EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL INFLUENCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CAREER EDUCATION AND PLANNING AMONG GRADE 11 LEARNERS

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents have an increasing need to know how the world of work is organised and want to develop their own career competencies. Unfortunately, many young South Africans not only have limited exposure to the world of work, but also have inadequate access to career education services and social contacts. This dilemma, however, has presented a unique opportunity to research how alternative systems, such as social network sites, are able to bridge these gaps and enable adolescents to investigate, explore and discover various career options online.

By exploring adolescents' online experiences and the ability that Social Network Sites have provided to explore, question and understand career-related information, this research may shed some light on how Social Network Sites could be used to provide more accessible career information. Although various research studies have focussed on career education and social media individually, it seems that there is limited research available on the potential link between the two phenomena, as well as how Social Network Sites could be used as resource tools for career education and planning. This research could thus contribute significantly to the development of modern-day career guidance practices and facilitate accessible career education for many South African adolescents.

Against this background, the primary objective of the study was to engage with Grade 11 learners to investigate how online social systems affect their choices and behaviour pertaining to career education and planning. Furthermore, the potential influence and value of Social Network Sites on these youth's career development were also explored. The study was qualitative in nature, and based on an eco-systemic and systems theory framework, as the study concerns itself with the interdependence and relationships

between different organisms and their physical environment. The systems theory also provided the ideal framework for the current study, as it elaborates on how various systems shape and influence individuals' experiences, choices and decisions. Participants for this study were purposively selected and data were collected through written essays, interviews as well as a focus group. The data and interactions were analysed using a thematic analysis.

The research findings indicate that Social Network Sites play a multifaceted role in the lives of adolescents, their views and decisions. For many adolescents, Social Network Sites are merely a way of keeping in contact and staying connected to peers. However, after some probing, it appeared that adolescents knowingly (and some unknowingly) have been influenced by Social Network Sites with regard to their career aspirations and further studies. It emerged that online information and networks ultimately expose adolescents to new ideas and world views, thereby influencing their understanding of themselves and their world of work.

Key words: adolescents; career competencies; career education; career planning; social network sites; systems theory framework

OPSOMMING

Adolessente het toenemend 'n behoefte om te weet hoe die werksomgewing georganiseer is en hulle wil graag hulle beroepsbevoegdhede ontwikkel. Ongelukkig het baie jong Suid-Afrikaners nie slegs beperkte blootstelling aan die werkswêreld nie, maar ook aan beroepsopvoedingsdienste en sosiale kontakte. Hierdie dilemma het 'n unieke geleentheid vir navorsing gebied om te bepaal hoe alternatiewe sisteme, soos sosiale netwerke, hierdie gapings kan oorbrug en adolessente kan bemagtig om verskeie beroepsgeleenthede aanlyn te ontdek, te bevraagteken en te verstaan.

Hierdie navorsing mag lig werp op hoe sosiale netwerk platvorms gebruik kan word tot meer toeganklike beroepsinligting. Hoewel verskeie navorsingstudies op beroepsopvoeding en sosiale media afsonderlik fokus, blyk daar beperkte navorsing te wees oor die verband tussen die twee, asook hoe sosiale netwerk platvorms as navorsingsgereedskap in beroepsopvoeding en –beplanning gebruik kan word. Hierdie navorsing kan dus 'n noemenswaardige bydrae lewer tot die ontwikkeling van moderne beroepsbeplanningspraktyke, en daardeur bereikbare beroepsopvoeding aan baie Suid-Afrikaanse adolessente bied.

Die primêre doel van hierdie studie was om te bepaal in watter mate aanlyn sosiale sisteme graad 11-leerders in hulle keuses en gedrag ten opsige van beroepsopvoeding en loopbaanbeplanning beïnvloed. Daar is verder ondersoek ingestel na die invloed en waarde van sosiale netwerke op hierdie jongmense se beroepsontwikkeling. Die studie was kwalitatief van aard en gebaseer op 'n eko-sistemiese en sisteemteoretiese raamwerk, aangesien die studie betrekking het op interafhanklikheid en verhoudings tussen verskillende organismes en hul fisiese omgewing. Verder verskaf die sisteemteorie die ideale raamwerk vir die huidige studie,

aangesien dit motiveer hoe verskeie stelsels en sisteme individue se ervarings, keuses en besluite vorm en beïnvloed. Deelnemers aan hierdie studie is doelgerig geselekteer en data is ingesamel deur middel van geskrewe opstelle, onderhoude, asook 'n fokusgroep. Die data en bevindinge is ontleed met behulp van 'n tematiese analise.

Die navorsingsresultate toon aan dat sosiale netwerke 'n veeldoelige rol in die lewens van adolessente speel, aangesien dit hul menings en besluite beïnvloed. Vir baie adolessente is sosiale netwerke 'n wyse om in kontak te bly en verhoudings te versterk. Tog blyk dit dat adolessente se loopbaandrome en motivering vir verdere studie wetend (en soms onwetend) deur sosiale netwerke beïnvloed word. Deur die verkenning van aanlyn ervarings is adolessente aan 'n groter en meer diverse netwerk van invloede blootgestel. Die blootstelling aan nuwe idees en wêreldbeskouings het dus die vermoë om hul denke te beïnvloed en om hulleself en hul werkswêreld beter te verstaan.

Sleutelwoorde: adolessente; loopbaanvaardighede; loopbaanonderwys; loopbaanbeplanning; sosiale netwerk; sisteemteorie-raamwerk

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND

For many years, the terms 'career education' and 'career guidance' have often been used interchangeably in South Africa. However, 'education' implies a far wider range of activities than 'guidance' (Akhurst & Nhlanhla, 2006). Law (1996, p. 211) suggests that "we are educating when we try to help people question, explore and understand what is happening". Gibson and Mitchell (1999, p. 312) add to this when they define career education as

> … those planned-for educational experiences that facilitate a person's career development and preparation for the world of work. A primary responsibility of the school with an emphasis on learning about, planning for and, preparing to enter a career.

> Gibson and Mitchell (1999, p. 312)

It is important to consider these definitions, and think carefully how one can facilitate this phase of questioning, exploring and understanding among learners. Gibson and Mitchell's (1999) definition also highlight a few key aspects of career education. Firstly, the need to plan for, secondly, focussing on the learner and the context in which they find themselves, and lastly, emphasising the world of work as a way of living. Thus, career education should consider and incorporate all the life experiences of the learner if it is to be applicable and responsive to contextual issues (Akhurst & Nhlanhla, 2006).

This notion has, however, raised some concerns, as realistic career goals among learners and an accurate knowledge about self and the world of work have been found to be greatly lacking among the adolescent age group (Watson et al., 1997). This lack of knowledge, combined with the limited provision of career education, have called for learners, educators, as well as representatives of labour, commerce and industry to develop more coherent and sensibly planned career education programmes (e.g. Jassat & Liebenberg, 2000; Mtolo, 1996). For this reason, it proves crucial to help facilitate this process and guide learners in developing a coherent and realistic occupational identity during their adolescent stage in order for them to develop into successful adults.

Many developmental experts acknowledge that career development begins during childhood and extends throughout one's life course (Hartung, Porfeli, & Vondracek, 2009). Tasks usually include learning about the world of work through the work experiences of others, establishing a sense of self, and exploring various career alternatives (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). During adolescence, one's career identity develops from a hazy sense of self and becomes sharper, developing towards a more realistic image of oneself at work (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). This career development process, however, proves to be more intricate, as many adolescents in South Africa are struggling to match themselves in their perceived world of work.

Since the 1980s, many Western countries as well as South Africa, have experienced a dramatic increase in the range of possible career choices. Moreover, the advent of technology and globalisation have drastically changed the world of work, resulting in a wider and more diverse range of career possibilities and clientèle that challenge traditional career conceptions (Maree & Beck, 2004; Savickas, 2007). Career paths

have also become relatively more unstable, forcing individuals to explore alternative paths and challenging their traditional expectations of the world of work.

As a result, adolescents are faced with a growing pressure to make career decisions, while at the same time, less guidance seems to be provided (Meijers, Kuijpers, & Gundy, 2013). Given the changes in the world of work, there has been an increasing need for adolescents to gain insight as to how the world of work is organised and to develop their own career competencies, has left a gap in many career education programmes. This need, however, enabled the fast-growing popular social systems, such as social network sites (SNSs), to bridge this gap, as adolescents can use these sites to investigate, explore and discover various career options online.

Internet-enabled interaction has long been lauded as having the potential to open up access to ideas, information, and individuals around the world (Ellison, Wohn, & Greenhow, 2014). Social network platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provide an online space where individuals can create a profile and connect with others to form a personal online network (Cheung, Chui, & Lee, 2010). These social network sites thus give adolescents a place to share their personal stories, learn about events, be exposed to diverse opinions and connect with others. According to Ellison and Steinfield (2007), social network sites have recently also become an essential tool in career planning and development, as it offers platforms to network with professional contacts, make new contacts, recruit employees and to stay in touch with the world of work.

This research study was therefore planned to explore the potential influence that SNSs can have on the process through which Grade 11 learners seek knowledge regarding careers and the pathways that they can follow.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Studies on career education and career development have been numerous and diverse. Yet, many researchers have advocated the need for further research and interest in this field (Akhurst & Nhlanhla, 2006; Beerlall, 1997; Fouad, 1994; Fukuyama, Probert, Neimeyer, Nevill, & Metzler, 1988; Newman, Fuqua, & Minger, 1990; Niles, 1997; Meijers et al., 2013; Whiston, 1996, Watson & Stead, 2006). The continued call for research in this field could be due to various reasons such as the high psychological and financial cost incurred by career indecision (De Bruin & Du Toit, 1997), the continuous rising rate of unemployment in South Africa (Yu, 2013), and the lack of career education and development among learners in South African high schools (Meijers et al., 2013).

An underlying assumption guiding many career practices is that an individual has choices, and has to make decisions. However, in the South African context, these choices have historically been constrained and prescribed by broader socio-political and economic factors (Nicholas, Naidoo, & Pretorius, 2006; Watson & Stead, 2002). Socio-political changes have highlighted the interaction between contextual factors and career development among adolescents, and also brought to light that career decisions have often been made by trial and error (Stead & Watson, 1998). Akhurst and Nhlanhla (2006) also argue that many young South Africans still have limited exposure to the world of work, little or no access to career education services, a lack of knowledge about tertiary institutions, and that many have a limited range of social contacts. These adverse circumstances indicate that more studies are indeed needed to research the variety of influences involved in career planning, school-to-work transition, as well as how career education programmes can be supported and adapted.

In recent years, social network sites (SNSs) have grown in number and popularity (Strehlke, 2010). This rising popularity of SNSs created a curiosity and left me wondering about the possibility of online experiences shaping adolescents' sense of self and their knowledge about the world of work. Could SNSs prepare adolescents for the decisions and transitions that life presents? For many of us, SNSs are merely a way of staying in contact or a way of connecting us to a larger network in which like-minded people can interact. It is, however, this extended network of contacts, which enables individuals to access information regarding career opportunities and to connect with decision-makers (Strehlke, 2010). This broad network of people also exposes us to new ideas and world views, and possibly influence our understanding of the world of work (Ellison & Steinfield, 2007).

Other questions about the usefulness of SNSs in today's competitive job market is answered by Ali (2004), who states that SNSs have proven its worth with regard to marketing employability, networking among possible employers and exploring possible career options before leaving school and stepping into the world of work.

1.3   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of above, the objective of this study was to investigate how online social platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, influence adolescents' choices and behaviour pertaining to career education and development. Moreover, it was envisaged that a deeper understanding could be gained about how adolescents use these sites to explore a range of career options, and how it helps them to network and to gain more access to their developing world of work.

Therefore the **primary** research question that guided this research study was as follows:

How can SNSs influence Grade 11 learners' career education and planning process?.

The following **secondary** research questions served to also guide the researcher in addressing the objective of the study:

- How do questions regarding careers develop by engaging on SNSs?
- How do Grade 11 learners explore these questions and what is the nature of the information that they acquire by engaging on SNSs?
- How do Grade 11 learners experience the value of SNSs with regard to career decisions?

However, before these questions could be explored, thorough research into the extant literature on the abovementioned questions was needed. This literature review provided a sound theoretical background and formed the basis of the research study, starting with the developmental phase of adolescence.

1.4   LITERATURE RESEARCH

1.4.1   Developing into adolescence

Adolescence is considered to be the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, which starts with the onset of puberty and ends in the early twenties (Kelley & Lee, 2014). Steinberg (2005) classifies this phase as the physical growth and development related to puberty, as well as a range of psychosocial changes such as refined identity, determining individual talents, interests and skills such as forming meaningful peer and intimate relationships. In addition to this, Steinberg also mentions the increasing need

for adolescents to take more responsibility and to feel more independent, as they make adult decisions about their future growth (Steinberg, 2005).

This exciting period of transition and development is characterised by exploration, discovery, and rapidly expanding abilities (Mann, Kristjansson, Sigfusdottir, & Smith, 2014). According to the life-span, life-space approach developed by Super (1990), the central process guiding adolescent career development is the readiness to make educational and occupational decisions focused on the various choices that this exploration stage tasks and concerns itself with. Super (1990) is of the opinion, that adolescents' self-concepts determine and shape not only their career choices, but also the degree to which they will experience self-fulfilment in the careers they ultimately choose (Maree, 2002).

Tasks like exploring, committing to and reconsidering career alternatives can help adolescents to formulate and establish a career identity (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). During this exploration stage, many adolescents find themselves learning tasks that guide them towards a more crystallised and specific career (Watson & Stead, 2006). Questions like, "What kind of career will suite me?" become central and is often being answered by the work experiences and knowledge, intentionally or unintentionally, shared by others (Porfeli & Lee, 2012).

Social systems like peers, family, communities and the media often play an influential role in shaping an individual's career identity and their career decisions. Several community psychologists (Lewin in Duffy & Wong, 2000; Kell, 1990; Seedat et al., 2001) share this view and are of the opinion that human behaviour and decisions are often the result of interaction between individuals and the various systems in their environment (Roos, 2006). Thus, career development is enhanced and restrained by

the roles of a variety of systems and the interactions between these systems (Watson & Stead, 2006), which are discussed in more detail in the systems theory in the following section.

1.4.2   A systems theory perspective

The bio-ecological and systems theory framework provides an eco-systemic perspective and is a sound theoretical base for the research discussed in this study. The bio-eco-systemic theory is based on the interdependence and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment (Donald, Lazarus, & Moolla, 2014). This theory posits that individuals are part of and encounter different systems and environments throughout a lifespan that may influence their behaviour and choices in varying degrees. Donald (2014, p. 41) adds to this when he says that "to understand the whole system, one must examine the relationship between its different parts".

The most influential psychologist with his perspective firmly embedded in the bio-ecological and systems theory framework, was Bronfenbrenner. He developed a complex but powerful ecological model involving different levels of systems in the social context (Donald et al., 2014). According to Amundson (2005), various career theories are based on systems thinking, among these is the systems theory framework (STF).

In contrast to the positivist world view which suggests that the world functions in a robotic manner, all parts working independently and in a linear cause-and-effect way, the systems theory framework values the whole (Patton, McMahon, & Watson, 2006). Arthur and McMahon (2005) assert that the systems theory recognises both the parts

in a whole system, whilst seeing the whole system as greater than the sum of its parts. Patton et al. (2006) links this view to career choices and decisions when they explain that:

> Human life consists of ongoing recursive processes involving disorganisation, adaptions and re-organisation. Knowledge about self and the environment is an emergent process as the individual interacts with the world. There is thus a complex interplay of influences through which individuals construct their careers.
>
> Patton et al. (2006, p.66)

This definition is very similar to that of Akhurst and Nhlanhla (2006, p. 140) who emphasise that "career education should take into account and integrate all the life experiences and all the systems of which a learner is part, if it is to be relevant and responsive". As an individual is not seen as living in isolation, but rather as part of a much larger contextual set of systems (Patton et al., 2006), it is essential to consider all the systems and contexts that influence an individual's development and decisions regarding careers. Thus, according to the STF, the individual is seen as both a system in his or her own right, as well as a sub-system of a broader contextual system, represented by the social system and the societal system (Patton et al., 2006). It follows then that family, educational institutions, peers and the media can all be regarded as social systems that provide a broader map for understanding the individual, their context and various systemic influences that continually interact and have an effect on one another.

In light of the above, the use of the STF provides an adequate theoretical foundation to acknowledge the influential role that social systems like SNSs potentially play in the development of adolescents' view of themselves and their careers. It could also be

argued that with the growing popularity of the internet and social network sites, more emphasis should to be placed on these social systems during career education programmes. For this reason, it proved useful to investigate the value that SNSs could have in career education and planning processes.

1.4.3   Growing influence of social network sites

The internet officially gained public face in the early 1990s and since then it has completely changed the way information is being disseminated throughout the world (Kramer & Winter, 2008). It has created a new world where more than a billion individuals are connected and can collaborate, create, communicate and contribute to knowledge and ideas (Cheung et al., 2010).

By gaining access to the internet and online social network sites, individuals can post self-relevant information, link and interact with others as well as create online identities. SNSs can be orientated towards work-related contexts, initiating romantic relationships or connecting those with shared interests.

In the United States, 80 per cent of internet-using adolescents aged between 12-17 report that they use SNSs socially (Ellison & Steinfield, 2007). Research in this field is also growing in popularity and has suggested that SNSs might facilitate social capital development and could contribute to adolescents' life aspirations (Ellison et al., 2014). Ellison et al. (2014, p. 6) believes this could be because adolescents "are exposed to new people, information, and ideas that expand their understanding of possible life paths".

Having access to individuals' beyond one's close circle provides access to more diverse career-related information and could result in benefits such as broader

employment connections (Ellison & Steinfield, 2007). Many people learn about job openings through people they already know personally, thereby gaining an added advantage in the application process. SNSs also have a highly controlled environment for self-presentation behaviour and as such, provide an ideal setting for impression management (Kramer & Winter, 2008). Its accessibility and manageability have potentially made SNSs a worthwhile tool for accessing information, exploring new career possibilities and views, networking with professionals as well as developing one's career.

1.5   RESEARCH PARADIGM

While the systems theory framework (STF) served as the theoretical foundation of the study, informing the research questions and eventually making sense of the findings, the research paradigm helps the researcher to understand the nature of the knowledge, how it was accessed and how the research questions could be answered (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 10) define qualitative research as a "type of study about a person's life, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions and feelings as well as about organisation functioning, social movements and cultural phenomena". Similar to Terre Blanche and Durrheim's view, I also believe that people make meaning from their own experiences in unique ways (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Therefore, I deemed the interpretive paradigm to be best-suited for this study.

Ultimately, my goal as an interpretive researcher was to make sense of the feelings, experiences, social situations, and of certain phenomena as they emerge in real and natural settings (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). An important aim of qualitative research

is that it attempts to seek in-depth descriptions and understandings rather than explaining or predicting human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2002).

1.6   RESEARCH PROCESS

The process of conducting research links to the researcher's theoretical framework and their research paradigm (Gerber, 2014). Thus, the researcher's theoretical framework and paradigm form the cornerstone of the research and determines what is to be researched, how it will be researched, as well as the way that data will be analysed and interpreted (Megaw, 2011). The research process that was adopted in the current study is briefly explained in the following section.

1.6.1   Methodology

To answer the research questions explained earlier, a qualitative study from an interpretive paradigm was used, as it concerns human action from the perspective of people being the social actors themselves (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). Being a social actor refers to conscious-thinking individuals, who have the ability to shape their worlds by reflecting on their situation and the choices available to them (Aparanji, 2011). Because of my keen interest in people and this reflecting process, I was instinctively drawn towards qualitative research as it offers the opportunities to further explore these thinking processes.

1.6.2   Research design

Merriam & Tisdell, (2016, p. 24) state that "over the years there has been a struggle with how to label qualitative study using basic words such as generic, basic, and interpretive". In addition Merriam and Tisdell express that "all qualitative research is

interpretive, and [that] "generic" doesn't convey a clear meaning [they have come to] prefer labeling this type of study *a basic qualitative study*" (my emphasis).

Supporting Merriam and Tisdell`s (2016) notion, a basic qualitative research design was used, with the following methods of data collection: explorative essay writing, individual, semi-structured interviews and a focus group. The focus of the study was the experiences and views of adolescents using SNSs and its possible influence on their career education and planning. As the researcher, I focussed on gathering the information objectively without any bias and for this reason also made use of purposeful and convenience sampling.

1.6.3   Population and sample

Ten Grade 11 learners at a school that was conveniently situated and accessible, with easy and daily access to the Internet and social network sites formed part of this study. Sampling was thus seen as convenience sampling.

The sampling process, however, also had a purposeful component to it. The criteria for selecting the ten participants included that all participants had to be Grade 11 learners, from a specific high school in the Western Cape. The reason why this group of adolescents was deemed appropriate participants for the research study, was that the majority of the learners of this high school aim to study further after school, and have the means and resources for acceptance into tertiary education. Learners from this school also have daily access to SNSs, whether on their cell phones, tablets or computers.

The initial process started with a career presentation for all the Gr 11 learners during a Life Orientation lesson in the school hall. Although this was not used as data

collection, this gave the learners an introduction to the STF, as well as to my research study. Information packs were given to volunteers interested in the research study after the presentation. The first ten learners who returned their signed consent forms, formed the unit of analysis for this study. The sampling process can thus be described as voluntary, convenient and purposeful.

1.6.4   Measuring instruments

Data were collected by means of explorative essays, individual interviews and focus groups (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). These methods were ideal as I was interested in how these learners viewed and experienced social network sites with regard to their career development.

The participants started the first phase of the research by writing an explorative essay. Once these essays' were analysed and coded, all the participants were called for individual, semi-structured interviews. Lastly, a smaller group of four participants volunteered to form part of a focus group. The focus group was considered as a consolidation phase that provided more clarity on the participants' views and opinions. It also gave me, as the researcher, the opportunity to record richer descriptions on themes that emerged during the previous data gathering phases as well as to confirm re-emerging themes.

By using these measuring instruments and the data, I attempted to place myself in the shoes of the participants, trying to understand the actions, decisions and behaviour from their world, as was suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2001).

1.6.5   Procedure

The learners took part in the data-gathering procedures under direct supervision of myself, the researcher. Life Orientation lessons were used during the last week of the second school term and the first few weeks of the third term.

During the first phase, the participants were asked to write an explorative essay about the possible influences of social network sites on career education among Grade 11 learners. The following secondary research questions guided the learners in addressing the primary research objective:

- How do questions regarding careers develop by engaging on SNSs?
- How do Grade 11 learners explore these questions and what is the nature of the information that they acquire by engaging on SNSs?
- How do Grade 11 learners experience the value of SNSs with regard to career decisions?

By using explorative essays, I could gather data on the influential role SNSs play in adolescents' career education and planning and also investigate to what extent their online presence was facilitating their career decisions. The data gathered from phase 1, guided the themes and questions of the individual, semi-structured interviews that followed.

The last phase of the research procedure consisted of a smaller focus group. Four participants were asked to join this group as it helped me to further explore their views on the written essays and interviews as well as with clarification, verification and triangulation of the study. This phase was ideal as it elicited more from the participants'

views, providing me with an opportunity to listen, understand and verify their views and possible themes that emerged from the research questions.

1.6.6   Data analysis

The method of data analysis that was used to answer the research questions, is known as thematic analysis and is seen by researchers such as Braun and Clarke (2006) as a foundational method for qualitative analysis. This data analysis method also resonated with my view of how knowledge is constructed and thus seemed to match this study.

