MSCI*, was beneficial. After the preparatory session all the participants completed the *MSCI* far more comprehensively and faster than in phase 1. Furthermore, the sample consisting of participants with learning disabilities and from

disadvantaged backgrounds, viewed the *MSCI* as a valuable and enjoyable learning experience (Dullabh, 2004).

The User Manual was also trialled, which involved Masters level students enrolled in career development courses in an Australian University (McMahon et al., 2005b). Feedback indicated that the manual was a clear step-by-step guide, easy to read and had helpful supplementary suggestions and case studies. Refinements consisted of altering formatting, wording and removing examples. The manual aimed to provide helpful instructions and examples of the administration process of the *MSCI* to aid career development processes (McMahon et al., 2005b).

The development of the *MSCI* has involved a meticulous process of theoretical, conceptual and practical refinements over a four-year time frame. The feedback from the trials suggests that the *MSCI* is suitable for adolescents based on the language refinement, booklet layout and development of a facilitator's manual (McMahon et al., 2005b). In addition, the *MSCI*, as a practical application of the STF, was documented to be effective in assisting socio-economically disadvantaged learners. The learners stipulated the benefits of the *MSCI* experience in the meaningful creation of career stories through reflection (Dullabh, 2004). Therefore, this instrument was deemed appropriate for the adolescents in Kayamandi.