A thematic analysis can be described as a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once the data were coded, emerging themes and questions were formed to create a guide for the individual, semi-structured interviews. Audio recordings of these interviews were transcribed and coded. During the last phase, four volunteers participated in a focus group discussion. This focus group discussion was transcribed and the data were analysed by using the constant comparative method, which enabled the researcher to identify re-emerging themes. As re-occuring themes appeared, I realised that saturation had been reached. These emerging themes were then compared to the findings from the literature review and attempted to address the research question. In doing so, it was, however, important not to limit the data to findings from the literature review, but to also explore possible additional and unpredicted information that could emerge from the findings, and that could contribute significantly to the outcomes of the study.

Given this background, it was important for the trustworthiness of the study, to realise the active role that I, as the researcher, played when contemplating the data that were

captured. I had to reflect on my own impact on the study, as I decided which themes were chosen for analysis, as well as how these themes were interpreted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to prevent personal bias to influence the study and to compromise the trustworthiness of the findings, I had to stay aware of my own position in the data gathering and data analysis, that I was immersing myself in the process, through constantly reviewing and re-visiting themes.

1.6.7   Data verification

As a researcher, it is essential to understand the vital role of data verification and quality assurance in a research study. Trustworthiness of a research project is ensured by means of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Beck & Polit, 2004).

Trochim (2006) defines the term 'credibility' as the degree to which the results of a study reflect the realities of its participants (Trochim, 2006), basically asking how true the findings of the study may be to the participants involved. Credibility was ensured throughout the study by using various forms of data collection as well as peer debriefing. I also made an effort to verify my findings with the participants' involved and kept detailed records of my field notes.

Secondly, transferability was attended to by attempting to ascertain if the findings could be generalised in other contexts. By using a school with groups of different cultures and backgrounds, it could have been more plausible to explore to which extent the findings could be applied in other contexts or with other respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). In providing thick descriptions and sufficient detail, I hoped to enable the reader to make their own judgment of transferability during the research.

Thirdly, by leaving an audit trail such as raw data, reduced data, process notes and an interview schedule (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Merriam, 2009; Trochim, 2006) I, as the researcher, helped attain confirmability. This was a crucial part of the research, as I had to be aware of the differences between myself and the participants, and had to consider any bias that might occur, that could influence the data and results.

1.6.8   Declaration of self

Considerable interest exists in who the researcher is and what values, assumptions, beliefs, or biases he or she brings to a study (Tredoux, Pretorius, & Steel, 2004). This notion is reasonable and, as mentioned previously, the researcher is also a key instrument for data collection in qualitative research. As a qualitative researcher, one decides on what questions to ask, in what order to ask the questions, what to observe, what to write down as well as what sense to make of the data gathered. Therefore, it is recommended that the researcher presents a declaration of self. Merriam (2009, p. 219) refers to this declaration as an additional measure to ensure credibility, clarifying it by the following statement:

> Investigators need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken. Even in journal articles authors are being called upon to articulate and clarify their assumptions, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation to the study at hand. Such a clarification allows the reader to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data.

Merriam (2009, p. 219)

As explained in Sections 1.4 and 1.5, my theoretical framework and world view has guided my inquiry and rationalised my research process. It is, however, still necessary

to declare who I am as a researcher, considering that my own experiences, history, and background have shaped me in different ways.

I am a female in my early thirties with seven years' teaching experience; five of which have been at a high school as a Life Orientation teacher. I grew up in a middle-class household where computer technology was very much part of my life. I also spent a few years in South Korea, where I was introduced to various social network sites for the first time. These sites helped me to stay in touch with friends and family and also made it easier to share my experiences and to network with new people whom I was meeting during my travels. Thus, I view myself as being part of a generation where social media form part of our daily experiences.

As a former teacher in Life Orientation and currently an intern educational psychology, I am passionate about career education and understanding the different ways in which adolescents construct views of themselves and their world of work. I have often wondered to what extent SNSs could influence these views of adolescents. It would be interesting to gain insight about their perspectives in this regard and also to further explore their awareness of SNSs being a tool that could guide them in terms of possible future careers.

1.6.9   Ethical considerations

Written permission was obtained from the relevant authorities, namely the Western Cape Department of Education (WCED), the principal of the high school from which the participants were selected, and the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee. Informed consent were also obtained from the parents and from all learners who participated in the study. As the participants were from an English

medium school, the consent and assent forms were both written and explained in English. As the researcher, I made sure that the language used was on a level that the participant could understand and that any ambiguity or misunderstanding was clarified (Durrheim, 2004).

The principal and educators were under no obligation to assist with the research in any way and special care was taken to ensure that no education programme was interrupted. The Life Orientation teachers and management of the school indicated which lessons suited them for the Gr 11 career presentation, as well as a suitable time for interviews and the smaller focus group. The explorative essays were written at home at a time that was convenient to the participants. Some participants left the essays with their Life Orientation teachers to be collected by myself while others e-mailed it.

This study posed no foreseen risks and no apparent benefits. However, career discussions with the participants, enabled learners to gain a deeper understanding of their own career development and career choices. Participants were also provided with contact details of career counsellors and more resources if they wished to obtain more understanding and support. Myself, as an intern educational psychologist, and the school counsellor, were available to assist learners if they required any post-counselling or more information with regard to questions on career development processes.

1.7   DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

1.7.1   Adolescence

Adolescence is known to start with the onset of puberty and to usually end in one's early twenties. It is considered by Kelly and Lee (2014) to be the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood. This growth includes physical growth related to puberty as well as a range of psychosocial changes (Steinberg, 2005). Individuals start focussing more on refining their identity, discovering their individual talents, interests, and skills. Peer relationships and romantic relationships become more meaningful during this development stage. During this stage, an adolescent's need for responsibility, independence and to make mature decisions about the future also becomes more prevalent. Adolescence in this study will thus be seen in light of the above mentioned phase and will be a valuable asset to my study as this process of refining identity is essential in career development.

1.7.2   Career

From an academic perspective, the term '*career*' remains an abstract concept and like the changing nature of the world of work, has undergone several changes in its meaning (Stead & Watson, 2006). Super, Crites, Hummel, Mosher, Overstreet and Warnarth (1957, p. 131) considered a career to be the "the sequence of occupations, jobs, and positions ... throughout a person's working life". More recently, Hall (1996, p. 1) posits that "careers are a series of lifelong work-related experiences and personal learning". For the purpose of this study, the researcher incorporated both above descriptions and used the term *'career'* as the meaning of work-related experiences in relation to the individual's life roles across his or her lifespan.

1.7.3 Career education

Career education can be described as educating individuals by means of exploring, questioning and understanding what is happening around them in terms of their careers and the world of work. Gibson and Mitchell (1999, p. 312) define career education as "those planned-for educational experiences that facilitate a person's career development and preparations for the world of work". It is thus important to note that career education should be planned for by schools and educators, and that it should focus on the person and consider their context.

1.7.4 Career planning

Career planning is an ongoing process where individuals are expected to explore their own interests and abilities and select an occupation (Nicholas et al., 2006). Action can be taken in this planning process by researching various career opportunities, developing one's professional self, and possibly then deciding on changing one's career. This process is likely to happen several times in a lifetime, as an individual gains more experience and redefines him- or herself due to a combination of their personal and/or career goals.

1.7.5 Social network sites

Social network sites (SNSs) can be defined as web-based services that allow individuals to create a public or semi-public profile in a bounded system. This online system assists people to create a list of other users with whom they can share a connection, as well as providing a platform where they can communicate, share ideas and views (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn are but a few examples of human communication and interaction. By means of the Internet,

any user is able to convey information to a vast audience through personal blogging, videos and photos (Mehdizadeh, 2009). Social network sites thus provide an online platform where individuals can create a profile and connect other profiles in order to create a personal network (Cheung et al., 2010).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The research process consists of many different features (Gerber, 2014). One of the first features that was explored in this study, was a literature review, as it provided the researcher with a comprehensive context (Kaniki, 2006; Mertens, 2005) and was an essential tool to guide the study.

The literature review, as presented in this Chapter, will firstly focus on adolescents, which will provide an adequate background and insight into the sample group from which expertise and views were drawn to gather information for the research. By firstly examining the developmental stage of adolescents and investigating their career identity formation, one could gain a better understanding of possible influences that may shape their choices regarding careers. This will then lead us to a brief overview of the development of career counselling and career education, touching on various career theories and global influences that have shaped the way we view careers. In order to provide a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the context surrounding adolescents and career development, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological framework will be introduced (Hardman, 2012). Emanating from this, an explanation of the systems theory framework (STF) will follow as a potential overarching framework to deal with various issues of human behavior (Patton & McMahon, 2006), including the facilitation of the meaning-making processes regarding careers during adolescence (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). The STF will thus clarify the parameters in which understanding and hypothesising about career behavior and choices occurred in this research study

(Watson & Stead, 2006). The literature review will then be narrowed down by focusing on specific systems, including the existing Life Orientation curriculum in South Africa and the social network sites. By exploring these two social systems in some depth, a better understanding of the research question at hand was sought, while at the same time providing an opportunity to reflect on previous studies.

In conclusion, these theories upon which the concepts of adolescence, social systems and career development were based, will provide greater insights into the complex interplay of influences through which careers are constructed.

2.2   DEVELOPING INTO ADOLESCENTS

From a developmental perspective, adolescence can be both an exciting and a challenging time in one's life. Schlegel and Barry (1991), formally define adolescence as a transition period from childhood to adulthood, which starts with the onset of puberty and ends with the adoption of adult roles such as employment and marriage. By sharing the views of an adolescent from Fish Hoek, Wild and Swartz (2012, p.203) add more complexity to this phase of transition:

> When I was younger … back then, it was just like: me. You know? My feelings and my mind and my stuff … But now, you're thinking of everyone around you. It's just like, snowballed into this huge big picture of, like, everybody that you know: my family, my school, my friends, boyfriends, where am I going to work one day, what money will I get … You know, all these things …

> (Leanne, girl, aged 17, Fish Hoek)

As one can see from this extract, adolescence involves more than physical growth and bodies maturing, it also includes various complex psychosocial changes (Steinberg,

2005). Cognitively adolescents start to think about the world in new ways, their social views on relationships with families and peers change, and it starts to play a central role in shaping their experiences (Wild & Swartz, 2012). With physical maturation, adolescents seek independence from family constraints and start to associate strongly with peers. Adolescents now have to start balancing a sense of 'Who am I?' with a sense of 'How do I connect to others around me?' (Donald et al., 2002).

Piaget's (1977) stages of development explains how adolescents construct their own cognitive world, from sensing and observing during infancy to culminating the ability to apply what they know, think logically and to interpret abstract concepts (Wild & Swartz, 2012). During this formal operational stage of development, adolescents make sense of their experiences and attempt to organise their worlds. According to Cicchetti and Rogosch (2002), developmental tasks of the adolescent period, especially in Western societies like South Africa, include: successful transition to high school, learning academic skills needed for higher education and work, achieving psychological autonomy, forming closer relationships and friendships, and developing a sense of identity (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002). They have a need to search for their own role and place in the world and often achieve this by connecting to a larger picture of social norms and values (Donald et al., 2002).

Erikson's introduction of the psychosocial stages of development complements this notion, as he proposes that the main aim of development is the formation of identity (Hardman, 2012). Both Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1967) explain that the healthy development of identity requires successful exploration, questioning and commitment by the individual (Wiley & Berman, 2013). During adolescence, peer groups are extremely important as a child begins to develop a sense of identity in relation to his or

her peer group. This development stage is referred to by Erikson (1963) as identity versus role confusion. The central challenge during this stage for the adolescent is to come to terms with who he or she is, and where he or she is heading to. As adolescents start to redefine their identity, they also start to discover their individual talents, interest and skills and become more responsible and independent in making adult decisions regarding risks, health and the future (Steinberg, 2005).

In this search for identity also lies adolescents' views of themselves pertaining to their world of work. Asking questions such as "Who will I become at work?" is the starting point which shapes many individuals' career identities (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). Career identity can be better understood as a person's commitment towards specific occupational activities or career fields of interests (Meijers et al., 2013). Tasks like exploring, commitment to and reconsidering career alternatives can help adolescents to formulate and establish a career identity (Porfeli & Lee, 2012).

During adolescence, education around career competencies also become essential. Career competencies include tasks like reflecting on one's motivation and aptitudes in terms of careers, shaping one's own career path by exploring various options in terms of further studies and work, steering one's own learning process, and developing and maintaining networks (Meijers et al., 2013). For this to happen, a learning environment that stimulates real-life experiences with work and a dialogue about these experiences are essential (Meijers et al., 2013). Knowing how the world of work is organised eases the process of career decision-making and also enhances the adjustment process for adolescents in their various occupational fields (Stead & Watson, 2006).

The concerns that were mentioned by the 17-year old Fish Hoek learner Leanne in the beginning of this Chapter, makes one reflect on how these questions about self and

the world of work can be answered. There are many theories that attempt to explain career behaviour and choice, each one of these theories suggest a perspective and philosophical assumption on which it chooses to focus (Stead & Watson, 2006). In the next section, a brief overview of these career theories and philosophical assumptions will be discussed and will explore how new complexities of the 21st century have influenced career guidance practices.

2.3   BRIEF OVERVIEW OF OF CAREER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The concept of career, career planning and career education are not simple constructs. In addition there have also been numerous historical and contextual influences over the past two centuries that have challenged and changed perspectives on careers and career behaviour (Watson, 2007). Fundamental global changes in the workplace and succeeding economic waves, have called for a contemporary response from career theorists and practitioners, clients as well as researchers (Watson & Stead, 2006).

In recent years, postmodernism has emerged as a significant intellectual movement in various disciplines, including the field of career education and career development (Hoffman, 2005). It has resulted in a more holistic and narrative approach, enabling career counsellors and clients to deal with new and diverse challenges. However, in order to understand these new approaches, one has to reflect on previous modernistic views and these views were challenged by global, social and economic influences. Modernism exploded from 1650 to the 1950s –1950 and was very much grounded in reason, logic and science (Nicholas et al., 2006). This positivistic, modernism concept of work began as the first economic wave of agriculture progressed into the industrial era. European immigrants imported the industrial movement to South Africa and as

such, altered the nature of work, as factories started replacing farms as a primary source of income (Nicholas et al., 2006).

Parson's concepts of the trait-factor theory (1908), evolved out of this industrial approach and he identified three key elements of career selection, namely self-knowledge, the world- of-work knowledge and reasoning on the relationship between the two groups (Watson & Stead, 2006). However, critique arose with this matching approach as many wondered whether the applicability of predetermined categories for all individuals were not merely a way to place people in areas of market needs (Nicholas et al., 2006). During the third economic wave of service and skills of third-party providers, a major shift in the second half of the 20th century occurred, as this predominantly static trait-factor approach changed towards a more dynamic life-long developmental approach (Watson, 2007).

Super's (1969; 1972) developmental view of career behaviour was the dominant discourse in career psychology during the service and skills of third-party providers, and gained popularity as he refined his views on career development from a postmodernism perspective, and considering career development as a process of choice itself (Hoffman, 2005). Super (1969; 1972) referred to the developmental stages which each match a specific career mastery and argued that as people go through these life stages, so does their career development. Starting at childhood (from ages 4–13 years), when the first stage of *growth* begins, when children develop critical tasks such as becoming concerned about the future, wanting more control over their own lives, working harder at school and acquiring competent work attitudes and habits (Watson & Stead, 2006). The *exploration* stage (from ages 14–24 years) follow, as adolescence start to explore various career options, crystallise and implement career

choices. During the middle adulthood (24–44 years) the third life stage of *establishment* takes shape when individuals start to stabilise and advance in their career position of choice. During the *maintenance* (45–65 years) and *disengagement* phase (from 65 years onwards), individuals hold on to their jobs by keeping up with demands and innovate their skills, until they are ready to slow down their work activities and start planning for retirement (Watson & Stead, 2006). Super's saying that "until you know who you are, you won't know what you will become" also emphasised the critical concept of self in career development (Watson & Stead, 2006). Adding to this notion of self, he also deemed career choice as a dynamic process whereby the individuals' past, present and future needs to be taken into account (Watson & Stead, 2006).

These views significantly changed psychologists' approach to career development and reflected on a growing realisation that no single theory is adequate to account for all types of people and their changing career aspirations (Hoffman, 2005). The fourth economic global wave, driven by communication and computer technology, fuelled this notion, as it influenced society's values and belief systems about themselves, others and the world of work (Stead & Watson, 2006). This changing age of interactive technology and electronic media, enabled people to see multiple realities, relationships, personal constructs and people as active agents in interpreting and shaping their own lives. In addition, it also transformed the nature of the relationship between the employer and the employee, as it changed from loyalty to economically driven short-term contracts (Patton, 2005). Digitalisation and globalisation added to this, as it enabled careers without boundaries, enabling people to freelance, work part-time, be self-employed, do contract or consulting work on their own terms. This, however, leaves the worker with a bigger responsibility to focus on their career-building

process and work ethics, as they need to develop themselves and become more self-realised (Patton, 2005).

These changes in the economy and the world of work, have challenged various career construction models, requiring them to include more diverse methods to incorporate the diverse needs of individual clients (Hoffman, 2005). In order to stay abreast with the world of work, career construction models should include both contextualised explanations of career and constructivist approaches as well as narrative and psychodynamic perspectives (Savickas, 2002; 2005). This new, postmodern approach is thus more than the individual's ability and belief that is evaluated, but includes both internal and external factors, giving attention to the complexity of individuals and the systems in which they interact (Patton, 2005). Cunningham, Duffy and Perry (1992) argue that meaning and learning are generated from within the individuals' connections to their experiences of the world. This movement towards a more interpretative, relational, contextual and tentative understanding was urgently needed (Watson, 2007), as it offers a range of perspectives and not only one theory. Thus, postmodernism can be seen as an umbrella term that embraces career theory along with a variety of practices that include contextual, relationship factors, the narrative metaphor, life-story counselling and constructivist approaches (Watson, 2007).

The bio-ecological theory, discussed in the next section, explains this interdependence of internal and external influences, as well as the various systems with which individuals interact. A systemic perspective and its influences on career development and career education will also be discussed.

2.4   A SYSTEMS THEORY PERSPECTIVE

A systems theory framework that includes ecological thinking, refers to a perspective that is based on, among other phenomena, the interdependence of organisms and their physical environment (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2002). This perspective provides a holistic outlook that will support the understanding of adolescents' choices and actions, as well as the theoretical perspective of career development and the possible career education needs of adolescents.

2.4.1   The bio-ecological model

The most influential psychologist with his perspective based on the ecological and systems theory was Bronfenbrenner. By acknowledging that a person's development is the product of a network of interactions (Swart & Pettipher, 2011), Bronfenbrenner developed a complex but powerful ecological model involving different levels of systems in their social context (Donald et al., 2002).

Bronfenbrenners' bio-ecological perspective suggests that there are various levels of integrating systems resulting in change, development and growth. These various levels of contexts have a direct and indirect influence on an individual's life and development (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). In Bronfenbrenner's model there are four interacting dimensions that are central to understanding this development process, namely proximal processes, person characteristics, context, and time. *Proximal processes* denotes the development that occurs when there is a person-and-environment interaction. It is essentially considered as a person's interaction in various systems with which they have direct contact (Donald et al., 2002). Secondly, 'person characteristics' refer to those characteristics of an individual that shape the course of their future development through their ability to direct and influence the proximal processes

mentioned above (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). An individual's disposition, ecological resources and person characteristics are the three most influential characteristics that shape the temperament of an individual (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). Thirdly, *context* can be seen as the environment of the individuals and the various systems they interact with. Bronfenbrenner suggests that it is helpful to conceive the social context or environment as a set of nested structures that are interrelated (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). These nested structures include the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem that all interact with the dimension of time, known as the chronosystem.

The first system, namely the microsystem, includes those systems in which the individual is closely involved with, such as family and friends. Secondly, the mesosystem refers to a set of microsystems that continuously interact with one another and in doing so, influence each other. The exosystem includes additional systems that the individual is not directly involved with, but may influence the people with whom they have proximal relationships. Fourthly, the macrosystem involves dominant social and economic structures, as well as values, beliefs and practices that influence all other social systems. Lastly, the chronosystem encapsulates the dimension of time and how this system relates specifically to the interactions among the other systems and their influences on the individuals and their development over time (Swart & Pettipher, 2011).

In this theoretical viewpoint of Bronfenbrenner, human life consists of ongoing recursive processes involving disorganisation, adaption and reorganisation (Donald et al., 2002). This notion proposes the potential for the systems theory to be seen as an overarching framework dealing with many issues in human behaviour. It has also led

many career theorists to utilise and redefine the systems theory framework (STF) in the field of career counselling and career guidance practice (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

2.4.2   Overview of the systems theory framework

The most significant theoretical framework for career counselling that has emanated from the bio-ecological and systems approach is the systems theory framework (STF) (Amundson, 2005). The STF is a sound theoretical foundation that explicate the interplay between individual and systemic levels, and illustrates this interplays possible influences on career development (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). The STF represents the complex interplay of influences from which individuals construct their careers (Patton et al., 2006). Significantly, it also accommodates the importance of both the content and process influences on an individual's career development (McMahon & Watson, 2008).

Similar to the bio-ecological model, the STF also has content and process influences that are presented as many complex and interconnected systems in and between which career development occurs (Patton et al., 2006). The content influences are structured in the STF as a series of three interconnecting systems where career development occurs. These content influences are the individual system, the social system, and the environmental-societal system (McMahon & Watson, 2008). The individual system is central to the STF and includes a wide range of intrapersonal variables such as personality, age, gender, and sexual orientation and their influence on career development. As individuals do not live in isolation, the individual system is connected with other influences, namely the individual's social system and the broader environmental-societal system (Patton & McMahon, 2006). The social system consists

of contextual variables which consist of social influences such as family, peers and the media. The individual and social systems also form part of the environmental-societal influences such as geographical location and socio-economic status (Patton et al., 2006).

The STF has the capacity to represent an even more dynamic process as it also includes the nature of process influences, recursiveness, change over time and chance (Patton et al., 2006). Fundamental to understanding the STF is the notion that each system is an open system. An open system is subject to influence from outside and may also influence that which is beyond its boundaries (Patton & McMahon, 2006). This interaction is known as recursiveness. In a diagrammatic form, recursiveness is depicted as broken lines in Figure 2.1, which represent the permeability of the boundaries of each system. It is also well acknowledged that influences on an individual may change over time.

The final process influence, namely chance, is depicted as lightning flashes in Figure 2.1, and can be explained as unexpected events that may influence career development in ways that are not planned or predicted (Arthur & McMahon, 2005).
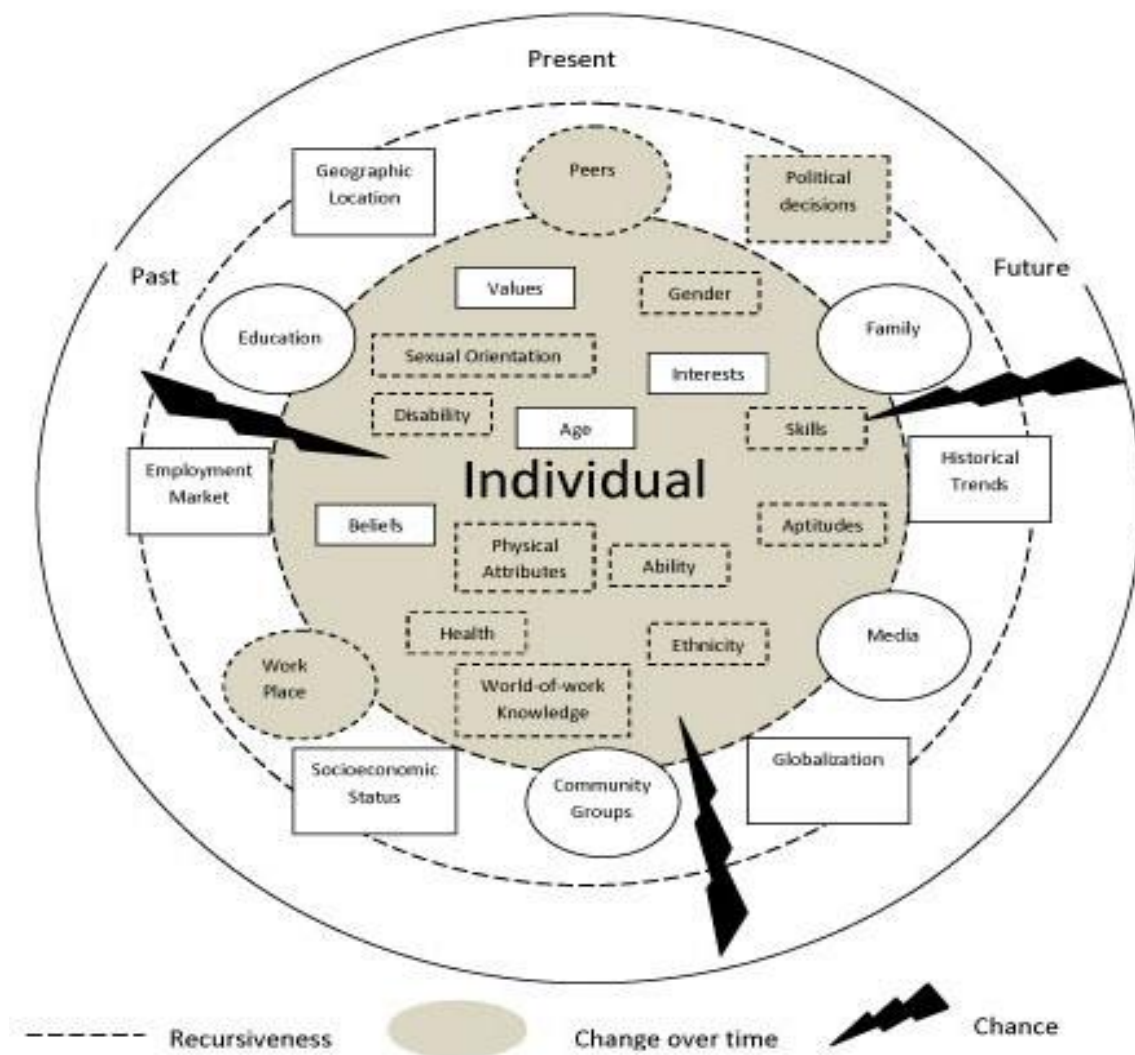
Figure 2.1: The systems theory framework of career development as conceptualised by Patton & McMahon, 1999 (in Patton et al., 2006 p.69)

All the systems of influence are located within the context of time - past, present and future - all of which are inextricably linked: the past influences the present, and combined, the past and present influence the future (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Time is represented in the systems theory framework of career influences (see Figure 2.1), as a circular depiction that emphasises the nonlinear nature of an individual's career

development and the integral role of the past, present and future influence (Patton et al., 2006).

Owing to the changing world of work, the STF has become more popular, especially in culturally diverse countries like South Africa. This could be due to the fact that the STF's theoretical foundation accounts for many diverse systems of influence on people's career development, including the individual as well as their social, and environmental contexts (Arthur & McMahon, 2005). Patton and McMahon (1999) mention several more advantages of the STF approach to career development. They note that the STF recognises the contributions of all career theories and in doing so, it can be adapted towards an individual's unique needs (Patton et al., 2006). The STF also makes it possible for an individual to explore the interconnectedness of various systems that influence their behaviour and decisions with regard to careers, so that the individual can become the expert in his or her own life. This process thus draws on knowledge and expertise to guide the person towards their own unique career stories (Patton et al., 2006).

Drawing from the STF, the next section will narrow down the individuals' 'interconnectedness' in two specific social systems, focussing firstly on career education in schools, and the implementation of the subject Life Orientation in particular, followed by adolescents' career-related interactions on SNSs.

2.5   OVERVIEW OF LIFE ORIENTATION IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The rapidly changing world of work of the 21st century undoubtedly pose great challenges for providers of career education. Akhurst and Mkhize (2006, p. 139) believe that "in the past two decades accelerating technology changes have/has had

a profound impact on careers. These challenges, coupled with the influences of globalisation and economic events, have resulted in people needing to adapt to changes in the work of work in unprecedented ways". Moreover, South Africa's new ruling, following apartheid, have also had a considerable impact on career education practices in schools, resulting in the adjustment and revision of policies and the teaching curricula numerous times.

The Department of Education (DoE), under the leadership of the late Minister Kader Asmal, first implemented the subject of Life Orientation (LO) through Outcomes-based Education in 1997, with the hope of overcoming curricula divisions of the past (Ferguson, 2015). A review was, however, prompted in 2000, after Mrs Angie Motshekga, current Minister of the Department of Basic Education, established that Outcomes-based Education (OBE) did not achieve the expected results. Her finding has led to the first curriculum revision: the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9, and the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (2002) (DoBE, 2002). Ongoing implementation challenges resulted in another review in 2009, when the DoBE amended the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2002) to create the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DoBE, 2002). It appears that there have been considerable good intentions with the implementation of CAPS, and that the objectives of the revised curriculum are to ensure that all learners' acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives. As such, CAPS encourages knowledge in local contexts, while being sensitive to global requirements (DoBE, 2002).

By making Life Orientation one of the four fundamental subjects required for a National Senior Certificate, the DoBE envisages that a holistic approach to the development of

all learners will be achieved. Furthermore, they hope that Life Orientation will encourage the development of a balanced and confident individual who will be a contributing and productive citizen in a democratic South Africa (DoBE, 2002).

The teaching of Life Orientation, as encapsulated in CAPS, has the following purpose for Grades 10 to 12:

> Life Orientation equips learners to engage on personal, psychological, neuro-cognitive, motor, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural, socio-economic and constitutional levels, to respond positively to the demands of the world, to assume responsibilities, and to make the most of life's opportunities. It enables learners to know how to exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities, to respect the rights of others, and to value diversity, health and well-being. Life Orientation promotes knowledge, values, attitudes and skills that prepare learners to respond effectively to the challenges that confront them as well as the challenges they will have to deal with as adults, and to play a meaningful role in society and the economy.

DoBE (2002)

In Grades 10 to 12, the focus of LO is on six main areas, namely the development of the self in society; social and environmental responsibility; democracy and human rights; study skills; physical education; as well as careers and career choices (DoBE, 2011). Considering how careers and career choices are being implemented in LO at school, a brief overview of the weighting of LO topics can be seen in Figure 2.2. Figure 2.2 also indicates that in Grade 11, eight hours of teaching LO during a year is spent on careers and career choices. The time weighting of the teaching of the LO curriculum, together with the overview of the career teaching plan for Grade 11's as

illustrated in Figure 2.3, raises the question as to why the promising theory of LO still remains doubtful in its effectiveness in practice (Prinsloo, 2007; Christiaans, 2006).

	Topic	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
		Hours	Hours	Hours
1.	Development of the self in society	8	11	9
2.	Social and environmental responsibility	4	3	3
3.	Democracy and human rights	7	7	4
4.	Careers and career choices	11	8	8
5.	Study skills	3	4	4
6.	Physical Education	33	33	28
	Contact time	**66**	**66**	**56**
	Examinations	14	14	24
	Total hours	**80**	**80**	**80**
	Total weeks	**40**	**40**	**40**

Figure 2.2: Weighting of Life Orientation topics in Grade 10-12 (DoBE, 2011)

Many research studies have indicated that teachers do not feel that they have been sufficiently trained and supported to teach LO (Rooth, 2005; Prinsloo, 2007; Jenkins, 2007; Christiaans, 2005). This lack of training, together with negative teaching practices, such as learners and teachers who do not regard the subject seriously, has had a major influence on the effectiveness of LO in schools (Prinsloo, 2007; Van Deventer, 2009). Dr Rene Ferguson, Professor of Life Orientation and Religious Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, is of the opinion that the success of LO is also based on which textbook teachers use and the extracts that teachers focus on in these textbooks (Ferguson, 2015). Ferguson adds that teachers need to become interpreters of the curriculum itself, and not rely on the textbooks alone. By incorporating teaching with other resources, teachers can inspire learners to learn, get them to participate actively and facilitate critical thinking (Ferguson, 2015).

LIFE ORIENTATION GRADES 10-12

SECTION 3

TEACHING PLAN

3.1 Overview of topics

	Topic	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
4.	Careers and career choices	• Subjects, career fields and study choices: decision-making skills • Socio-economic factors • Diversity of jobs • Opportunities within career fields • Trends and demands in the job market • The need for lifelong learning	• Requirements for admission to higher education institutions • Options for financial assistance for further studies • Competencies, abilities and ethics required for a career • Personal expectations in relation to job or career of interest • Knowledge about self in relation to the demands of the world of work and socio-economic conditions	• Commitment to a decision taken: locate appropriate work or study opportunities in various sources • Reasons for and impact of unemployment and innovative solutions to counteract unemployment • Core elements of a job contract • Refinement of portfolio of plans for life after school

Figure 2.3: Life Orientation teaching plan for Gr 10-12 (from: DoBE, 2002)

Although a number of studies assume the effectiveness of LO and acknowledge its significance (Theron & Dalzell, 2006; Rooth, 2005), little empirical evidence is available as to what extent LO achieves the aims as set forth in the National Curriculum Statement. This lack of evidence also leaves the question whether or not LO is able to adequately prepare adolescents in South Africa to meet the demands of the rapidly changing world of work of the 21st century (Akhurst & Nhlanhla, 2006).

Undoubtedly, for learners to succeed in life after school, they need adequate exposure to the world of work, accessible career education services, knowledge of tertiary institutions, and a wider range of social contacts (Akhurst & Nhlanhla, 2006). This gap in many career education programmes in South African schools, has made it apparent that one cannot rely on LO alone to assist in all these fields. For this reason, it has

become crucial for adolescents to start taking ownership in finding out who they are and exploring various careers if they want to keep up with the changing demands of the world of work. Currently, a major source of investigation, exploration and discovery in this field has been found in internet-enabled interactions (Ellison et al., 2014). Social network sites in particular, have grown in popularity and give adolescents a platform to network, make new contacts and keep in touch with the ever-changing world of work. The next section will elaborate on these new, interactive, online phenomena and explore how SNSs could influence adolescents' career education and planning.

2.6 SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

Social network sites (SNSs) have become a truly significant new phenomena in human communication and interaction (Cheung & Lee, 2010). It has also profoundly influenced the way people connect with each other and with the world, and how they view themselves, others and their world (Debatin, Horn, & Hughes, 2009).

2.6.1 History and development of social network sites

In the early 1990s, the internet officially became a public platform and since then it has completely changed the way information is disseminated to the world (Kramer & Winter, 2008). It has thus created a new world of collaboration and communication where more than a billion individuals around the world are connected at a given time (Cheung & Lee, 2010).

Social network sites are most often orientated towards connecting those with shared interests, romantic relationship initiation or work-related contexts (Mehdizadeh, 2009). The growth and popularity of SNS have shown that any user with minimal knowledge of the internet is able to convey information to an infinite audience through personal

bloggings, videos, and photos via interactive sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Mehdizadeh, 2009). On these interactive online sites people can create profiles that can connect to others' profiles and in doing so, create their own personal online network (Cheung & Lee, 2010). Access to these profiles thus give individuals the opportunity to post self-relevant information, interact with other members and ultimately create an online identity.

There are currently hundreds of SNSs available, with various technological affordances, which support a wide range of interests and practices. A possible reason why online sites are so popular and used on such a frequent basis, is that it creates a platform for learners to stay connected to those around them, to support and maintain pre-existing social networks and also possibly assist them to connect with strangers with whom they have shared interests (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Several companies have researched the possible reason(s) for individuals' fascination with SNSs. In a consumer survey conducted by Deloitte in the United Kingdom in 2015, the company concluded that the motives for using SNSs vary, depending on the age of the user, as can be seen in Figure 2.4 (Deloitte Media Consumer Survey, 2015).

Why do people use social media?

The biggest motivations behind social media use in the UK in 2015

● 16-24s   ● 25-34s

| 65% | 53% | 29% | 20% | 19% |

| 52% | 42% | 39% | 20% | 15% |

| To find out what my friends are doing | To send messages directly with my friends | To keep in touch with relatives | To post my photos/videos | To see what my friends are watching /listening to |

@StatistaCharts Source: Deloitte

i100 from The INDEPENDENT statista

Figure 2.4: Deloitte's Media Consumer Survey, 2015

Deloitte's survey indicates that knowing what peers are doing and being in contact with peers, are the main reasons for adolescents' frequent online use. Besides the importance of social interaction with peers, as indicated by Deloitte's research shown in Figure 2.4, the next section will explore the additional motivations and influences of SNSs on adolescents, especially pertaining to career-related interactions.

2.6.2   Adolescents and the use of social network sites for careers

The Pew Research Centre's Internet and American Life Project, has recently investigated Internet and social media use among adolescents and young adults, and found that 73 per cent of American adolescents, aged between 12 and 17, use social network websites (Lenhart, Purcell, Smit, & Zickhur, 2010). The study further indicates that "nearly two-thirds of teen internet users (63%) go online every day, 36% of teens

go online several times a day and 27% go online about once a day" (Lenhart et al., 2010).

As self-development and identity formation can present some major challenges for adolescents and emerging adults (Yang & Brown, 2016), this could possibly be the reason why adolescents are drawn to SNSs, as these online sites provide opportunities for adolescents to explore, question and understand who they are and what they want to be (Yang & Brown, 2016). SNSs have also changed the way in which individuals form and maintain their interpersonal relationships (Cheung & Lee, 2010) and as already confirmed by Donald et al. (2002), it is important for adolescents to balance these interpersonal relationships to connect with larger framework of social norms and values (Donald et al., 2002).

Research also shows that being active on SNSs can reshape adolescents' perceptions of their future life paths, their identity formation and later life experiences (Ellison et al., 2014). This notion of this finding, suggests that SNSs have the potential to facilitate social capital development and contribute to adolescents' life aspirations (Ellison et al., 2014). These authors argue that by being active online, adolescents are exposed to new people, information, and ideas that expand their understanding of possible life paths and in this way facilitate their self-development and life goals (Ellison et al., 2014).

According to the STF, adolescents' choices are strongly influenced by their social and individual systems, the type of information they are exposed to, as well as various other factors such as community norms and values (Ellison et al., 2014). Thus, it comes as no surprise that SNSs have rapidly become both a basic tool for and a mirror of social

interaction, personal identity and network building among adolescents (Debatin et al., 2009).

Online access increases adolescents' knowledge and exposes them to a set of diverse experiences that may influence the way they conceptualise their desired professional and educational goals (Ellison et al., 2014). Yang and Brown, relate to this view, as they believe that SNSs have given adolescents the opportunity to reflect upon who they are, who they want to be (Yang & Brown, 2016) and by doing so, it ultimately influences them in how they see themselves in terms of their world of work.

A study by Meihers, Kuijpers and Gundy (2013) elaborated on this view, suggesting that career competencies include reflecting on one's own motivations and skills, exploring various options in future career paths, as well as building and maintaining networks (Meijers et al., 2013). As the development of networking skills has become more essential, due to changing career contexts of globalisation, economic changes and advances in technology, it has forced individuals to take more responsibility for their own career development (Strehlke, 2010). This self-action is exactly what SNSs enable adolescents to do, as it has created an easy and accessible platform for users to network with contacts, make new contacts and stay in touch with the world of work by means of online activities (Ellison & Steinfield, 2007).

2.7   SUMMARY

Based on the literature, this chapter provided the foundation for the research. It started by defining the term adolescence and reflected on some of its major developmental tasks, such as identity formation, interpersonal peer relations and establishing career competencies. Career competencies as a development phase in adolescence,

introduced the discussion on various career theories and reflected on how global and societal influences have influenced and changed the way we view the world of work. Present post-modernistic views of career development highlighted the influential role of internal and external factors in individuals as well as various systems with which they interact. These interconnected systems play an influential role in adolescents' view of themselves and their world. The literature expanded on the theoretical framework of the systems theory upon which the concept for this research is based.

By using Bronfenbrenner's development of the bio-ecological framework to understand human behaviour, an in-depth discussion of the systems theory framework followed. This dynamic framework emphasised the notion that each system is open and subject to influence from the outside, and in being influenced by others, it also influence that which is beyond its confines (Patton & McMahon, 2006). The systems theory provided an overarching framework that reflected on the distinctive situations of adolescence, their views, their perspectives, their stories and also considered the 'interconnectness' of systemic influences.

By critically evaluating career education in schools particularly Life Orientation, some concerns were identified. These concerns or gaps possibly resulted in adolescents taking ownership of their own career constructions through online internet interactions. This led us to the focus of the research study at hand, namely the possible influences of SNSs on career education and planning among Grade 11 learners. By narrowing SNSs down as a specific interconnected social system, previous research studies on these network sites and their effect on self-development, networking and career advancement among adolescents in the changing world of work, were reviewed. This resulted in the notion that influences of SNSs deeply penetrate users' everyday lives

and reshape the way in which many adolescents in particular construct their identities and view their world (Cheung et al., 2010), including the world of work. The next chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of the research process that was followed in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this study was to explore how SNSs potentially influence Grade 11 learners' career education and planning. The study offered an opportunity for Grade 11 learners to voice their lived experiences and views on how being active online presented opportunities for them to explore, question, and research various aspects with regard to possible careers. The study also provided greater insight into how SNSs could bridge the gaps in career education programmes at schools. In order to achieve the aims of this research study, the following research question as highlighted in Chapter 1, was used to guide the investigation:

- What are the possible influences of SNSs on career education and planning among Grade 11 learners?

The following secondary research questions served as additional areas of investigation during the research process:

- How do questions regarding careers develop by engaging on SNSs?
- How do Grade 11 learners explore these questions and what is the nature of the information that they acquire by engaging on SNSs?
- How do Grade 11 learners experience the value of SNSs with regard to their career decisions?

In this chapter, the procedures that were followed to address the specific research questions, will be described. This involves the research process, the research

paradigm and methodology, the research design, participant selection, data collection methods, the analyses of the data, as well as the insurance of trustworthiness. The ethical considerations will also be discussed, along with my reflections as the researcher.

3.2   OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

In relation to the research, it is important that a researcher's theoretical framework and research paradigm guide the research process and provide the basis from which research is conducted. This guidance is essential, as it assists the researcher to follow a logical fashion and also ensures scientific rigour (Merriam, 2009). The specific research paradigm and design formed part of this framework and was my starting point as the researcher. The chart below is a broad framework that illustrates the research process that was followed for this study:
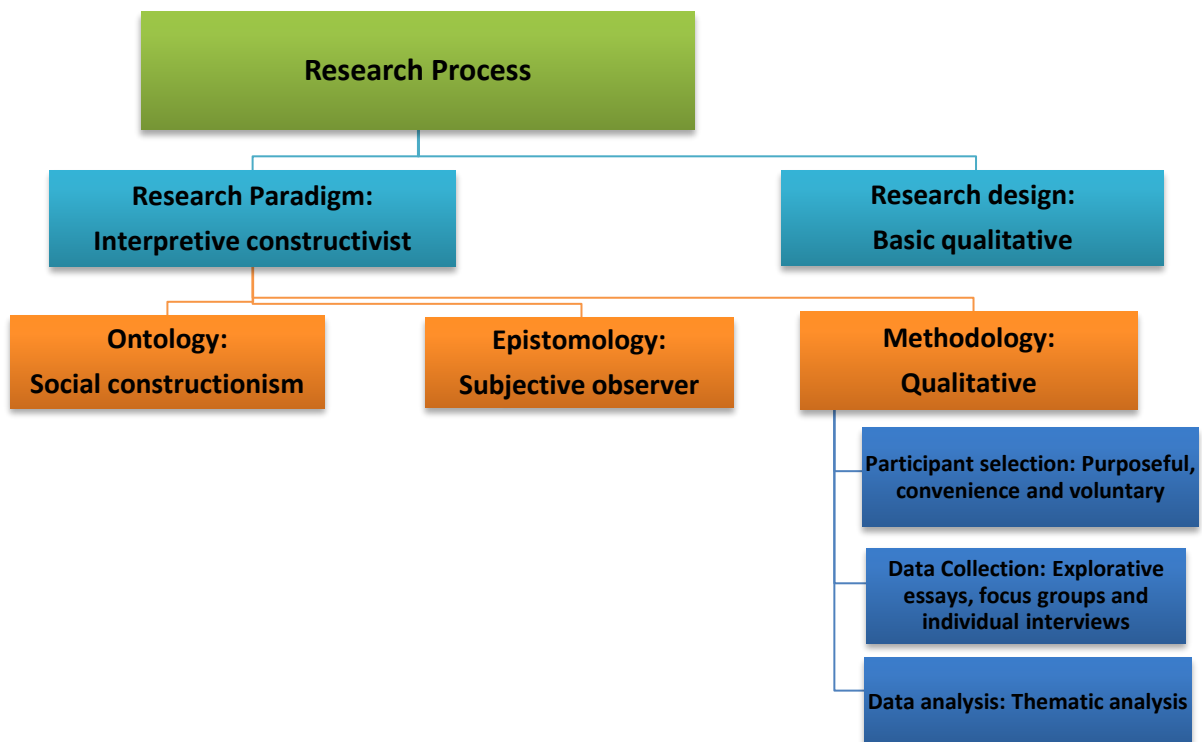
Figure 3.1: Theoretical framework of the research process

3.3   RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm can be described as the basic belief system or world view (Holtein & Gubrrium, 2011) that guides the researcher in planning the research process and making sense of the data. Paradigms help the researcher to understand the nature of the knowledge, how it will be accessed and how the research questions will be answered (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). It also guides the researcher in using appropriate methods of data collection, keeping record of observations and how to interpret the collected data (Durrheim, 2006).

Paradigms are dynamic and comprehensive by nature, and generally viewed as "systems of interrelated practice of thinking" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006, p. 6). Since my philosophical assumption is that people make sense of their own experiences in unique ways, I worked from the perspective of an interpretive-constructivist paradigm. Using the interpretive-constructivist approach enabled me to observe the subjective experiences of adolescents' views with regard to career influences. My goal as the researcher was to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations, and phenomena as it occurred in real and natural settings (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In doing this, in-depth descriptions and perspectives rather than explanations and predictions of human behaviour were researched (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). The interpretive paradigm also allowed me, as the researcher, to interact with the participants' experiences making it possible to interpret the collected data.

The interpretive paradigm follows an inductive approach towards data collection and analysis and thereby identify themes as they emerge from the data (Durrheim, 2006). In order to understand the views and perspective of adolescents, the data were collected by means of a literature review, explorative essays, semi-structured

interviews and a focus group. In using this multi-method data collection, which will be discussed later in this chapter, I was able to understand the realities created by the participant's specific context in the most accurate way (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). An interpretive paradigm therefore made it possible that the participants' voices could be heard and that they could convey their experiences in a way that is fair and just (Babbie, 2011).

The next section will elaborate on how the interpretive paradigm guided my understanding of the nature of knowledge (ontology), how it will be accessed (epistemology) and how the research questions will be answered (methodology) (Lincoln, 2005; Mertens, Holmes & Harris, 2009; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

3.3.1   Ontology and epistemology

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) refer to ontology as the nature of reality that is being investigated and epistemology as the researcher's interaction with this known reality. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a qualitative, interpretive-constructivist paradigm was used to guide this research study.

Ontological expectations in this qualitative, interpretive-constructivist paradigm denote that multiple realities and meaning-making of a single event or concept is socially and internally constructed (Durrheim, 2006; Merriam, 2009). In this unique context, these multiple realities, constructed by the participant, are assumed to be based on their subjective experiences of the social interactions they come across (Durrheim, 2006). Interpretive-constructivist research is based on social-constructionist principles of reality, suggesting that reality is not fixed, it cannot be objectively studied, and that there is no one single truth or reality (Merriam, 2009; Burr, 2000; Freedman & Combs,

1996; White, 1990) supporting the social constructionist theory accepts that people construct and interpret their own realities through social interaction with others, meaning that each person's construction and interpretation of their experiences might differ (Burr, 2000; Freedman & Combs, 1996; White, 1990).

Epistemology contributes to this notion, as it refers to the philosophy of knowledge which describes the relationship between the research and "what can be known" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006, p. 6). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) further elaborate on this relationship and view the researcher as the key instrument in data collection and for this reason should be cautious not to take control over contextual or situational variables (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The role of the researcher is thus more one of a co-creator who facilitates the process of making sense of the participants' experiences (Henning, 2004). The researcher attempts to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences in their everyday environments, taking into account significant influences that their own unique contexts and backgrounds and proximal processes bring to the study.

From the perspective of an interpretive-constructivist research paradigm, the researcher engages directly with participants, and as such, also has an influence on the nature of reality and the way it is interpreted, as their interaction with one another is inextricably linked (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Therefore, for the purposes of this research study, I had to adopt an "insider's perspective" in an attempt to see the world through the eyes of the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 271). In doing so, I had to link the process of knowledge construction with my own understanding of reality. In research, this process of how these questions or knowledge is understood is known as methodology. According to Henning (2004), the methodology of a study refers to

the finest practical means and methods that a researcher can implement in the quest to understand the world of the participants better.

3.3.2   Methodology

Research methodology is seen as the process during which a coherent group of methods are tailored together in a complementary manner to provide findings which answer the research question (Henning, 2004). As mentioned previously, a qualitative research methodology and an interpretive research paradigm were used to address the research questions of this study.

In using a qualitative methodology, I was able to research the lived experiences of Grade 11 learners and to observe the influential role of SNSs in their career constructions. As Merriam (2009) indicates, a qualitative methodology can be used to investigate how people construct their world and interpret their lived experiences, as well as giving meaning to these experiences. Merriam & Tisdell (2016, p. 24) state that "a central characteristic of all qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds". The primary goal is thus to describe and understand human experiences in a social context, rather than explaining them (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This description is possible as qualitative research concerns itself with human action from the perspective of people being the social actors themselves (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). Using a qualitative research approach provided me with specific tools to obtain a comprehensive description, to "uncover and interpret" the meanings adolescents construct and the sense they make of the phenomena experienced in their lives (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). The methodology included an inductive approach to data collection and analysis, and facilitated emerging themes to be identified from the data collected (Durrheim, 2006).

In qualitative research there are certain key features that researchers need to comply with, starting with the process of investigation (Patton, 2002). During this investigation process, the researcher as the primary instrument, is positioned to adopt an interpretive approach when conducting the research in the natural setting of the participant (Merriam, 2009; Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The researcher is also focussed on the process, rather than the outcome (Babbie & Mouton, 2010), thus making the experiences of the participants' world visible to the researcher as an 'insider', while the researcher remains unbiased (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). In this study, I deliberately and empathetically attempted to place myself in the shoes of Grade 11 learners, to understand their lived experiences of SNSs with regard to their career education and planning. In this research paradigm, a specific design, context and methods were chosen to conduct the research, which will be discussed next.

3.4   RESEARCH DESIGN

A basic qualitative design was seen as the ideal design for this research study, as I am a qualitative researcher "interested in (1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences " (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.24), The aim of this study was therefor to observe, understand and interpret participants' real-life experiences and understandings in an in-depth way (Anthony & Jack, 2009; Macpherson, Brooker, & Ainsworth, 2000; Merriam, Tisdell, 2016). This in-depth understanding and accuracy of a specific phenomenon can be explained by using multiple methods of data collection as mentioned above. This multi-method of data collection also enabled richer descriptions, instead of generalisations. Denzin and Lincoln, 1998 (in Macpherson, Brooker, & Ainsworth, 2000, p. 53) posit:

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Denzin and Lincoln (1998)

For this reason it was important among other components, to also consider the context from which the participants came and the setting in which the research was conducted.

3.5   RESEARCH SETTING AND PARTICIPANT SELECTION

According to Henning et al. (2004) and Merriam (2009), purposive sampling is an appropriate method used in qualitative research. Through purposive sampling, suitable participants could be selected and predetermined criteria for participation could be met in the study   (Roulston, 2010).

Megaw (2011, p. 77) points out that purposive sampling "allows the qualitative researcher to seek out a setting and individuals where the processes being studied are most likely to occur", and where the setting provides the researcher with the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge of the specific issue or topic of interest. Thus, the specific setting in which the research was conducted should be considered when analysing the research data. For this purpose, I will first present a clear picture of the contextual setting in which the participants were located before elaborating on the predetermined criteria for the participant selection.

This study was conducted in an urban high school in the Western Cape. This high school makes provision for learners in and around a middle-class community. The

medium of instruction is English and the school has well-established Life Orientation programmes as well as computer and Internet facilities available for their learners. My career presentation, essays and interviews were carried out at the time when the Grade 11 learners' job shadowing projects were due for Life Orientation. In order to stay true to the roots of the assumptions of social constructivism, I regarded and reflected upon these aspects during the process of data analysis, as this might have influenced the participants' views and voiced truths.

A sample size of ten participants was selected for the research study, based on Babbie and Mouton's (2002) notion that in a qualitative research approach, smaller samples are ideal to obtain richer descriptions and more in-depth information. These ten participants were purposively selected from the Grade 11 group, as the research question seemed to correlate with the Grade 11 Life Orientation outline as well as their developmental stage and tasks at hand. As mentioned in Chapter 2, adolescents' career construction is a major developmental task as learners explore, ask more questions as to who they are, and seek further information about their world of work and tertiary studies. Besides their age, another predetermined requirement for the sample group was adolescents who aimed to study further after school as well as adolescents who had daily access to Internet facilities and were active users of SNSs. In using these predetermined criteria, greater insights would most likely have been obtained from the research questions at hand.

Convenience, however, was also an important factor in deciding on the selection of participants. It was important for me as the researcher, that the school should be conveniently situated and accessible, with easy and daily access to the Internet and social network sites. The school's location, along with learners volunteering to

participate in the study, brought a convenience and voluntary component to the sampling process.

3.6 ETHICAL CLEARANCE, CONSENT AND ASSENT

As a researcher needs to ensure the correct ethical progression procedure with regard to the selection of participants and process of the study, ethical clearance, consent and assent were required from a variety of institutions, participants and their guardians before the study could commence.

An essential step was to apply for ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Stellenbosch (attached as Appendix A). This process involved discussing the procedures of the research and how the research would adhere to certain ethical guidelines. Prior to this, permission from and access to the high school learners was needed from the school principal as well as the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) (attached as Appendices B and C). With this in place, written informed consent and assent forms (attached as Appendices D and E) were sent to the participants of the research study, to ensure the cooperation of participants, and to clarify any concerns from them or on their parents' side. I thus actively engaged with them by obtaining valid permission using Patton's (2002, in Merriam, 2009, p. 223) ethical checklist to conduct my research in an ethical manner.

Firstly, I had to explain the purpose of the research and the methods that will be used, thus ensuring that the participants have accurate knowledge of the research process. Detailed information concerning the purpose of the research, how data will be collected, the role of participants, as well as details around the expectations of them as the participants were also covered. This document can be found in Appendix F. As

the majority of the participants were younger than 18, their parents or legal guardians also had to sign a detailed and informed consent form (see Appendices D and F) before the data capturing process could begin. The aim of informed consent was to confirm the participants as autonomous agents of the research and to ensure that their dignity and respect will be adhered to (Berg, 2007; Kelly, 2003). The consent form also informed the involved participants of the researcher's shared process of giving feedback about the research and allowing them the opportunity to view the collected data. In short, the consent form can be seen as an agreement between myself and the participants, clearly specifying the roles and responsibilities of each party. To protect the participants in the unlikely event of harm, they were informed that they could withdraw from the research if circumstances warranted them in doing so.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.7.1 Data collection process

During the analysis of data, qualitative researchers need to be meticulous about 'the what', 'the why' and 'the how' (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The identification of a specific topic or phenomenon is the first phase in any research process, followed by the formulation of research questions regarding the topic (Boeije, 2010). After the research questions have been formulated, the researcher decides on aspects such as a specific target population, sample size and process of data collection, while adhering to relevant ethical principles throughout the process.

Following Merriam's recommendation (2009), data were collected by means of essays, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group. As already explained in Section 3.4, the interpretive approach does not focus on isolating and controlling variables, but on

connecting and extending the power of language and expression to help us understand the social world we live in (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

3.7.2 Measuring instruments

As mentioned before, I collected the data by means of explorative essays, semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group. This was appropriate as I am interested in how these individuals view and experience SNSs with regard to their career education and planning.

During the first phase, the participants wrote explorative essays about the possible influences of social network sites on career education and –planning among Grade 11 learners. The assignment for the essays was directed by the research questions mentioned in Section 3.1 and can be seen in Appendix G. This essay served as an instrument to facilitate open discussion about certain aspects of the participant's career construction as well as gaining insight into the possible influences SNSs have on adolescents' career education. After the data were analysed, identified themes emerged, which were elaborated on in the interview phase. The data gathered from essays as well as an extensive literature review, were used as a guiding tool that facilitated open-ended questions in the semi-structured individual interviews during phase two of the study.

In qualitative research, interviews are the most frequently used method of data collection and the most valuable way of obtaining information from another person (Merriam, 2009; Henning et al., 2004). Throughout the interview process, the interviewer engages with the interviewee in a focused conversation, while asking questions related to the research topic (Merriam, 2009). The aim is to gain specific

information on the theme of research, and to determine what and how the individual thinks about the phenomena under investigation (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2009). According to Patton (2002), qualitative interviews provide the researcher with the opportunity to collect data which may not be directly observed, as the researcher may enter a participant's own reality, seeing the world through his or her eyes.

A semi-structured format was chosen for the individual interviews, as it allowed for similar questions to be put forward to all the participants, while at the same time giving more flexibility and a more open-ended approach rather than structured, standardised interviews (Durrheim, 2006). The interview guide for the semi-structured interviews can be seen in Appendix H, which guided the questioning and established a general direction for the conversation topics that arose. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed the researcher the freedom to probe the subjects' responses, as well as to pursue emerging themes. This flexibility, however, calls for advance listening skills on the part of the researcher, who must decide when and how to probe, as well as to decide if all research topics have been appropriately covered (Roulston, 2010).

The interview sessions were scheduled at the school on dates and times which were convenient and suitable for each participant. The interviews took place in a safe and private classroom, to ensure that the participants' privacy was not compromised. Each interview lasted about 20-30 minutes. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were discussed in the introduction phase, as well re-affirming the participants' rights to withdraw from the study at any stage or to choose not to answer certain questions. I re-explained the purpose of an interview and permission was obtained to record the interview, in order to code the data at a later stage. A short summary of what was said,

concluded the interview and participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a focus group at a later stage.

A focus group interview was arranged after the interview data were analysed. A focus group is generally seen as an interview conducted with a certain group of people who share similar backgrounds and experiences (Merriam, 2009). Administered to a small group of participants, focus groups provide the opportunity to participants to engage and interact with one another. Focus groups are often seen as an additional method of data collection, as different viewpoints are encouraged in the group as guided by an interview schedule (Marshall & Rossmann, 2011). The interview schedule (see Appendix I), guided the various themes as the participants interacted and engaged with one another, generating additional comments and information. By using this last phase of a focus group, I was able to access information which might not otherwise be available (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). This also enabled me to gain additional insight into the inter-subjective experiences of the participants and give participants the opportunity to elaborate on unclear topics. Thus, the focus group was seen as a consolidation phase that enabled the researcher to explore any remaining questions to gain clarity on the participant's views and opinions. It also gave the researcher an opportunity to record richer descriptions on themes that emerged during the previous data gathering phases. This process thus facilitated the clarification, verification and triangulation of the research study, which will be discussed later on in this Chapter.

3.7.3   Data analysis

As qualitative data consist of words and observations, analyses and interpretations are required to bring order and understanding to the data (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the process of thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data.

A thematic analysis not only resonates with my view of how knowledge is constructed, but it is also acknowledged as a foundational method for qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) explain thematic analysis as a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is often used to categorise data into smaller units of meaning (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and enabling an interpretation of various aspects of the research topic. In short, the process of thematic data analysis as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006), occurs in six phases which are shown in Figure 3.2:
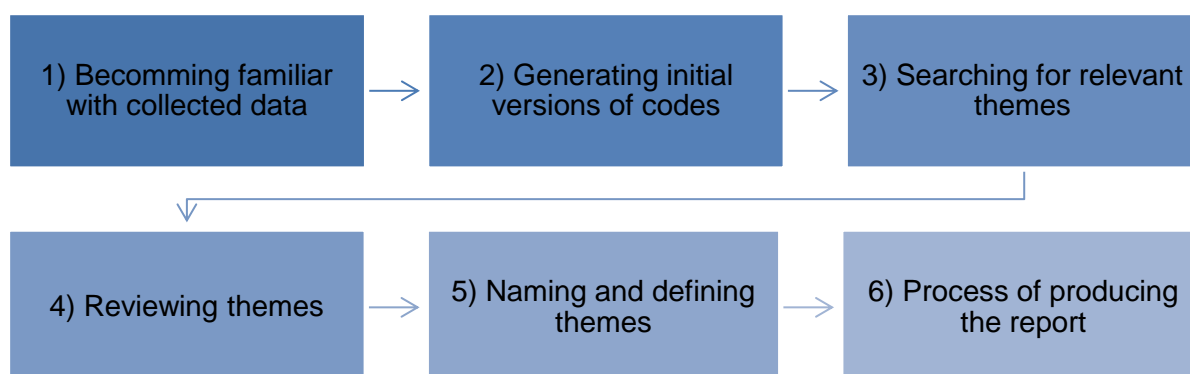
Figure 3.2:   The process of thematic analysis according to Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 16-23)

The coding process of this research study was administered as described in Figure 3.2. The first phase of coding started with the reading of all the explorative essays written by the participants. This helped me to develop general themes as well as to create member-checking opportunities during the individual interviews and focus groups. These categories, themes and subthemes then formed part of the individual interview guide, together with the participants SNS worksheet, which in turn, gave

direction to the semi-structured interviews. The second process of coding followed after the individual interviews. From these interviews, audio recordings were transcribed and coded according to the emerging themes. During the last phase of coding, four volunteers participated in a focus group discussion. The verbatim transcriptions of the data collected during the focus groups presented different interactions and feedback of the participants and were given relevant codes. These codes that consisted of words and selected phrases were named as different units of meaning that became evident during the coding process.

Next, I viewed the whole set of codes in order to assess which codes could be grouped together, which codes were relevant and which were richly described data. The codes that occurred frequently and were rich with information and descriptions, were grouped together into various clusters of categories, themes and sub-themes. The codes that appeared infrequently were not included in the research findings, but were still regarded as important aspects and were reflected upon during the research analysis. As a result, concise findings of the data were presented, which enabled me to gain a holistic understanding of the data. The coding process also aided with the formulation of certain recommendations, which will be presented in Chapter 5.

Lastly, in using thematic analysis, I as the researcher, had to consider my own theoretical stance and values with regard to qualitative research, as well as the active role I played in deliberating and reflecting on the data which were captured throughout the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this reason, it was important to immerse myself in the data and analysis process and to constantly review and re-visit themes to prevent any bias from my part. This process was noted in my research journal (see Appendix K) and enabled me to reflect on my own involvement during this

study. This, together with data verification, ensured the quality and trustworthiness of the data in this research study. This topic will be discussed next.

3.8   QUALITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE DATA

Ensuring accuracy, quality and trustworthiness of the data analysis process is an important part of research (Rubin & Babbie, 2007). Researchers need to present valid and reliable data in an ethical manner (Merriam, 2009). To ensure the authenticity and reliability of the data collection, analysis, interpretation and verification strategies need to be carried out (De Vos et al., 2005). These verification strategies is a rigorous process of systematically checking and confirming the validity and reliability of data collection.

Generally, a study is seen as reliable if it can be repeated in a similar setting producing the same results, whereas validity is shown if the results reflect what was intended to be measured (Merriam, 2009). Questions about the reliability and validity of qualitative research have been raised, as quantitative and qualitative paradigms have different opinions of what constitutes reality (Merriam, 2009). This conflicting methodological views affect what will be studied, how the researcher approaches the study, and also what conclusions will be drawn from the study. For this reason, it has become essential for qualitative researchers to review how reliability and validity can be safeguarded during the research process. Several researchers suggested alternative principles to ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Beck & Polit, 2004; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Mertens, 2005; Trochim, 2006). Each one of these principles will be explored in more detail next.

3.8.1   Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which the results of a study reflect the realities of its participants (Trochim, 2006), essentially examining how true the findings of the study is to the participants involved (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). According to Merriam (2009, p. 215), a number of strategies are available to a researcher to increase "the correspondence between research and the real world". Guba and Lincoln (1985) believe that triangulation, member-checking and peer examination are central strategies which can reinforce a study's credibility.

In following Guba and Lincoln's (1985) advice, credibility in this research study was ensured through a process of triangulation. Gibson (2007) defines triangulation as the combination of different methods of interpretations of different types of data towards a more correct representation of the research question. During this study, I used explorative essays, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, as well as a literature review. By combining these research methods, the researcher was able to obtain a better and more substantive picture of the reality of the participants (Merriam, 2009). Essentially, data gathered from these multiple methods and sources, were cross-checked and compared throughout the research process. Participants were also employed additionally to inspect the interpretations of the data which added to the data analysis and is known as member-checking (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Member-checking, often referred to as 'respondent validation' (Merriam, 2009, p. 217), consists of soliciting feedback from participants on emerging themes and findings of the research. This enabled me as the researcher, to identify or highlight any bias on my part and clarify any misunderstandings or misinterpretations (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Merriam, 2009). The data gathered during the essays and worksheet were

checked with each participant in the individual interviews as well as in the final consolidation, focus group phase. According to Merriam (2001), triangulation ensures that the outcome of the research is usually more objective and therefore is in a more 'correct' position.

3.8.2   Transferability

The transferability of a study is measured by its external validity. It generally indicates the extent to which findings of one study can be applied or generalised to another study, context or participants (Merriam, 2009; Babbie & Mouton, 2010). For a study to be generalised, its findings have to be internally valid, credible and reliable (Lincoln & Guba, 1981, cited in Merriam, 2009). However, unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is not interested in generalising statistical findings, but rather relies on rich descriptions to contextualise the study (Merriam, 2009). These rich, in-depth descriptions allow the readers the opportunity to determine on their own, to which extent the findings can be applied or be transferred to other situation (Merriam, 2009; Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Jensen, 2008).

Guba and Lincoln (cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2010), further suggest that transferability can be capitalised on in qualitative research by means of purposive sampling. Predetermined categories were established in the sample group as explained in Section 3.5. However, research variation and diversity in the small sample size was sought in terms of race, culture and gender. In giving a detailed description of the participants as seen in Section 3.5, rigour and trustworthiness of the study was safeguarded.

3.8.3   Dependability

Dependability refers to how accurately the findings of a study match the data that were collected (Merriam, 2009). A key responsibility of the researcher is to ensure that "given the data collected, the results make sense" (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). A researcher can ensure this by keeping accurate records of the data collection and analysis process (which can be found in Appendix J, K, L and M) as well as describing the research process and paradigm.

According to Trochim (2006), dependability "emphasizes (sic) the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs. The research[er] is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research[er] approached the study." Only through this process, can research be considered dependable.

3.8.4   Confirmability

Confirmability denotes how accurately the results of a study link to the initial purpose of the research (Merriam, 2009). Confirmability is often achieved by leaving an audit trail, such as raw data, reduced data, process notes and interview schedules (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Merriam, 2009; Trochim, 2006). As qualitative researchers should be aware of the differences between themselves and the participants, I had to consider any bias that could influence the data and results. Using an audit trail was a valuable tool to confirm whether or not researcher bias had influenced the research process (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the confirmability of the research was verified by my supervisor and the participants. A sample of the study's audit trail is included in Appendix J, K, L and M as mentioned in section 3.8.3.

3.8.5   Crystallisation

Although it was not initially part of the principles discussed in the preceding sections, crystallisation should also be included to ensure trustworthiness. Richardson (2000) explains that "just as a crystal consists of many angles, so a qualitative researcher should also view the world from various angles to ensure the trustworthiness of the data" (Richardson, 2000, in Ellingson, 2009, p. 3). Merriam agrees with this notion, adding that there are multiple ways of viewing the world, not just on the part of the research participants, but also on the part of the researcher (Merriam, 2009).

As mentioned previously, as a qualitative researcher, I thus had to immerse myself in the data analysis process and also alternate this with a reflective process. This reflective process gave me the opportunity to identify and articulate patterns or themes noticed during the immersion process (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In the following section, my own reflections as the researcher will be discussed.

3.9   RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY

During qualitative research, the researcher should reflect on who he or she is and what values, assumptions, beliefs, or biases he or she brings to a study (Tredoux et al., 2004). This reflexivity is reasonable, as the researcher is also an instrument for data collection in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). As a qualitative researcher, one decides on what questions to ask, in what order to ask the questions, what to observe, what to write down as well as how to interpret the data collected. For these reasons it is recommended that the researcher offers a declaration of self.

Merriam (2009) explains that declaring one's position as a researcher can be seen as an additional measure to ensure credibility in qualitative research. Guba and Lincoln

(2000, in Merriam 2009, p. 219) refer to this as 'reflexivity', while Merriam (2009, p. 219) describes this reflexivity process as follows:

> Investigators need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken. Even in journal articles authors are being called upon to articulate and clarify their assumptions, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation to the study at hand. Such a clarification allows the reader to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular of the data.
>
> Merriam (2009, p. 219)

As explained in Chapter 1, my theoretical framework (social constructionism) and world view (interpretive paradigm) have guided my inquiry and rationalised my research process. In Chapter 1, I have also identified my own experiences, history and background and how it has shaped me and influenced my view of reality, and as such, influencing who I am as a researcher and how it could have influenced the interpretation of the data collected from this study. Therefore, a reflection on my voice was critical to this study, as the thesis was visibly written from a first-person perspective, namely my perspective. I was as much involved in this storytelling process as were my participants, and therefore this thesis was as much my process, as it was the process of each participant involved in the study. For this reason, I have included my reflections regarding the research process throughout Chapter 4 as well as in my research journal (see Appendix J). In doing this, I have acknowledged that the meaning of the research findings are inseparable from my own ideas regarding the data that were collected (Merriam, 2009).

Given this immersion into the research process and with the participants that a qualitative researcher experiences, ethical considerations are even more vital to consider, as it serves and protects the welfare of the research participants. The ethical considerations that were made and guaranteed throughout the study will be discussed next.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are taken into account throughout the research process and are of even greater importance when human participants are involved (Wassenaar, 2006), as was the case in this study. Wassenaar's (2006) principles of respect and dignity of persons, non-maleficence, and beneficence and justice, guided me in applying these ethical principles. Wassenaar (2006) is correct in stating that: "[the] research participants' dignity and welfare are more important than the research". The implementation of the different ethical principles will be discussed in the sections that follow.

3.10.1 Autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons

The principle of autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons, represents the right and ability of the participants to "freely and voluntarily" (Allan, 2008, p. 128) make decisions with regard to their lives. It denotes the participant's position of autonomy and competence in giving informed consent to take part in the study. This principle is also linked to protection and privacy of the participants and institutions to ensure confidentiality at all times.

3.10.2 Non-maleficence and beneficence

Accompanying the principle of autonomy is non-maleficence and beneficence. Non-maleficence obliges the researcher to ensure that no harm or wrong-doing occurs, either as a direct or indirect consequence of the research. I therefore made sure that no harm or wrong-doing towards the participants was caused. Furthermore, I avoided any kind of deception, showed respect, and also acknowledged the differences of participants throughout the study (Wassenaar, 2006; Allan, 2008).

In designing the study, no foreseen risks were pointed out, however, steps were put in place to accommodate any concerns or questions. I, Melany Black as an intern educational psychologist, and the school counsellor, were available to the participants to assist them should they require post-counselling, debriefing or additional information.

As a researcher, I also had a moral obligation to act for the benefit of the research subjects (participants) and to promote their welfare (Allan, 2008). Beneficence was ensured by respecting the participants, their views, and rights, and looking after their welfare. During the research process, the participants were given several opportunities to reflect and to gain a deeper understanding into their own career meaning-making process and career decisions. The career presentation that was offered to the whole grade 11 group of the school (see Appendix N), ensured that the research benefits were not limited to the participants only. Secondly, the findings from the research could be used to further develop career education programmes at schools, as well as to assist career guidance counsellors with additional tools and information that could benefit their clients. It could also assist adolescents to accept responsibility and bridge

the existing gaps in career development programmes at schools by using SNSs to question, explore and discover.

3.10.3 Confidentiality and right to privacy

Confidentiality is seen by Merriam (2009) as the protection of the participants' identities and is an important ethical responsibility of the researcher. In accordance with this principle, I ensured that the limits and nature of confidentiality were explained to the participants and their parents, before consent forms were signed. Privacy was highlighted and assured, and pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the participants, their parents, and the school. In doing so, none of the participants' names or other identifying information was used in the writing of this thesis. Participants were also encouraged to keep their essays anonymous and additionally only the research supervisor and myself viewed and interpreted the collected data. Furthermore, safeguard measurements were implemented by storing the data in a password-protected laptop, as well as storing hard copies of the data in a locked cabinet at home, to which only I had access to.

3.11 SUMMARY

In summary, a detailed outline of the research process of this study was given in this chapter. Firstly, an overview of the research process was discussed, followed by an explanation of the interpretive research paradigm, explaining how the participants' subjective experiences were taken into account and the methods the researcher used to reflect on their world view, instead of the researcher's view (Babbie, 2011). Three essential aspects of research were also highlighted in this section, namely ontology, epistemology and methodology.

This discussion was followed by a more in-depth description of the qualitative methodology that was used in this study. This qualitative methodology was explained, by exploring the purposive nature of participant selection, the data collection process, as well as the process of reducing and analysing the data. Another crucial aspect of qualitative research, namely how validity and reliability was ensured and maintained throughout the research process was highlighted. This explanation was based on five features of qualitative research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and crystallisation. This chapter concluded with a section dedicated to the importance of researcher reflexivity, as well as the ethical considerations that were taken into account to ensure sound ethical research practices.

The next chapter outlines and explains the research findings. In this chapter, the various emerging themes and categories will be identified and discussed as they contributed to the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research data collected from a sample of Grade 11 learners, as well as the outline of categories, themes and subthemes that emerged from the research study.

A diagram of the four main categories of findings which emerged during the research study can be seen in Figure 4.1. This diagram also includes each of the categories' own themes and subthemes. The diagram thus serves as a broad overview of the study's findings which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
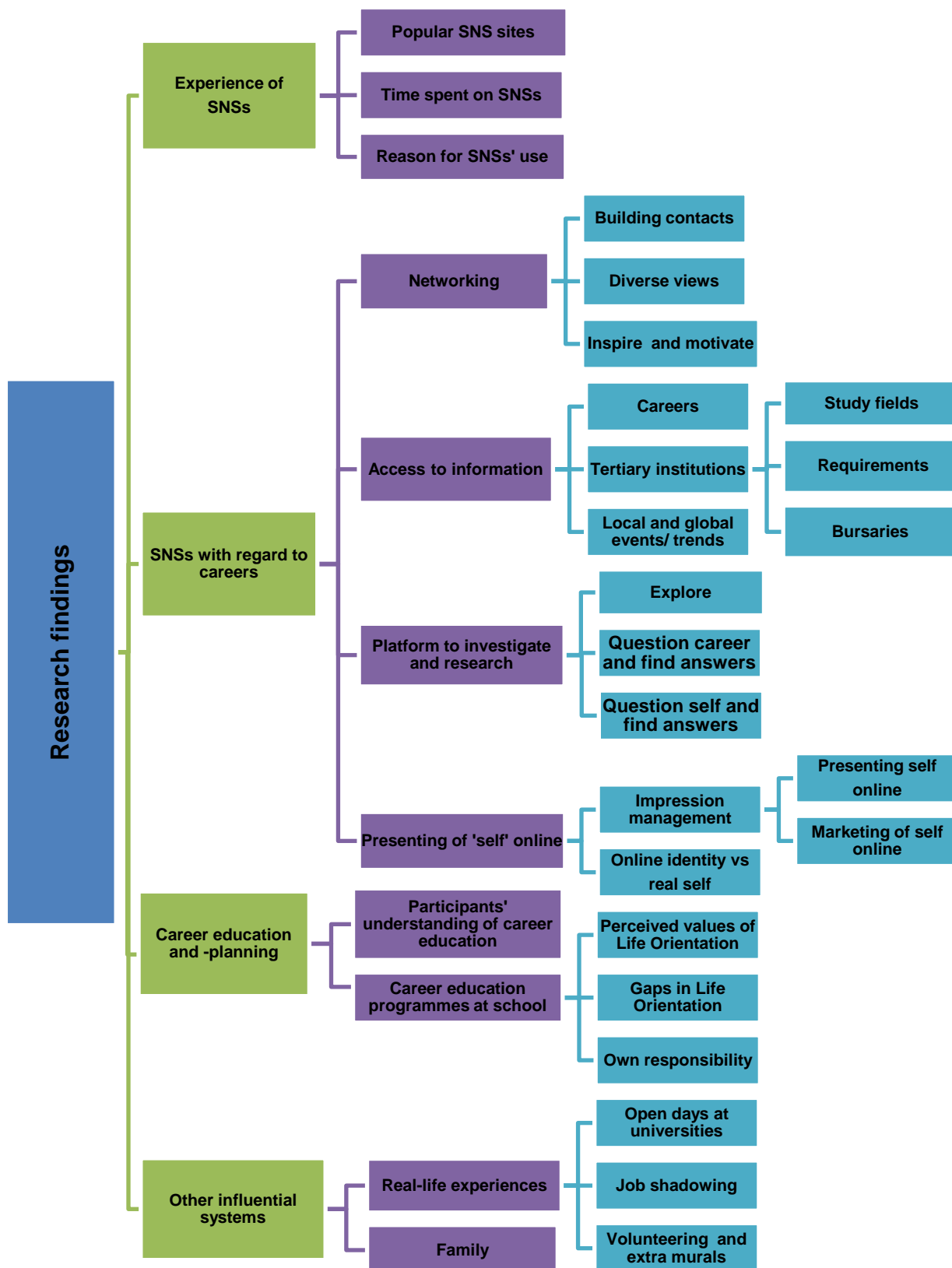
Figure 4.1:   Diagram of thematic content of research findings

4.2   CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

As indicated in Figure 4.1, the categories that emerged during this study is represented in green, themes in purple and subthemes and codes in blue. However, before presenting the categories, themes and subthemes which emerged during this study, a brief introduction of the participants, contexts and events should be covered as it could have influenced the research outcomes.

Initially, the research study was planned for eight to ten English-speaking participants in Grade 11, covering a diverse group in terms of race and gender. Unfortunately, the majority of the participants who responded to and engaged with the research study were predominantly white females. As a result, the findings could only reflect this occurrence.

Originally, ten participants between the ages of 16-18 years, volunteered for the research study, handing in their consent and assent forms. Eight participants were female and two were male. During the research process, two withdrew from the study, while the remaining eight participants completed their essays before the July school holidays in 2016. Seven returned for the interviews the following term and, four were asked to participate in a focus group discussion towards the end of the study. It is important to mention that during the July holidays, the Grade 11 learners had to complete a Life Orientation task as prescribed by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), where they had to job shadow at a company or organisation of their choice, and were expected to write a short report of their experience. This assignment can be found in Appendix N. During the week of the research interviews, the Grade 11 learners were busy with oral presentations as part of their feedback on

their job-shadowing experiences. They were also planning to visit several open days at universities in the Western Cape.

4.3   RESULTS OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE DATA.

The next section describes the four main categories of findings that emerged from the research study, along with its corresponding themes, subthemes and codes.

4.3.1   Experience of SNSs

General themes with regard to the participants' views of SNSs were explored first. This provided a brief overview of popular sites that were being used by the participants, the amount of time they spent on these sites as well as the motives for their frequent visits.

4.3.1.1   Popularity of SNSs

It appeared that the most popular online site that was used by the participants was Instagram. Although Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Twitter were also mentioned, it seemed that the participants enjoyed the visual element of Instagram and deemed it as a fast and easy way to communicate and connect with their peers.

A sense of excitement was observed when participants discussed Instagram. Many of them explained their thoughts and feelings of this popular site:

> *I only engage on Instagram and don't have any other social networking accounts (Essay – L5)*

> *Instagram is a bit younger. You know, more youthful ... so a lot of teenagers use it. You basically chat with pictures and "hashtags". It's such a fast and easy way to communicate and it captures a lot without using a lot of words (Interview – L2)*

With Instagram its one picture and a few words, maybe some links and "hashtags"

if you really want to know more. So it's, quick, informative and you can move on to

the next picture (Focus group – L1)

It seemed as if participants viewed Instagram as relevant and current, while they also explained that other sites such as Facebook were probably more applicable to the older generations. By using pictures with short captions and "hashtags" (#), various topics could be communicated in a short and creative way.

4.3.1.2   *Time spent on SNSs*

As the participants reflected on their time spent on the various SNSs, many were surprised and even embarrassed to admit how these sites have become a constant part of who they are and how they live. The majority of the participants described it as a daily routine, which they struggled to function without:

Social networking is a part of me 24/7 (Essay – L1)

I am on social media basically every day, it is a constant thing, like 24/7. It's sad. I

think it is like an addiction, you just can't stop (Interview – L4)

It's genuinely like part of my morning routine. I will wake up, check my phone, see

what everyone got up to and then go the "explore page" and procrastinate some

more … (Focus group – L2)

It appeared that the participants were concerned about the amount of time they spent on SNSs and many questioned their constant need to be online:

I think too much ... I use it all the time. It's like a habit for me. I go in and out, then

back in again on SNSs. I am like, why am I doing this? (Focus group – L5)

But I never really thought about why my phone is always on. So that made me question what I am spending all my time doing on my phone (Interview – L2)

4.3.1.3   *Primary reasons for using SNSs*

It appeared that knowing what their peers were doing and being in contact with peers, is one of the key reasons for participants' frequent online use. After reflecting on the research question and becoming aware of their reliance and fascination with SNSs, many participants had the opportunity to voice their thoughts about their constant need to be active online:

> *It's nice to stay up to date and see what everyone is doing (Interview – L4)*

> *SNSs has obviously made it easier for me to connect with my friends and family that I don't see every day. I use to live in Johannesburg and through Facebook, I connected with old friends I used to have there. It is nice to see what they are up to and they can also see my new life in Cape Town (Interview – L1)*

> *Everyone is on Facebook, so it is a cool way to keep in touch with family and friends. Show them what you are doing and updating them on your life. It's quick and easy (Interview – L2)*

Given that SNSs enable people to connect with one another, it is not surprising that it has become so deeply embedded in peoples' lives (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Besides connecting to peers, the participants also mentioned that SNSs were outlets, providing a way to express their feelings and to share it with others:

> *Social networking is often an outlet and source of inspiration (Essay – L1)*

… maybe the reason I go back and use it so often, is that it entertains me and it is also an outlet and distraction from what is actually happening in my world. So others feeds enable me to hear their stories and experiences (Interview – L1)

You get a broader input and a better perspective, as you are connected to such a large network. Also because it's not so personal and you are chatting or following groups that you don't always directly know, you can honestly share parts of yourself and not feel ashamed. There is support in a strange way (Interview – L2)

… SNSs gives you the opportunity to express your personal opinions about anything and everything (Essay – L6)

It seemed that participants valued the space that SNSs provide to share their thoughts and ideas, as well as the feeling of support by connecting to others.

4.3.2   Value of SNSs with regard to careers

Nowadays, just about every individual and organisation has a social presence which could make SNSs powerful resources for career and networking development, whether it be on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or specific career-related sites like LinkedIn (Strehlke, 2010). In contrast to the social aspect of SNSs and the participants` initial reasons for using these sites, many of the learners were also able to realise the influence that their online activities could have on career-related information and how it could expose them to new ideas, contacts and questions about themselves and possible career paths.

Participants mentioned their general thoughts about the value of SNSs pertaining to career-related matters. In the initial essays they wrote:

It opens your eyes to how many different types of career fields there are (Essay – L5)

Connections online enable me to create more opportunities for myself (Essay – L6)

SNSs play a very important role in what career you would like to pursue, because you get exposed to various people, blogs, post and even photos about other careers (Essay – L3)

Its value to me is mainly that I am able to see and interact with many different people and those careers that I am interested in, by simply reading about it or sending them a quick message (Essay – L1)

It appears as if there are a variety of reasons for participants to value SNSs concerning their career education and planning. After further investigation, these reasons were divided into four subthemes, one of the most popular subthemes being, online contacts and networking with professionals.

4.3.2.1 Networking

Most of the participants viewed SNSs as a valuable search tool when it came to networking with professionals, building networks and keeping in contact with people that could be valuable connections in the future.

- **Building contacts**

All the participants mentioned that SNSs could be used to develop professional contacts:

... you can exchange contact details and find out more through people who already work in that career (Essay – L2)

... social network sites can make it easy to communicate with businesses and connect with the right people fast (Essay – L5)

You are able to talk and source information and connect with people on a whole different level. Obviously you can do that face to face as well, but it's just faster and easier on SNSs. With social media you have more access and you can go out with more confidence and talk to people (Interview – L1)

In addition, participants expressed that having access to these contacts could assist them in finding more information about their career field and could provide them guidance:

SNSs are used by an abundance of people, so you have a larger and more diverse network of influence (Essay – L2)

… speaking to others in the field so they can help guide you (Essay – L5)

I also follow some of my dads' business partners and we chat every now and then about my future and I can ask them questions. That's how I found my job shadowing company, I asked a guy my dad used to work for and he organised me to follow his HR department for two days (Interview – L7)

The notion that professional contacts could help these participants in their future, and potentially open doors when they need internships or when they start applying for work positions, also came to light:

I follow other smaller production companies and keep updated with their internship requirements. So that when I need to start looking for an internship, I already have lots of connections (Interview – L8)

After a job shadowing project I connected with one of the interns online, we have been chatting on Facebook and she has given me advice on where to go study

and which institutions have the best courses. She is even willing to be my reference and said if I ever need help after my studies, I should contact her (Focus group – L1)

It appeared that most of the participants believed that an extensive online network could expose them to more career opportunities and could create career and internship possibilities. Having professional connections online has become increasingly important, as the changing world of work has forced individuals to become more responsible for their own career development. To do this successfully, developing networking skills has become imperative (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Strehlke (2010) supports this notion, suggesting that computer technology enables the support and extension of SNS users' networks, by providing accessible information and linking resources.

- **Diverse views**

As larger online networks expose participants to more opinions and alternative perspectives, the diverse views that online connections offer, were also seen by many participants as a value of SNSs:

SNSs enable you to compare notes with others online and this broadens your view on various topics and careers (Essay – L6)

… but with social media, these groups or influences can mix, so you get a far wider range or exposure and not just one way of thinking or looking at the world (Interview – L2)

Participants shared how exposure beyond their parents' and friends' career perspectives has been helpful to them, as wider exposure enabled them to discover more career opportunities:

> *Your parents might suggest a few key careers … but other people you network with online, expose you to so much more than just the basics (Essay – L5)*

> *There is such a variety of career paths and ways to get to those paths that you need to have a broader idea of what is going on outside of just your small community (Interview – L2)*

> *… helping you explore different parts of yourself and being exposed to a big variety of people and opinions. You also have the chance to look onto someone else's life and imagine yourself in that career … thinking could this be me? (Interview – L4)*

- **Inspire and motivate**

Choosing who they follow, enabled participants to select the best updates and views that relate to their interests. This constant interaction and exposure to positive contacts and groups seemingly fostered motivation among many of the participants:

> *I follow specific people because they motivate me and encourage me to follow my dream of where I want to be one day. For example, when I write maths … if I get anxious or feel like I am going to fail, I go to certain peoples pages that inspire me or links that encourage me. They remind me of what I want to be and what I have to do to get there. So it makes me work harder and push through (Interview – L2)*

> *You see all the nice stuff people have and where they live and then you also want that. It kind of gives you a goal, something to work towards or strive for (Focus group – L7)*

Not only can online posts inspire and motivate participants, it also has the ability to create an excitement and eagerness among the participants to experience what others have experienced online:

… seeing a blog or article of someone traveling or someone helping children in Africa excites me and makes me want to experience that as well (Essay – L1)

Seeing films and previews online is exciting. It makes me think about my future, and how one day there will be people watching movies that I directed (Essay – L8)

A number of participants mentioned that by following a certain group or people, either exposed them to new careers or kept them motivated to follow a specific career path:

On Instagram I follow an account that is all about astrophysics. Every day they post a fact about space and through this they have provided me with useful information and kept me interested in this field (Essay – L8)

I also like stars and astronomy, so I recently started following NASA. So I see what they are doing and all the pictures on their account. There is always a caption below the picture and a link if you want to read more about that topic. It's really exciting to see what they are doing (Interview – L5)

When I was younger I followed the New York University of Film on Facebook and I only now realised that reading all their updates has influenced me in many ways. It has kept this desire of me wanting to go into film alive all these years (Interview – L8)

The majority of the participants were of the opinion that their online networks inspired and motivated them, especially during times of uncertainty.

4.3.2.2   *Access to information*

According to many of the participants, online connections exposed them to different types of information. Access to this information was, however, not only limited to their online contacts, but also included their friends' contacts, advertisements as well as sponsored links that appeared on their home pages and feeds. As a result, the theme 'access to information' emerged from the data.

Majority of the participants also indicated that they enjoyed the accessibility of online information and that it did not overwhelm them, as online information is kept brief, giving them the option to investigate further, should they need more detail about the topic of interest:

> *SNSs make information accessible to numerous people at a much more insightful level … SNSs allow me to gain small amounts of information at a time, because often large amounts of information can be too overwhelming, which essentially causes me to miss the key points (Essay – L2)*

> *For me SNSs are amazing, you can get quick access to any information (Essay – L3)*

> *… many do not have resources to travel or locate necessary information, but SNSs make information easy [to attain] and accessible to everyone (Essay – L6)*

This accessibility seemed to influence the participants' thoughts and knowledge about careers, tertiary institutions and local and global events and trends.

- **Careers**

In response to the questions regarding how online information has helped them in terms of their career education and planning, it was evident that the participants

obtained such information by interacting and networking with relevant people and groups, as well as being exposed to career-related advertisements and online feeds:

Participants mentioned that talking to various professional and institutions online informed them about the vast variety of careers:

> *It opens your eyes to how many different types of career fields there are (Essay – L1)*

> *Being active on SNSs can often improve your awareness of other career opportunities that you never knew existed (Essay – L4)*

> *Facebook is one of the biggest career influenced SNSs around, in that there are various groups you can join that will inform you about jobs in specific fields or in you city … by talking to people online you can get access to information about career paths you are interested in and engage in group chats about it (essay – L3)*

Being exposed to a variety of careers, sparked not only the participants' curiosity, but also guided them to some extent to find a path which they could be interested in. Many of the participants said that they enjoyed the idea that SNSs were giving them a glimpse of the realities associated with a career:

> *… by talking to different people online from different medical universities you actually get a broader idea of what life would be like as a doctor and the different paths you can follow to become one (Interview – L2)*

> *I either want to be a film director or I want to go into science. They are kind of opposites. But I would see a preview of a movie on Instagram and be like, wow, that is so cool. And then I would see a cool experiment on the next page or a new type of plastic that was invented and then be into that again … so it shows me the*

fun parts of these jobs and it's a bit more than just the theory we do in class (Interview – L8).

I also found this account that was all about dentistry, so on that account they have animation videos of how a dentist do wisdom tooth removal, fillings and so on. I found that really interesting and informative. I thought it would be disgusting, but I could actually enjoy being a dentist (Interview – L5).

Figure 4.2 is an example of how Participant 2 used hashtags (#) to source specific career-related information.
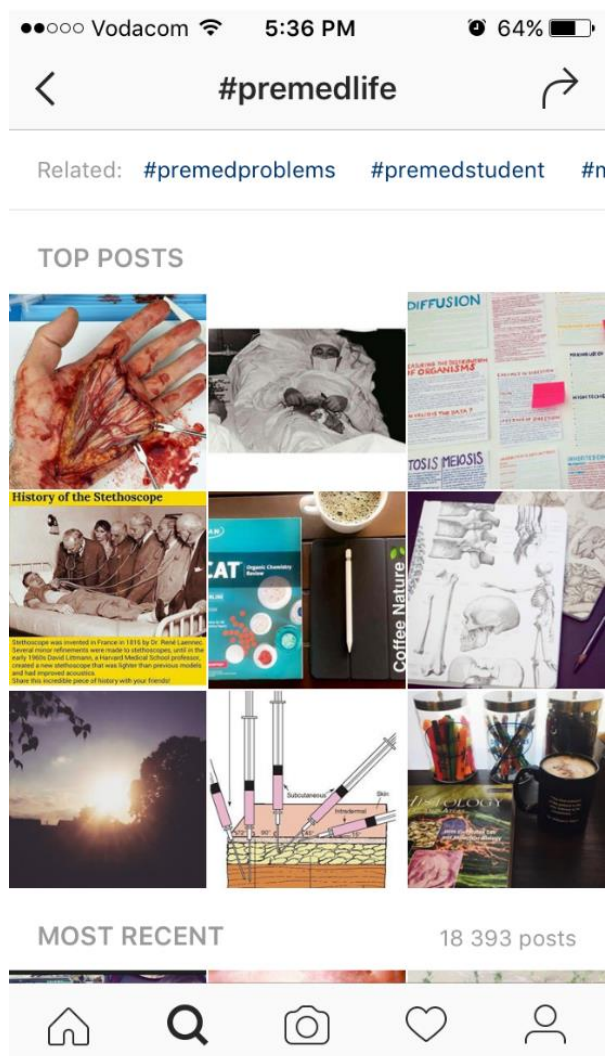
Figure 4.2: Example of "#premedlife" on Instagram

By using hashtags, Participant 2 received insightful and practical information about medical-related careers, and it also connected her to a network of professionals and medical students that provided her additional information about this career field:

> So if you're a doctor I check your profile to see where you studied. Sometimes "hashtags" (#) will also help. People will #stellies, #medicine #premed or something like that. These hashtags then send me to other people that have also tagged the same term or theme. It can even refer to suggested friends to follow (Interview – L2)

It seemed that this information of and exposure to possible careers, not only provided some guidance, but also influenced several participants' possible career choices:

> I come across stuff that you never even knew about. Like in science, the first time I thought this is something I could do one day, was actually when I saw a video on my Facebook feed. So because of the video I saw one time, it opened up a whole new career possibility for me. All of a sudden science is a big part of my life (Interview – L8)

Although having insight into a career field was valuable to them, participants also indicated the importance to not only see what the career would be like in the real world, but also how that career could influence their lives, values and long-term goals:

> I think being active on social media exposes you to different lifestyles that people are living and this could affect the career choice you make. You see how a certain career can provide you with the certain standard of living and financial freedom (Essay – L5)

I think it is a great platform to make sure or double check jobs that you are interested in. Like looking on someone's page that is an engineer and seeing if that is something you would like? (Interview – L4)

If I look online for a job that I am interested in and I see some comments … if there are too many negative comments then it makes me hesitate (interview – L7)

So I realised that I like to compare myself to these medical professionals and see how our lives differs. What would happen if the difference is too much or if I am not comfortable with what their lives portray online … and that could be my life one day, which will be a problem for me (Interview – L2)

- **Tertiary institutions**

A second subtheme that emerged, was the need for information regarding further studies. Participants reflected on various tertiary institutions which they followed online. It seems that the majority of colleges and universities have their own social pages on SNSs and use it to post information on various courses, campus activities and open days online:

Many University now have Facebook pages, I know some of my friends stay informed through that. They update you and I know my mom also follows those sites and she lets me know if there are open days (Interview – L6)

Figure 4.3 shows examples that the learners referred to. The examples were taken from the Facebook pages of two universities advertising their open days online.
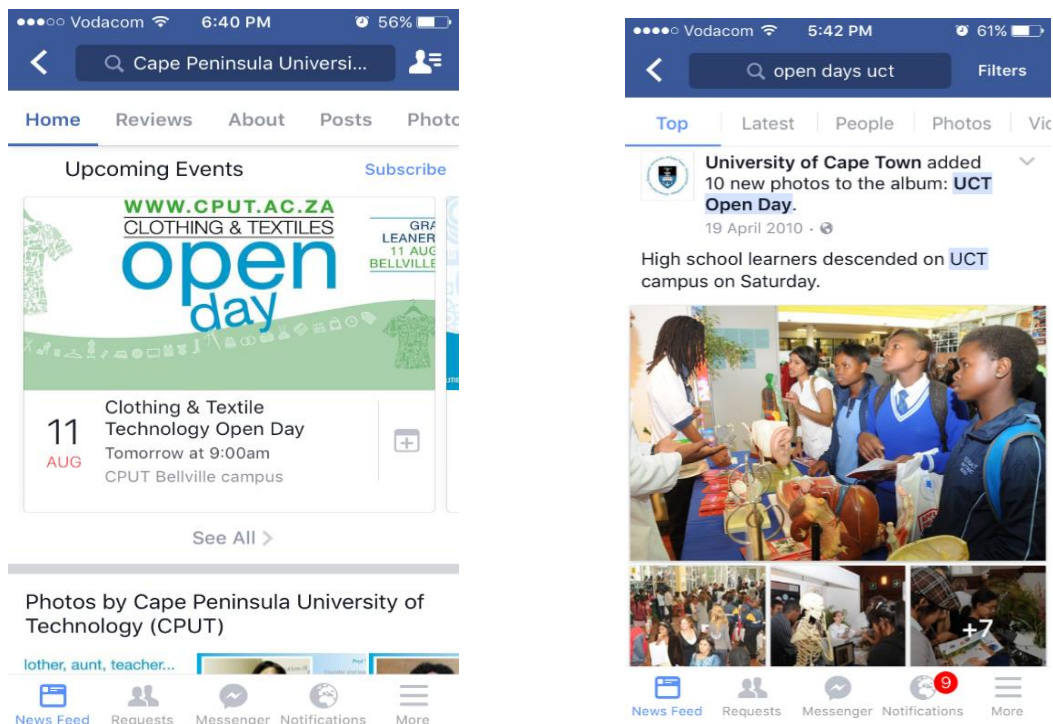
Figure 4.3: Examples of UCT and CPUT advertising their open days on Facebook

The participants` thoughts about tertiary institutions' online activities and influences were revealed by some relevant examples from their own experiences:

A good example is Stellenbosch University. So if they post stuff I can see it on my feed, it keeps me up to date with their open days and gives me an idea of what courses are available in an interactive way (Interview – L2)

I found a bunch of adverts from UNISA and SASOL, advertising bursaries on Facebook … A lot of them advertise different bursaries and what you need to apply for those bursaries. So that has guided me in many ways and made me work harder to try and obtain those bursaries (Interview – L8)

According to the participants, following a college and university's social page also helped them to see what life would be like as a student. They enjoyed looking at various students' photos and listening to their student experiences online:

It depends what course you do … I follow some students who study BA or teaching and it looks like they just have a joll. Whereas the medical students that I follow, post pictures or [of] their study notes and hashtag "prepping for finals". So through that I realise that it's not jolling, but medicine will be hard work. In a weird way it makes me excited, because that's what I want to do (Focus group – L2)

My brother studies at Stellenbosch and I follow him on Facebook, so I see what he is up to by looking on his profile and the pictures that he gets tagged on. His stuff just pops on my feed. I am excited to join him there (Interview – L8)

Stellenbosch University has a variety of pages on social media and all their feeds link to their Facebook account. They would tweet something or post a picture on Instagram and then it goes to their official Facebook page too. These posts and pictures from students helps me to see the social part of varsity life. It seems that it is not all hard work, but some fun as well (Focus group – L1)

Examples of the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Stellenbosch University's Instagram pages about campus information and campus life, as referred to by the participants, can be seen in Figure 4.4.
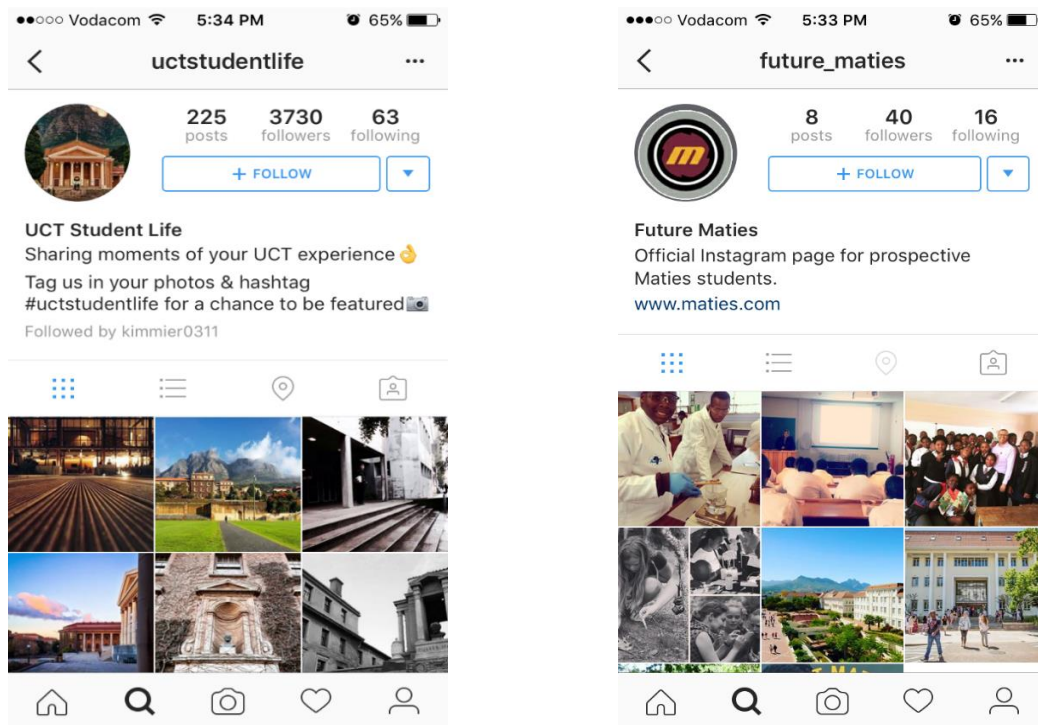
Figure 4.4: Examples of UCT and Stellenbosch University's Instagram pages for existing and prospective students

Whether social events or academic information, it appeared that the majority of participants followed a certain University or had access to friends or siblings who exposed them to student life. This campus visibility has given them some sense of direction in terms of study fields, expectations, as well as what to expect from life after school.

- **Global events and career trends**

A subtheme of having access to global events, as well as career trends was also raised during the research study. Participants mentioned basic ways of how SNSs helped them to stay informed and up to date with changing events and trends around the world:

[SNSs] has an explore page and there you can see a bunch of stuff that you would not normally see. So it exposes you to a bunch of new things, like news events (Interview – L 5)

People you follow and groups you like will notify you when they update things or change things, so you are always up to speed with things that are changing or trending (Interview – L1)

When asked to elaborate on this, it seemed that events and trends with regard to careers actually assisted participants in thinking realistically in terms of their world of work and career aspirations. The responses indicated that the participants surprisingly used SNSs to research career opportunities in various fields:

In the beginning I wanted to go into sport science, but after some online research I realised that the market is flooded and that there are not enough job opportunities in that field. So then I looked at some alternative options and realised that physiotherapy and bio-kineticist would also be enjoyable as a career. That helped me (Interview – L 4)

I use Careers 24 to help me see how many jobs there are available in my field. You know, see if there is a need. Which in my case there is a big need for female quantity surveying (Focus group – L1)

You also get influenced by online trends, seeing what Hollywood wants at the moment and what they are looking for. So I think that could play a big role in what direction my film career goes (Interview – L8)

Before concluding this theme of 'access to information', it is perhaps important to note that even though participants saw the value of SNSs in obtaining information, some concerns were also raised.

Firstly, learners voiced their concerns about the authenticity of the information which is displayed online, as they thought the information could be misleading and biased, only showing the positive side of a career:

> *Social media also doesn't have a filter and nobody stops you to say what you want. So there is so much diverse opinions some are true and some not, some comments can put you off a career or make a career look more glamourous (Focus group – L7)*

> *I think a lot of the time social media can make stuff look better than it really is. So I am not really sure if you can trust everything you hear and see on some sites (Interview – L8)*

> *Reading stuff online is one dimensional, while going out in the workplace and sitting in is real and you get to see how things really are (Interview – L2)*

Secondly, the amount of information and uncontrollable exposure to it, was another area of concern. Participants contradicted themselves in initially valuing the accessibility and amount of information available online, but also admitted that it left them feeling overwhelmed and confused:

> *It can also be overwhelming seeing all the information and makes you anxious at times (Interview – L 7)*

> *It definitely makes you second guess who you want to be and what career you want to have one day. Because it exposes you to so much, you constantly see a career path and think, well I could go into that (Interview – L4)*

> *SNSs exposes you to everything, because there is no filter. So I have come across so gross stuff like videos of doctors doing real operations, and it just starts playing*

automatically … almost you like have no control over what you see (Interview –

L5)

In conclusion, it appears that even though there are some downfalls to what participants are exposed to online and that it could cause confusion and second-guessing, there still seems to be more advantages to being online and having access to information.

Overall, the sentiment among the participants was positive, in that they found most of the information on SNSs useful and relevant for career education and planning. Participant 4 concluded this theme effectively, as she believed that using SNSs for career-related information is the responsibility of the individual and that it is up to the individual to guide his or her own exposure to online information and to use it effectively:

> *Social media provides us with a lot of information, but it is up to us to look for the information and use it for career related matters and decisions for our future (Essay – L4)*

4.3.2.3   *Platform to investigate and research*

The research question also guided participants to reflect on how SNSs have enabled them to explore and investigate careers and various aspects of themselves in terms of their career planning. The majority of the participants were of the opinion that SNSs could be valuable to them in terms of researching possible career options and exploring them. This, in turn, made them question certain career fields.

Participants expressed their general views on this subtheme in their essays as follows:

> *[SNSs] makes researching faster and you can always find an answer (Essay – L3)*

[SNSs] enables me to compare different institutes and viewpoints of other people who have been through the process that I am going through currently (Essay – L2)

Social media has its advantages, like being able to ask questions and receive answers almost instantly about a career you are interested in (Essay – L7)

As the Internet has a limitless search engine and almost everything can be found online, it was no surprise when participants mentioned how easy it was to use SNSs to do research on careers. During the interviews and the focus group, participants elaborated on their views and gave some examples from their own online experiences:

SNSs have made research and career guidance much easier for everyone, everything you seek is there by a simple click of a button (Essay – L7)

SNSs give you the opportunity to research things or careers that you are interested in. For example, you can just search teacher on any social platform and find a large amount of connections, groups and information about that career (Essay – L1)

- **Exploring**

When asked to elaborate on these statements, the value of SNSs enabling participants to explore and find information online seemed evident:

My parents told me they think I would be good at Quantity Surveying, First I had no idea what that was, so I googled it and it took me to a variety of sites and webpages that gave me all the info I needed. So reading up on that gave me an idea and gave me the space to think about that career and whether it would be good for me and whether I would enjoy it (Interview – L1).

Some of the doctors I follow say they are medical practitioners' at … (Hospital's name) and then give the link. So you can go to that link and see what hospitals

they are working at or their company name. There is also a lot of information on

their bio page, with internship programmes available and where they studied and

so on. You find a lot of back doors and alternative routes to go into the medical

field (Focus group – L2)

I research careers with sport and bio-kinetics, physiotherapy and stuff like that

came up. So I read up on a few of these careers (Interview – L5).

It appeared that by researching and exploring their career fields of interest, participants were able to gain the information required and also to gain some clarity on what the career entailed and other options available in that field.

A concern that emerged again during the study, was employment. It seemed if participants wanted to use SNSs to research and explore the availability of work in their fields of interest:

SNSs enable you to look if there is a big demand for the career you want to pursue
(Essay – L5)

Due to the large amount of people using SNSs you can gauge what careers are in
high demand and whether you would enjoy the job or not (Essay – L4)

It appeared that by researching and exploring the availability of work in a certain career field, not only guided the participants, but also offered them alternative career options to consider.

- **Questioning careers and finding answers**

Another dimension that emerged from the research theme, was the ability that SNSs have to make participants question career choices. The participants' general views on questioning were expressed during their essays:

Connecting with people online, enables you to ask questions about the field as well as listen to their stories and work experiences (Essay – L4)

Whilst on SNSs, a number of questions arise with regards to the overall atmosphere of the career you would like to enter (Essay – L2)

Social media allows you to ask direct questions that can be compared to other information and give you more alternatives or options (Essay – L2).

Participant 4 was of the opinion that SNSs enabled her to obtain fast responses to questions:

I think if you have one quick question that you want to ask someone, then social media would be best and help you. You can send a professional a message and they don't have to block out a specific time to meet you. It's easier and less invasive (Interview – L4)

It appeared that SNSs also enabled participants to find their own answers to these and other questions that they might have about career possibilities:

[SNSs] allow you to find simple answers to the career path you want to follow (Essay – L1)

People online can help you answer questions you have about specific careers (Essay – L5)

When asked to explain and elaborate on this subtheme of questioning and finding answers, participants shared some examples:

… maybe seeing what else I can do? What careers are out there? Or looking at others' careers and thinking if that would make me happy (Interview – L7)

… do I see myself doing this? What is this career really about? So then I research and find the answers to those questions for myself (Interview – L5)

I look at the kind of career they have and wonder if it is something I would consider? Then I do some research on it and investigate, seeing if it is a path I would like to follow (Interview – L6)

Many of the questions that exposure to SNSs created among the participants were related to the suitability of a particular career and whether it would provide a sense of fulfilment:

… seeing some posts make me question whether or not going into the corporate world after school is for me? (Essay – L1)

You can kind of see if they are happy as well, I mean your social media pages does reflect who you are and what your life is like. So you can kind of see if people are happy and if their life is something you would want (Focus group – L7)

… if I follow my doctor on Instagram and he posts something that doesn't fit with my idea of what a doctor should be, in that case it would make me question whether I would trust him or want to go to him again. Then, what if I posts things that doesn't fit in with my ideal image, could it damage me? (Interview – L2)

It appeared that researching a career path can seldom be separated from who you are as a person and your own interests, abilities and values.

- **Questioning of self and finding answers**

According to the participants, SNSs made them question their career path and self within that path in numerous ways. Participant 8 mentioned that at times SNSs made her question not only a career, but herself in that career as well. It thus appeared that

seeing others' comments, posts and experiences, made her examine her own worth and capabilities:

> *Some of the things these people or groups post look difficult. That makes me step back and wonder if I am smart enough or good enough to also do that one day. That's scary for me (Interview – L8)*

When reflecting further on how SNSs made participants research, question and explore themselves in terms of careers, it appeared that they all wanted their future careers to correspond with who they are:

> *[SNSs] help[s] you to explore different parts of yourself and being exposed to a big variety of people and opinions. You also have the chance to look onto someone else's life and imagine yourself in that career … thinking could this be me (Interview – L4)*

> *You can also look at important traits for like nursing or engineering and see whether it matches you to some extent (Interview – L1)*

- **Abilities**

The majority of the participants were of the opinion that realising their own abilities was important when choosing a career field. Social network sites enabled them to reflect on this and research careers, assessing if this field matched their personality and skills, as well as their own strengths and weaknesses:

> *Personality wise you see what would be required from you by a certain career and then you can assess whether that is you or not. Like for me, wanting to be a doctor … I have to have empathy, but can't be too soft. So by looking at their posts you can see if you have that balance that other doctors have (Focus group – L2)*

SNSs provide you with the opportunity to explore your own strengths and weakness and enable you to see whether a career path would fit you or not (Essay – L4)

Then you think of your qualities that could help you in that field and I think that's how I got to dentistry. So it sparks an interest and want to do something and shows you what skills you need (Interview – L5)

It appeared that whether positive or negative, SNSs made it possible for participants to reflect on who they are and what their abilities are, and in doing so, the sites possibly guided them into pursuing a career field or questioning a career field.

- **Values and beliefs**

Another aspect of exploring oneself and matching it to a career, seemed to be reflecting on one's values, lifestyle and beliefs. The outcomes of the research questions made it evident that being exposed to online posts and careers, enabled participants to question who they are and whether a career field would support the life that they wanted for themselves:

Seeing other medical professionals profiles, make me wonder, if that is the kind of life that I would want to live one day? (Interview – L2)

I would much rather want a career that challenges me daily and allows me to travel and meet new people (Essay – L1)

I follow a lot of medical professionals. They always post healthy stuff and that makes me realise that I also need to change my life style and become more aware of my own health if I want to help other people (Focus group – L2)

Participant 6 highlighted the importance of knowing what life-style certain careers could provide, as well as judging whether those careers would be in line with her values:

> *[Online, you can see how people's] careers influence their lifestyle and I never linked that. So now when I see the way some people live online, I look at the kind of career they have and wonder if it is something I would consider? ... Then I do some research on it and investigate, seeing if it is a path I would like to follow … [SNSs' posts of people in specific careers enable me to ask questions], like if I want a family, would this career allow me to do that, would I have some flexibility and freedom or will it absorb me? Is this job lucrative, will I be happy? (Interview – L6)*

Many questions and concerns arose during this interview, making it possible for me to observe how SNSs also exposed participants to the type of life they could have one day. It can be deduced that participants would choose careers that would make them happy, enable them to be themselves, and that are not in conflict with their values.

4.3.2.3   *Presenting of 'self' online*

The way how participants presented themselves on SNSs was another important theme that emerged from the research study. Given that the way in which one presents oneself is a crucial part of self-development and is particularly acknowledged as a key development phase of adolescents, it is not surprising that the participants identified this theme. Mehdizadeh (2010) links this process to self-presentation, highlighting it as a central element of identity formation and an important part when forming career aspirations and making career-related decisions.

- **Impression management**

With the rise of SNSs, the way in which one presents oneself has progressed beyond face-to-face encounters, enabling participants to communicate various aspects of their identities online, by displaying photos, showcasing friends, writing comments and explicit self-descriptions (Yang & Brown, 2016). In doing this, participants now have the opportunity to manage their online image, as well as to make decisions concerning how to best portray themselves to others, including potential employers (Strehlke, 2010):

> *For my future career in general, I try to keep my social media squeaky clean (Essay – L4)*
>
> *A future boss could make a judgement call based on your online profile and online behaviour (Essay – L6)*
>
> *We often judge people based on what they portray online. Impressions last a long time and become problematic later on in life when you want to establish a career (Essay – L3)*

Participants explained that their online profile could have adverse effects on their future careers if it is not managed properly. Some examples were given of being judged and possibly missing out on career opportunities:

> *… if a doctor post pictures of himself drinking and smoking, well that does not fit in with the healthy lifestyle or advice they give their patients. How could you trust someone like that to treat you? So, I take careful consideration when I post things on my profile, because I know people are watching and forming their own opinions (Interview – L2)*

There is like a work profile now, LinkedIn and if you are on that site and people Google your name that is the first profile that comes up. So all your skills, interests and work experience can be loaded onto that site. Twitter for me is also something that I watch, I try not to like weird stuff and post inappropriate stuff because you never know who will see it and it could cost you a job in the future (Focus group – L1)

It appears that participants were aware that the way in which they present themselves online, could potentially have damaging effects on their futures. However, by having editorial control of their profiles, participants not only show themselves in a specific light, but also could display their perceived interests, values, likes, beliefs and ultimately, possible career themes:

… just as I follow people in the medical field, my friends follow other people in their interests … I realised so their profile and feeds, is almost a kind of indicator as to what they want to do after school or like, who they want to be one day (Interview – L2)

That the majority things that are in my feeds … are all in the same category. So, stuff that I enjoy, things that interests me … I always thought a feed is a feed and normally a feed consist of random things, but actually it is all grouped into certain categories (Interview – L1)

- **Marketing of self**

In addition, there were also participants who mentioned the importance of marketing oneself online. By sharing content of their own, participants believed they could be noticed and that it could even open doors to work opportunities. Promoting oneself

online and showcasing your talents and skills thus seemed to be a pertinent value of SNSs:

> *… on most social media platforms I can show my own short films and in doing this, gives me exposure and creates feedback (Essay – L8)*

> *Your online visibility is quite important in the sports world; clubs, companies or sports institutes could see your profile and decide to sponsor you or get you to their team somehow (Interview – L4)*

> *I think it depends on the career that you are interested in. Like if you want to be a model, actor or in the film business, you can actually promote yourself online and find jobs like that (Interview – L8)*

- **Online identity**

A subtheme of online identity was brought forward during discussions of presenting 'self' online. There appeared to be a debate and difference of opinion among the participants about the 'real' self and the 'online' self, when it came to career construction and career advancement.

Mehdizadeh (2010, p. 357) elaborates on this by explaining that "SNSs offer a highly controlled environment for self-presentation behaviour, it provides the ideal setting for impression management". Markus and Nurius (1986) add to this by positing that a person's formation of self can be distinguished by two categories: the 'now self', the identity that is recognised by others, and the 'possible self', the identity unknown to others (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

SNSs thus seem to enable participants to manage both these identities by either withholding information and hiding undesirable facts, or role-playing a more desired persona online:

> *I don't think that people are always honest on social media … they post what they think others want to see. Always amazing and fun things. So maybe we have two sides, our social media side and our real side? Hmmm … Social media is almost like an edited side of yourself (Interview – L5)*

> *Obviously you have two different personalities, you have who you show to the world online and who you really are. So I think it's difficult. You see people's accounts and think they are really cool and you want to be friends with them, but then you spend time together and the person is not what they seemed online. So you can portray one thing and be another (Interview – L6)*

When asked which one of the two categories of 'self' is more important to them, participants appeared conflicted, as one learner noted:

> *I would love to say your "real self" [is more important], but most people judge you based on your online profile … so I think at my age, that is more important. For example in the sports world, you need to have an image that is in line with your sponsor and club (Interview – L4)*

Another participant felt strongly that there should not be a difference between the two, especially in terms of your work or leadership roles one day:

> *Many people have not met you, but maybe they have heard of you and need to check your profile for some reason, like prefect for school or a job one day. So, I think your profile should give people insight about you as a person. If the real you*

and the online you don't match up, people will notice it quickly and that could cause

issues (Interview – L2)

In conclusion, access to SNSs has profoundly altered traditional conditions of identity construction and is providing various opportunities for young people to interact in disembodied messages, revealing only the facts and characteristics they choose to reveal (Ridout, Campbell, & Ellis, 2012). For some of the participants their online profile showcased their "hoped-for possible self", while others believed that there is no difference between their online self and their real self as this discrepancy could create complications in the long term.

4.3.3   Career education and planning

As the central theme of the research entailed career education and planning, I thought it relevant to investigate the participants' understanding of these two terms.

As explained in in Section 1.7.3, career education can be seen as educating individuals by means of exploring, questioning and understanding what is happening around them in terms of their career and world of work.

4.3.3.1   Learners' understanding of career education and planning

In general, the participants' understanding of career education and career planning seemed to coincide with Gibson and Mitchell's statement, alluded to in Section 1.7.3. Participants mentioned that career education revolved around learning about themselves, various careers and researching relevant information and requirements:

I think it means knowing what you want to do one day, what it is about and what is

required of you (Interview – L8)

Education makes me think of being taught about careers … like how to apply, what you need for that career, what a study course entail. Sometimes they use big words though like honours, masters … and I am like, what does that mean and what is the difference? So I have to do my own research and find out those things … but maybe that is part of career education? (Interview – L5)

When asked how they understood career planning, learners mentioned taking steps and making plans that could steer them closer to a career:

… planning, could be the steps you are taking to get to a career. You know what subjects to take, where to go study and your own skills and talents that is needed in that field. Do I need any extra mural activities that could increase your chances to get accepted? And the advantages of the job, disadvantages and sacrifices which you might need to make one day (Interview – L8)

Getting to know yourself and different careers and kind of figuring your way around it and making a choice, basically knowing more about yourself and the career that you want to go into (Interview – L8)

4.3.3.2   Career education programmes at school

After a basic understanding of the research theme was established, participants were able to explore how career education programmes at school, like the Life Orientation curriculum, have assisted them in terms of their own career education and planning and whether there was space for SNSs in these programmes.

- **Participants' perceived value of Life Orientation**

A debate unfolded with regard to the value of Life Orientation in terms of career education and planning, as participants had different opinions on this controversial

topic. The various perceived values of LO were explored first. According to a number of the participants, LO supplied basic information about careers and guided them to do further research on their own in terms of their specific career needs:

> *Teachers in LO give you basic steps to follow. They give you the foundation of what to look for in yourself, your values, likes, dislikes, trends … and so on. So from there you learn a bit about yourself and a career and then do some extra research yourself (Interview – L2)*

Others enjoyed the practical component of the job-shadowing project, the assessments they did to understand themselves better, as well as advice how to place themselves on the job market:

> *Now in Gr 11 we had to go out and job shadow somewhere, you know, actually go out and experience the world we might enter in a few years. We could ask our self if this is really something we would want to do one day. We also did personality tests and that helped me understand myself a bit more. So stuff that you really didn't know about yourself is coming out and that opens up so many more options in terms of careers (Interview – L8)*

> *Our LO teacher told us the other day about social network site to network and connect with other professionals. I think … LinkedIn? You can market yourself and upload your CV (Interview – L7)*

Although there were some valuable aspects to LO, not all the participants shared the same opinion. A debate arose as some learners mentioned concerns and gaps within the subject field.

- **Gaps in Life Orientation**

Shortcomings were identified pertaining to the relevance, reoccurrence and restrictedness of the subject content of Life Orientation. A number of participants viewed LO as limiting and not enabling them to either explore or express their own views and career interests:

> *They make you do things the way they want you to do it. You can't think for yourself at all or explain what the topic means to you. For me, that's just a waste of time. (Focus group – L2)*

> *… they only cover the basics in class and only use traditional examples like a doctor for instance. So teachers never go in-depth with careers, like Quantity Surveying. So in LO class you get option A, but not really an option B or C (Interview – L1)*

The majority of the participants perceived the information to be repetitive:

> *We learn the same thing every single year and then when you really need it you zone out completely. So maybe they start too young, so we are bored with it by the time it really matters and we need to pay attention (Interview – L5)*

> *How many times can we learn about HIV, careers, study methods and stuff like that? In Gr 11 we should have enough information on study methods and HIV (Focus group – L7)*

Participants also expressed their need for a more hands-on approach in the LO class, that is, having the ability to investigate and to do research themselves on relevant career topics:

LO is just reading from a text book and can be bit one sided at times. So I think it would be quicker with a phone or tablet and more relevant to our own unique needs (Interview – L1)

I would love to have the opportunity to investigate topics for myself. Teachers could give us a few good websites and we could source the relevant information on the topic. It would also be great to add to the information that teachers give us in class (Interview – L6)

… so the learners control what they learn and how they learn it. It would certainly be easier and more fun (Interview – L4)

- **Own responsibility**

Interestingly, the participants also realised that they have a part to play in their own career development, and that the responsibility does not lie with only the teachers and schools to guide them. The majority of the participants believed that as their careers will eventually be their own journey, they will need to take ownership of their own career planning process:

… ultimately it is our responsibility, because it's our life and our job one day. So we need to make sure we know what we are getting into and that it is what we want to do. The school can only do so much. They tell you what to look at, like skills, interests, values, personality and so on … but you actually have to go and implement it. Work through it and take action (Interview – L5)

Participants indicated that they valued the basic guidance which LO offered, but felt that it was their duty to apply those basic steps and to do their own research in their fields of interest:

If teachers talk about something in class and I want to know more about it, or more detail, then I would go home and investigate for myself at home online. So by reading up extra I can see whether it's just a phase I am in, or I am interested in, or something I want to pursue … I could take the basics that the teachers give us and add my unique needs to it, by researching online (Interview – L1)

… to take what school gives you and implement it to your own unique needs. You know putting what we learn at school into action. Not just sitting back and waiting for something to happen. You actually have to figure some things out for yourself in your own way (Interview – L6)

4.3.4   Other influential systems

As the value of SNSs in terms of careers and career education programmes at school has been explored, participants identified various other influential systems that could also lead to exploration, questioning and re-considering career paths. Real-life experiences seemed to be a popular theme among the learners.

4.3.4.1   Real-life experiences

Other systems which play an influential role in career education and planning that emerged throughout the data gathering process, were real-life experiences and their value. It appeared that even though participants acknowledged that SNSs is making life much easier; by providing easy access to information, contacts and more, many still believed that the value of real experiences and face-to-face conversations could not be disregarded:

For me, personal experiences mean more. Actually doing the work and forming your own opinions and not just reading it on a screen (Focus group – L7)

I think it is better to experience things for yourself. Researching it online, you need to be specific and if you can't find what you are looking for your questions go unanswered (Interview – L6)

Furthermore, participants preferred to learn for themselves, rather than just hearing about it from others online:

I think a face-to-face conversation is still more memorable for me, so networking with people in your field of work interests can be quick and easy, but I don't think it can replace something like job-shadowing … (Interview – L1)

As helpful as SNSs can be, for me I have obtained more information about careers by job-shadowing and attending open days at Universities (Essay – L5)

- **Job-shadowing experiences**

Much emphasis was placed by the participants on their job-shadowing experiences, which could have been contributed to the fact that they had a job-shadowing assignment for LO that was due for Term 3. Many participants thus used their July holidays and spent two days shadowing and observing at a company or business of their choice. This could have influenced the strong and enthusiastic reporting on these experiences as it was still fresh in the participants' minds and they appeared eager to share their experiences:

It was by far the best project we ever got in LO. In the beginning I wasn't amped to do it, it's scary to go out and look for work. But I have to say, I really enjoyed it while I was doing it and found it so helpful (Focus group – L5)

When you job-shadow, you learn so much more and spend the whole day talking to someone and asking questions. So I don't think SNSs can help you experience

a job by reading it online, whereas job shadowing can a bit more. So you have to go and find out for yourself, well experience for yourself (Interview – L1)

The job shadowing helped me ask a lot of questions to people in the field and it helped me get a feel for it (Interview – L6)

The job shadowing project really helped me. Being forced to go out and actually experiencing a career you think you would like. Asking the real professionals questions and seeing what their lives are like (Interview – L4)

- **Open days at universities**

As referred to in Section 4.3.3.2, many universities advertise their open days on SNSs. Participants described these real-life experiences as eye-opening and valuable. They also explained that being able to ask questions, speaking to lecturers and noticing how many other people were also interested in their courses, left them motivated:

I get a lot of assistance when I went to the open days at universities and colleges. Recently I went to Stellenbosch and UCT, and I asked lots of people there in the subject field that I am interested in questions. I also take like all the brochures … and then I read over them at home (Interview – L4)

I went to the Stellenbosch open day and there were so many people and I just realised that I need to up my game if I am going to compete with them to get a place there. So that motivated me and helped me focus a bit more in the exams (Focus group – L7)

- **Volunteering and extra murals**

Another subtheme that emanated from the real-life experiences was the value that participants attached to volunteering and extra mural activities at school, such as sport,

clubs and societies. Learner 2 believed that volunteering in a field of interest is a helpful way to gain practical experience and a sense of what the career could be like:

> *Since volunteering at the Fire Station I realised that there are days where you just sit around and wait for stuff to happen and when a crisis does happen you are in a total panic, trying to manage the situation as best you can. So people must be careful to just judge based on what they see on TV or even social media, it's not always a true reflection, so in my opinion real-life experiences are better and more reliable. It's a quick way to test yourself and see if you can handle the pressure (Focus group – L2)*

> *I have been part of our school's drama club since Gr 8 and I can see how I have grown and changed from all the things I have learned and been exposed to through this club … So they need to go out there and start doing things that they are interested in, experiencing it for them self (Interview – L8)*

4.3.3.2   Family

Although the influence of family and friends was not explored specifically during the research study, a number of participants did mention how their parents have influenced and motivated them in terms of moving towards a certain career direction.

Other participants commented that their parents gave them a few options that they would be good in and then left it to them (the participants) to research these careers:

> *My parents told my they think I would be good at Quantity Surveying, First I had no idea what that was, so I googled it and it took me to a variety of sites and webpages that gave me all the info I needed (Interview – L1)*

> *My dad always told me you don't need to know exactly what you want to do, you just need start working on a rough idea or direction. Have some kind of general*

plan and if you change your mind along the way that is fine, as long as you are

going in some sort of direction (Focus group – L7)

This could indicate that although parents did not form part of the initial research, they still have some influence over their children's career choices. Certain parents use their influence to motivate their children, while others guide them towards a career field. It did seem, however, as if the participants mostly experienced these influences as positive.

4.4   PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

As outlined in Section 3.8.1, regular feedback was given to each participant in the research, as a measure to ensure credibility of the interpretations. Being the researcher, I was fortunate, because after each phase, I had the opportunity to verify the findings and interpretations with the participants.

During the interviews, I explored the participants' experiences of the essays and had the opportunity to ask for clarification and probe for additional examples. The majority of the participants initially felt overwhelmed by the research question in the essay, and struggled to link SNSs as an influential system to their careers.

However, after they started paying attention as to what they are exposed to online, the participants recognised the value of SNSs:

… when I started the essay I didn't realise what a massive impact social media has

had on my life. How you think, how you feel … So when I had to try and link it to

my career decisions and planning … It was a bit overwhelming and I struggled to

see the link between SNSs and careers. So I started to look at my own profile, who

I follow, what groups and topics I have liked … I realised it was all medical-related.

I was like wow … (Interview – L2)

I actually had to sit down and think. I don't really think of career guidance stuff when

I go onto social media. I just normally use Instagram and Snap-Chat to chat to

friends and see what they are up to. So after the talk you gave at the school and

doing the job-shadowing project I started looking at social media in a more career

type of way (Interview – L7)

It was a nice topic, because I have been thinking about careers quite a bit this year.

So with this research project I actually saw some career possibilities on my

Instagram account and it made me think of different directions I could go into

(Interview – L5)

The same approach was followed in phase three, where I used the focus group to show to the participants the emerging categories, themes and subthemes. They were surprised to see what the main themes were, and to hear what their fellow peers had to say.

Participant 7 indicated that the research study had changed her perspective on SNSs and that she started using it in a more career-focussed way:

I recently started using SNSs in a more focussed way, actually becoming aware of

the post I make, the people I follow and information I am being exposed to … using

it more as a tool to research and find information and not just only uploading photos

and checking on friends (Focus group – L7)

4.7 SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter presented the research data collected, as well as the outline of categories, themes, subthemes and codes that emerged from the research study.

Firstly, the category of participants` experiences of SNSs were elaborated upon, which was followed by the participants` perceived values of SNSs with regard to careers. Participants' views of career education and planning were also covered, in addition to further findings, such as face to face connections and the value of real life experiences, which also emerged from the study

In conclusion, the research findings show that SNSs have the potential to assist participants question, explore and understand more about themselves as well as their world of work. The next and last chapter of this thesis will discuss these findings in more detail, especially pertaining to their relation to the specific research questions. Chapter 5 will also serve as an overall conclusion where my final reflections as researcher will be discussed. The study's strengths, limitations and recommendations for future research will also be presented.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, PERSONAL REFLECTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore the value that Grade 11 learners attached to SNSs with regard to their career education and planning. In this chapter I shall discuss the findings related to the primary research question namely:

- What are the possible influences of SNSs on career education and planning among Grade 11 learners?

The following secondary research questions were formulated at follows:

- How do questions regarding careers develop by engaging on SNS?
- How do Grade 11 learners further explore these questions and what is the nature of the information that they obtain by engaging on SNSs?
- How do Grade 11 learners experience the value of SNSs with regard to career decisions?

In concluding the whole research process, this chapter will also provide the platform to express my final reflections as researcher. The strengths, limitations as well as recommendations for further research, as based on the findings of this study, will be presented.

5.2   DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, I discuss the research findings with reference to the theoretical framework on which it was based, as well as attempting to answer the research questions.

As presented in Chapter 2, the systems theory framework (STF) provided the theoretical base for the research, as it presents career development as a dynamic process, depicted through its process influences, recursiveness, change over time, and chance (Patton & McMahon, 2006). In addition, the eco-systemic nature of the STF is based on the interdependence of organisms and their physical environment (Donald et al., 2014) and states that each system is an open system that is also subject to influences from the outside (Patton & McMahon, 2006). As the STF allows for a more diverse understanding of career planning, the individual is able to explore the interconnectedness and influences of various systems and reflect on their own contextual factors that could be influencing their career (McMahon & Watson, 2009). A popular social system, with which learners seem to engage on a daily basis, is a collection of SNSs. This research used the STF as a guiding principle which facilitated learner-participants to explore the extent to which SNSs have influenced their behaviour and decisions with regard to their career and career choices.

Akhurst and Mkhize (2006, p. 139) assert that "in the past two decades accelerating technology changes has had a profound impact on careers. This coupled with the influences of globalisation and economic events, has resulted in people needing to adapt to changes in the world of work in unprecedented ways". In addition, for learners to succeed in life after school, they require more exposure to the world of work, accessible career education services, knowledge of tertiary intuitions and a wider

range of social contacts (Akhurst & Nhlanhla, 2006). This study thus explored how SNSs could provide this exposure, access and knowledge and assist learners in their career education and planning process.

In order to discuss the research findings, the secondary research questions of the study will be addressed first, followed by a discussion of the main research question pertaining to the possible influences of SNSs on learners' career education and planning, after which a conclusion will be given including a reflection on the research findings.

5.2.1 Development and exploration of questions regarding careers through SNS engagement

Through the research, participants indicated a number of ways in which SNSs enabled them to question and explore various aspects of careers and their 'self' with regard to careers. As a larger online network exposed them to countless career opportunities, study fields and life views, it also prompted them to question and explore areas around careers and their 'self'.

Considering Donald Super's developmental notion as mentioned in Section 2.3, learners progress to a phase of exploration during adolescence. During this phase, learners start to question and explore themselves as well as possible career paths (Watson & Stead, 2006). During the research, the learner-participants remarked that SNSs provided them with an ideal platform for questioning, as exposure to several careers online, indicated possible realities of those careers, the life style which those careers could offer, as well as possible fulfilment in their future.

In addition, being exposed to companies, tertiary institutions and other professionals' posts, comments, photos and advertisements online, elicited numerous questions around the participants` own personalities, values and strengths towards possible careers. Other questions about flexible hours, a family-work-life balance, life style and possible fulfilment, also emerged from the study. Participants also questioned whether training and working overseas could provide them with more work opportunities in certain career fields. This then eventually led them to research alternative options or careers and gave some direction in their future career choices.

Issues around 'self' and identity arose and were seen as another area of exploring by using SNSs. It appeared that Super's saying "until you know who you are, you won't know what you will become" is a critical concept in career development (Watson & Stead, 2006). Yang and Brown (2016) state that online sites provide ideal opportunities for adolescents to explore and question who they are and what they want to be, and thus it can be seen that SNSs have the potential to guide learner-participants through this self-discovering process. As participants questioned various characteristics of themselves and their identity, they often also found themselves comparing their online profile to those of others. In doing so, they were able to reflect on the similarities and differences, making them question their own abilities and worth within a certain career field.

It appeared that by being exposed to a broader network of perspectives, careers and possible 'selves', SNSs made a range of questions and opportunities possible for further exploration by adolescents with regard to careers. These questions and exploration in turn then guided them towards answers and some clarity in terms of possible career options as well as views on their own career identities.

5.2.2 Nature of information that is acquired by engaging on SNSs

As mentioned in Section 1.1 of Chapter 1, the internet and SNSs have completely changed the way information is broadcasted to the world (Kramer & Winter, 2008). New information on SNSs is collected by means of online connections, exposure to friends' posts, advertising, and sponsored links etc. The majority of the participants commented on the accessibility of information online, as they felt that access to information on SNSs was quick and easy. According to the participants, Instagram was one of the most popular sites to use. Their fascination with Instagram, where communication is limited to pictures, also indicated the participants` increasing desire to communicate in an indolent and more simplistic way. Filters, search boxes and hash tags (#) are often used as research tools, which can filter information into certain categories or themes, making it even easier and faster for participants to find relevant information about career topics of interests.

Parson's trait-factor theory, as mentioned in Section 2.3 of Chapter 2, asserts that knowledge about self, knowledge about the world of work and reasoning on the link between the two, are three important factors to take into account when considering a career path (Watson & Stead, 2006). By being exposed to more diverse views, shared connections and interacting with likeminded people on SNSs, participants reported that they were able to gain more information and insight about themselves, as well as about a potential career field.

Participants also mentioned that information available on SNSs opened their eyes as to what is available, compared to the few traditional careers that are normally discussed in LO at school or among family members. Through online posts, photos, videos and links, participants gain information and a better understanding about the

realities of a career. Participants also commented that SNSs provide a platform which enables them to learn through experience, and that they obtain more insight into what a potential career could hold for their future. This new awareness creates the possibility of more career opportunities and guides them to match themselves to more suitable career fields.

Online news and career websites like News 24 and Career 24 are also visited by participants to share local and global news and events. Through these online engagements, participants have the option to be aware of what is happening locally and globally, as well as staying informed about current job trends, job availability and career demands across the world. In addition, various colleges and universities also have SNS pages that they use to communicate with existing and prospective students. By using SNSs, universities and colleges post information about open days, available courses, application dates, as well as useful links to bursary and registration procedures. The majority of the participants enjoy this interactive way of communicating with tertiary institutions, as the online pages not only provide valuable academic course information, but also practical tips and updated information on campus activities and social events.

Participants valued this limitless access to information, however, certain concerns were raised about the trustworthiness of information found online, as well as the inability to control the type of information one is being exposed to. During the focus group, participants expanded on this notion and expressed the idea that information found online could be misleading, biased and could exaggerate for entertainment and appearance value reasons. Moreover, one participant pointed out that being exposed to so much information online, made her feel overwhelmed and confused. It also made

her think twice about herself and her career choices. Although the participants acknowledged these downfalls of SNSs, the majority still believed that SNSs are vital tools to research and obtain information. It was concluded that the information found online and how it is used, is eventually the responsibility of the SNS user.

5.2.3   Value of SNSs with regard to career decisions

As alluded to earlier in this study, many young South Africans struggle to make career decisions, as a result of their limited exposure to the world of work, a lack of access to career education services, and inadequate knowledge of tertiary institutions (Akhurst & Nhlanhla, 2006). Throughout this research study, participants indicated various ways in which SNSs enabled them to bridge these gaps and assisted them with possible career decisions.

Participants revealed that SNSs provided a platform for them to explore and investigate various characteristics of themselves and possible careers. By engaging in online activities, being exposed to a multitude of careers and professional networks, participants could gain insight into a certain study field, which could either create an excitement and motivation to pursue a career path, or make them decide to change or reconsider a career path. It seemed that having insight into others' careers and lives through updates and news feeds, much-needed clarity could be gained with regard to the realities of a career path. Participants also indicated that online career sites like Careers 24, guided their choices and career paths, by indicating work availability, overcrowded job markets, as well as various options within a certain career field.

5.2.4   Possible influences of SNSs on career education and planning among Grade 11 learners

Career education is defined by Gibson and Mitchell (1999) as "educating individuals through questioning, exploring and understanding what is happening within them and around them with regard to their world of work". In addition, career planning starts when an individual uses that self knowledge and career knowledge learned through career education to convert it into action. Career planning is often a life-long process of researching, reflecting, deciding and reconsidering career alternatives (Nicholas et al., 2006).

Keeping this dynamic process of questioning, exploring and understanding in mind, participants participating in this research study, expressed their views on how social network sites have enabled them to take ownership of their career planning process. As discussed in Section, 2.3.2 of Chapter 2, SNSs have been acclaimed for having the potential to open up and access ideas, information, and diverse views of individuals around the world in terms of the world of work (Ellison et al., 2014). Participants explained that easy and quick access to information about a specific career field allowed them to ask questions about a career field, explore a career field, as well as to gain some understanding through others' experiences in that field. As SNSs seem to be an ideal resource for career networking, participants` acknowledged the value of SNSs in building and maintaining contacts. The participants also found that having a bigger network base, facilitated more access to authentic work situations, provided useful career guidance tips, and gave valuable and diverse insights into a specific career. In agreement, Ellison et al. (2014) reasons that by being active online, adolescents are exposed to new people, information and ideas that expand their

understanding of possible career paths and in this way also has the potential to facilitate their self-development and life goals (Ellison et al., 2014). These diverse views have also given the participants alternative perspectives, enabling them to explore various career truths and paths for themselves.

During the research process, many of the participants investigated their own as well as their peers' profiles. In reflecting on their findings, the participants identified general patterns and themes relating to possible career aspirations. It appeared that by managing their overall online image, controlling posts, comments, networks and followers, participants` profiles reflected their interests. In realising this, participants mentioned that they were able to match their own, as well as their peers' online profile to certain career fields. Yang and Brown (2016) relate to this view, as SNSs seem to give participants the opportunity to reflect upon who they are, who they want to be and by doing this, in the end influence how they view themselves in terms of their world of work. In addition to their own profiles, participants also indicated that they often compared their own online profile with other professional profiles. In doing this, they realised that they were able to reflect on their own personalities, abilities and values, and could assess whether or not the latter suited a desired career path.

Although parents and teachers have been helpful in participants` career education and planning processes, the majority of the participants felt that parents and teachers could be more biased and restrictive, compared to the knowledge the learners could gain from SNSs. This notion, however, does not mean that participants do not value the input of their parents and teachers, but rather that they regard their insights as basic guidance. Participants explained that they would like to use this guidance and expand on it by exploring it further on SNSs.

Similarly, participants reflected on career education programmes at school and explored the value and limitations of a subject like LO. The majority of the participants expressed that LO fell short with regard to career education, in terms of relevance, reoccurrence and its restrictedness. Participants elaborated on this and mentioned that subject content in LO was often limited to traditional views and career options. They felt that subject content was often repetitive, as the same topics were being covered year after year. Participants also mentioned their desire to think for themselves, be more hands on and have more responsibility in terms of their own career planning in LO class. Additionally they mentioned wanting more practical tasks and advice, such as their job shadowing assignment. Participants mentioned that by being exposed to relevant and real life experiences, they were able to use guidelines obtained in class and implement it for themselves in real life situations. Participants ultimately agreed career education programmes at school should offer the basic tools for career planning and reflected on how SNSs could be used as an additional tool to further investigate and explore career alternatives. As careers and choices around it are eventually the responsibility of the individual, learners expressed their desire to take more responsibility and ownership in shaping their own career journey, and by having access to SNSs this could potentially be easier to achieve.

5.3 RESEARCHER'S PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Merriam (2009, p. 219) suggests that "investigators need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken … [as] such clarifications allow the reader to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data". In contemplating this definition,

I realised the importance of a reflective process and felt encouraged to engage in my own thoughts and feelings throughout this research process.

It seemed that career education and guidance has been a part of my field of interest for many years. Through my experience as a teacher and Master's student in Educational Psychology, I started making my own assumptions as to how individuals arrive at a certain career or study field. This, along with adolescents' growing fascination with SNSs, intrigued me and left me wondering in which ways SNSs could influence not only their perceptions of themselves but of a potential career as well. My initial assumptions were based on adolescent ignorance of both the value and dangers of SNSs. This research process, however, has been exceptionally enlightening, as I realised firstly, that I was part of an older generation; an "outsider", who does not understand the participants` need to be constantly active on SNSs. Their initial motivation for being online, as to engage and feel connected to peers, was another area which I realised I could not understand, as face-to-face communication still feels more authentic and real to me, but to the participants that did not seem to be much different to their online connections. Many of the participants surprised me with regard to the vast career- and 'self' knowledge they gained from being active online. This made me realise that my assumptions were my own, and being confronted with the participants` realities and experiences of SNSs has left me once again surprised by their honesty and level of career maturity.

Secondly, it was also remarkable to see how the theory of my research "came to life" and related in many ways to the participants` views and experiences of SNSs. The systems theory framework (STF) was merely an abstract term which I have only used in therapeutic ways when attempting to understand and counsel clients. This research

process, however, has enabled me to understand this theory in career- related practice, as each system in an individual's life is critical in terms of the perceptions and decisions around a career. In the end, it was evident that each participant, and myself as the researcher, brought different meanings and systems into the process, based on our own understandings and interpretations of the unique lives we have. Thus, I can justly say that this research study was a collaborative effort and that each participant played a valued role in this process.

5.3.1   Strengths of the research

As the majority of qualitative designs usually employ a smaller number of participants, fewer and more in-depth data collection methods are normally used. This qualitative study, however, attempted to combine a variety of methods for data collection by means of essays, interviews and a focus group. In using a multitude of data gathering methods, the study was able to obtain comprehensive descriptions that helped to uncover and to interpret the meanings that the Grade 11 learners constructed in their exploration of career planning on SNSs. The interviews and focus group helped to probe the learners' views and provided an additional level of depth and richness to the interpretations.

An additional strength of this research is that it could be seen as a significant contribution to career education and guidance practices in South Africa. Although research in these fields appear to be diverse and numerous, there are still major gaps that have been identified, while concerns about the accessibility and quality of career education programmes in South African schools seem to be increasing. This research could thus present a manageable way in which learners can have access and take ownership of their career planning processes. In addition, the research could also be

seen as an initial attempt to expand on the use of SNSs as an ideal platform for learners to question, explore and understand their world of work, as well as to keep up with its challenges and changes in the 21st century.

5.3.2   Limitations of the research

If the research were to be reworked, I would use a more diverse population group as my sample. The participants were mostly white, middle class females with access to career education programmes at school, resources for further studies, as well as daily access to SNSs. With previous research indicating the limited number of South African citizens that have access to tertiary institutions and the Internet (Bon, 2007), the results of this study could be skewed in favour of a specific demographic group, which limits the study's generalisability. Qualitative research, however, does not aim towards generalisability, but rather towards an in-depth understanding of a specific group's experience. It could have however given my study more validity if the sample group was more representative of South Africa`s diverse population.

To counter possible misconceptions and generalisations, I made various attempts to create more diversity in the sample group. The demographic area in which the study was conducted, however, did not allow for this. In addition, I shared my interpretations of the research data with each participant during the focus group. Although the feedback that I received was positive, it could be perceived as limiting, as only four learners could join the focus group. This small number of participants could have been as a result of the difficulty in finding a time that suited all participants, as examinations and extra mural activities, made the research a challenging and time-consuming process.

Lastly, because of the small sample, the findings of the study represented each participant's unique experience within the group. It is therefore not possible to predict if conducting a similar research design with another Grade 11 group, would yield similar results.

5.3.3   Recommendations for further studies

Given that research is limited about SNSs as a career exploration tool, it is recommended that further research is conducted, as it could bridge a number of gaps in career education practices, as well as to provide accessible and more diverse career information. Further research could also provide a foundation for career education models at school and career guidance practices in general, as it can provide alternative online support services that can reach a wider population in South Africa and enable the youth to take more ownership of their own career planning process.

Finally, it is recommended that future researchers in this field explore a more diverse and bigger sample group. A sample group representing all genders, cultures and socio-economic groups, could provide opinions from a wider audience, which could enable researchers to generalise the findings and apply it to bigger groups of adolescents in South Africa.

5.4   CONCLUSION

The results and findings of this research study confirms the findings in both international and South African literature. As unemployment and challenges in the changing world of work becomes a global concern, this research presents the possibility of utilising SNSs in addition to other social systems, in order to provide more accessible support for adolescents on their career journey.

The research process used three phases to explore and gain insight into the learners' views of SNSs and careers. In doing so, learners were able to respond to questions and observations, as well as to provide additional insights into their online experiences and perceived value of the SNSs in their career planning process. The STF provided the theoretical foundation for SNSs to be seen as a social system, with the potential to influence and shape behaviour and choices. In conclusion, the study revealed how SNSs could assist in the construction of adolescents' career identities and career aspirations.

The learners confirmed that a bigger online social network exposes them to more diverse careers, gives them quicker access to career-related information, and provides valuable insight into the realities of various careers, which in the end will influence their career choices.

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APPENDIX A

Letter of ethical clearance by the Research Ethics Committee

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

Approval Notice
New Application

02-Jun-2016
Botha, Melany M

Proposal #: SU-HSD-002282

Title: Exploring the possible influences of social media on career education and planning among Grade 11 learners

Dear Miss Melany Botha,

Your **New Application** received on **03-May-2016**, was reviewed
Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **25-May-2016** -**24-May-2017**

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (**SU-HSD-002282**) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.

Included Documents:

DESC Report
Comments and changes on DESCR
REC: Humanities New Application

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham
REC Coordinator
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

APPENDIX B

Letter of consent from school principal

HIGH
SCHOOL

I .... the principal of   High School hereby
give Melany Black permission to do her research study at this school.

Signed at .... on the ...22........ day of ...February..... 2016.

M. Black

Principal:
Drive | | Cape Town South Africa
T +27 (0)21 | F +27(0) | office@   org.za | http://   .org.za
Established

APPENDIX C

Letter of consent from Western Cape Education Department

Western Cape Government
Education

Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za
tel: +27 021 467 9272
Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20160310-8649
ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mrs Melany Black
31 Country Places
Cedarwood Street
Goedemoed
Durbanville
7550

Dear Mrs Melany Black

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CAREER EDUCATION AND PLANNING AMONG GRADE 11 LEARNERS

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 **04 April 2016 till 24 June 2016**
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: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
Directorate: Research
DATE: 10 March 2016

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001   Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000
tel: +27 21 467 9272   fax: 0865902282   Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47   www.westerncape.gov.za

APPENDIX D

Explanation of the research process and assent from learners

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Exploring the possible influences of social media on career education and planning among Grade 11 learners.

RESEARCHERS NAME(S): Melany Black

ADDRESS: 31 Country Places, Cedarwoord Street,

Durbanville

CONTACT NUMBER: 072 259 7420

What is RESEARCH?

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 children and teenagers and the things that affect their lives, their schools, their families and their health. Research also gives more clarity in regards to participants view on specific topics and helps society understand different viewpoints and stories of diverse people.

What is this research project all about?

The focus of the study is to look at the possible influences social network sites have on adolescents' choices and development when it comes to career education and planning. Moreover, it will explore how adolescents use various social network sites to

explore a range of career options and how it helps them to network and promote themselves online. The research will take place in two phases. Phase one consists of an explorative essay. Phase two is a focus group discussion with a smaller group of learners that have identified and agreed that they would like to continue with this study. (See consent at the bottom of this form).

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

The reason why you have been asked to partake in this research study is because your views on social media and its influences on career development can add richly to the data required for the study. You are also in Grade 11 and therefor are an eligible candidate for this project as you are at a stage in your life where further studies and career opportunities are becoming more of a reality.

Who is doing the research?

Mrs Melany Black and her supervisor Mrs M. Perold from the Department of Education Psychology, University of Stellenbosch, is accountable for this research study. The researcher is doing this research as it forms part of her Masters course in Educational Psychology. The researcher is also interested in adolescents and their views on the possible influences social media has on their career development.

What will happen to me in this study?

Phase 1

During phase one you will be expected to write an essay in the language of your choice. The essay must explore your views on social network sites and its possible influences on your life in regards to career education and career planning. You will have a one hour in which to complete this essay.

You will have to indicate your gender (male or female) and age on the essay.

The essay is seen as private and confidential, to protect your identity, you can make use of a pseudonym or leave it anonymous.

You will be expected to write an explorative essay about the possible influences of social network sites on career education among Gr 11 learners. The following sub-questions will guide you during the essay:

- *How does being active of social network sites make you question yourself and possible future careers?*
- *How does social network sites help you explore these career questions?*
- *What information can you get through engaging on social network sites?*
- *What is the possible value of social network sites for you in regards to your career planning and advancement?*

Provide your essay with an appropriate title.

Phase 2

During phase 2 the researcher will have individual interviews with all participants. Before the interview it will be expected of you to compile a short inventory of your online career activity on social network sites, within the last month – a form will be provided for you to fill in. Please bring this form with to the interview as it will form part of the researcher's interview. Interviews will only be 30 min long and will take place after school or during an allocated Life Orientation lesson.

Phase 3 (OPTIONAL PHASE):

If you are willing and agree, a focus group will be formed with 4 participants to discuss various themes that emerged from the essays and individual interviews. This will give the researcher the opportunity to gain a better understanding, gain richer descriptions and obtain more clarity of your views. The focus group will consist of 4 learners and the researcher. You can indicate at the bottom of this form if this is something you are

willing to participate in. The focus group will take place after school for an hour, or during an agreed upon Life Orientation Lesson, ensuring that no academic work will be missed.

Can anything bad happen to me?

There is no foreseen reason that anything should go wrong during the information gathering process and participation in this study. If you as the participant feel uncomfortable at any stage, please inform the researcher.

What advantages are there for me in participating in this study?

Your participation in this study will add to research that has already been done in this field. It could also potentially identify new information in regards to how social systems influence the development of adolescents in regards to their careers. Schools could use the information to allow for more meaningful career exploration and development during career education. You as a participant could also potentially learn more about yourself within the work of work, various systems that influence your career planning and development, as well as getting the opportunity to reflect on how social network sites could possibly facilitate your career journey.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

Your participation in this study is private and confidential. Only during the focus group will your identity be known to the other participants in the focus group and the researcher. The information gathered will also be shared with the research supervisor. The pseudonym you choose will ensure that your identity will not be revealed and that nobody will connect you to specific information that will be gathered in this study.

Who can I talk to about the study?

You are welcome to contact Mrs M Black (072 259 7420/ melany.botha@gmail.com) or Mrs M. Perold (mperold@sun.ac.za) if you have any questions or concerns with the study.

What if I do not want to do this?

The study is on a voluntary basis and you have the right to choose not to participate. You also have the right to withdraw your participation any time during the study without any negative consequences if you decide to do so.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?	YES	NO
Has the researcher answered all your questions?	YES	NO
Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time?	YES	NO
Do you want to participate in the focus group discussions?	YES	NO

....

....

Signature of Child   **Date**

APPENDIX E

Explanation of the research process and consent from parents

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Exploring the possible influences of SNSs on career education and planning among Grade 11 learners.

Your child has been ask to take part in a research study conducted by Melany Black (M.Ed Psych), from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results of the data gathered will form part of a research study with the tittle, *Tool or traitor? Exploring the influence of social media on career education and planning among Grade 11 learners.* Your child has been chosen as a possible participant as they meet the particpant criteria for this research study.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The focus of the study is to look at the impact of social media on adolescents' choices and behaviour when it comes to career education and development. Moreover, it will explore how adolescents use various social network sites to explore a range of career options and how it helps them to network and promote themselves online.

2. PROCEDURES

If your child volunteers to participate in this study, he/she will be expected to do the following:

He/She will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about their usages of social media systems like Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter and their views on how it impacts their choices and behaviour when it comes to career education and development. The questionnaire will also survey how your child uses these various social network sites to explore a range of career options and how it helps them to network and promote themselves online. The following outcomes will be the main focus of the study:

- How social network sites influence adolescents career development and their decision making process.
- What the advantages are of using social network sites for career planning and education.
- What the down falls are that should be considered when using social network sites for career exploration and advancement.

Time: The research study will start in February 2016. The study will consist of a questionnaire of about 30-60 minutes, depending on the participant and will be done after school or during a Life Orientation lesson if required. After the data has been collected and reviewed, the participants will be contacted again for a final focus group discussion of about 40 minutes.

Location: The questionnaire and focus group will be done at XXXXX High School. One Life Orientation lessons will be used for the questionnaire and the focus group will be done after school or on a Saturday morning at XXXXX High School. In all likelihood no more than two contact sessions will be required of him/her.

Confidentiality: The school and its participant's names will not be mentioned during the study and all information will be dealt with utmost ethical care and anonymity. An alias can be used throughout the study and the only requirements are that their gender "male" or "female" and age is marked clearly.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The assurance that no learner will experience any judgement, prejudice or discomfort during the research study is of the utmost importance. The researcher will attempt to keep any inconvenience and risks to a minimum. Necessary arrangements have been

made with the principle and guidance counsellor in case any support or debriefing is needed during or after the research study. Learners have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time, if they choose to do so. To ensure confidentiality and the protection the participants' identity, participants are encouraged to use an alias name during the research study. This alias will be used throughout the research process.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The participants will get the chance to reflect critically on social systems that influence their view and choices in regards to careers. It is possible that the study could also assist participants in understanding the world of work better and guide them towards the importance of networking and promoting oneself professionally. Findings of the study can be used in future for career education programmes at High Schools and will contriblute to current research about career development among adolescence.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will receive no formal compensation. However a lucky draw will be held at the end of the study where one participants will be able to win a Canal Walk voucher worth R500.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by safeguarding the information and will only be available and accessible by the researcher and their supervisor.

If the results of the research are to be published, the researcher will only make use of the participants' alias to ensure confidentiality.

Participants have the right to review/edit recordings of the focus group discussion. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be permanently erased as soon as the research study is completed and handed in.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your child can choose whether to be in this study or not. If he/she volunteers to be in this study, they may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. He/she may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw your child from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact *Melany Black: main researcher*, or *Mrs M. Perold: Supervisor*

Me M. Black   *Me M. Perold*

072 259 7420

melany.botha@gmail.com   *mperold@sun.ac.za*

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Your child may withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. He/she are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of their participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above has been given and explained to me by Melany Black in English. English is my preferred language and I am in command of this language.

I was given the chance to ask any questions and my questions were answered satisfactory.

I hereby give permission for my child to partake in this study. A copy of this form has been given to me.

....

Name of Participant

....

Name of Legal Representative

....

Signature of Subject/   **Date**
Participant or Legal Representative

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the participant]* and [*his/her*] representative _____. *[He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

....

Signature of Investigator   **Date**

APPENDIX F

Excerpt from Career Presentation to Gr 11 learners

Career TALK

Grade 11

What is important when making career choices?

Before you choose a career think about the following:

1. Your Skills
2. Your Likes and Dislikes
3. Your Personality
4. Your Values
5. Your changing environment
6. Interaction with other systems
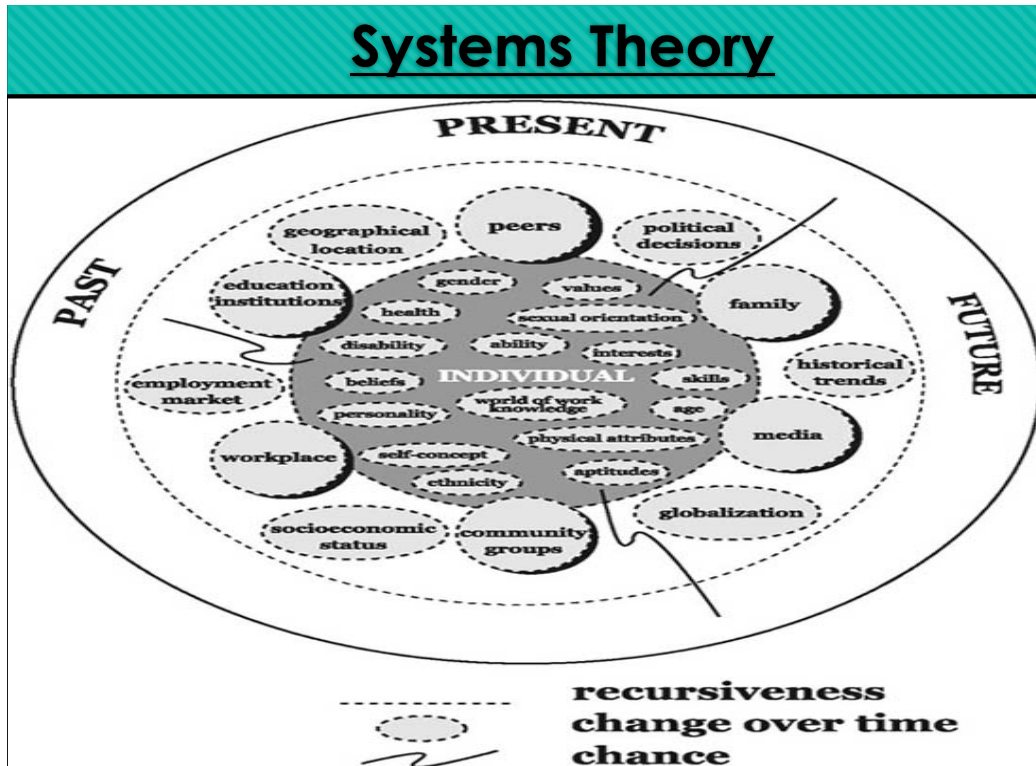
Systems Theory

Various systems that influence my view of myself and possible decisions I make:

- **YOU – THE INDIVIDUAL:** skills, values, beliefs, likes, personal attributes, characteristics, gender, age, looks, attitude…

- **SOCIAL SYSTEMS:** family, friends, peers, teachers, coaches

- **COMMUNITY:** school, church, location - Edgemead

- **BROADER COMMUNITY:** Social network sites, media, South Africa,

- **GLOBAL INFLUENCES** - economy, employment market, history, politics…

MORE SYSTEMS….

○ **TIME: the influence the** past & present has on your future

○ **RECURISIVENESS:** Each system is an open system. An open system is subject to influence from outside and may also influence that which is beyond its boundaries

○ **CHANGE OVER TIME:** Influences on an individual may change over time

○ **CHANCE:** reflecting an increased recognition of the part chance plays in career development.

Social systems: SOCIAL NETWORK SITES
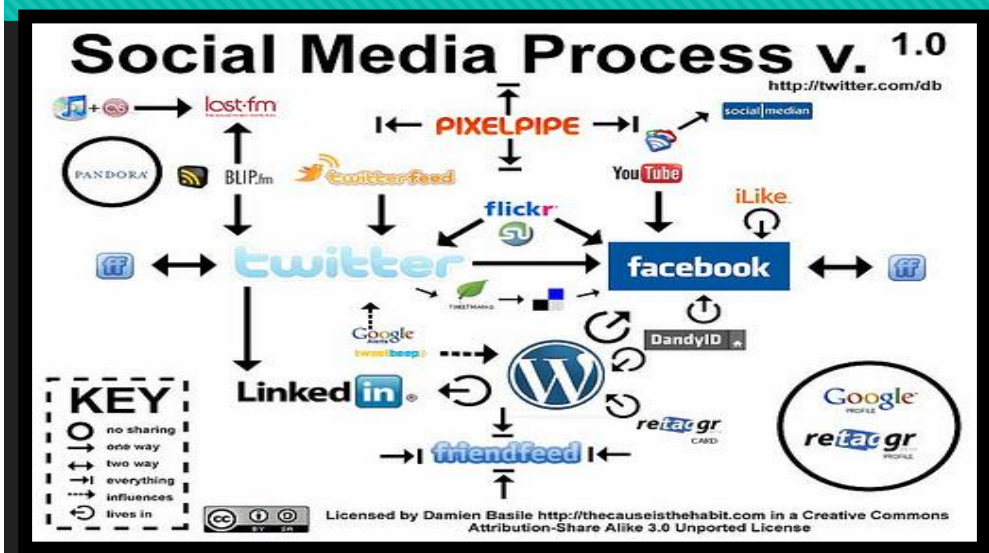
HOW CAN SOCIAL MEDIA HELP ME with CAREER EDUCATION?

SCOUT for tertiary institutions or jobs

NETWORK

FIND INFORMATION

FOLLOW PEOPLE WE LIKE or SHARE INTEREST WITH

RESEARCH VARIOUS CAREERS

ASK QUESTIONS

Stay up to date with trends

PROMOTE MYSELF

CONNECT WITH LIKE MINDED PEOPLE
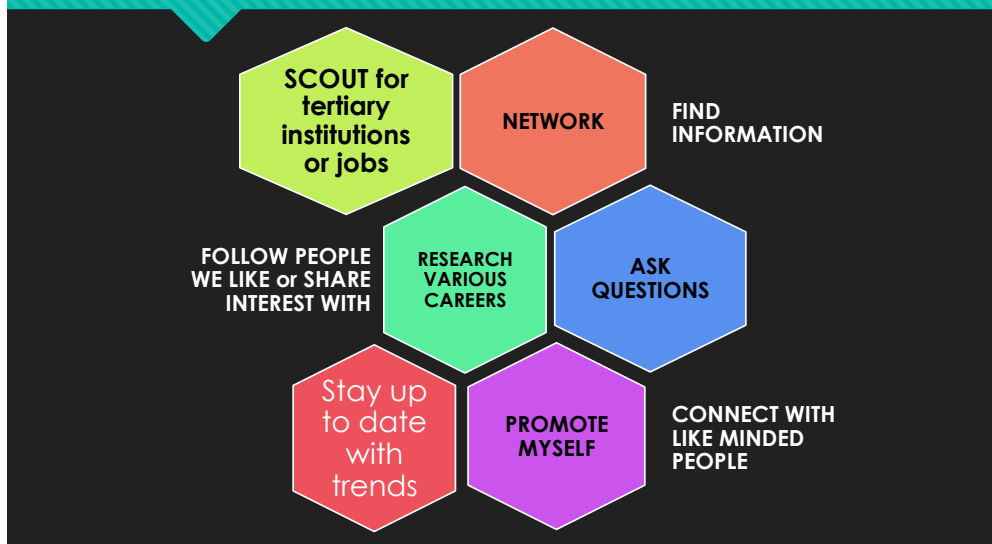
JOB FINDING SKILLS...

1. IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING:

- Development of informal contacts to help you hear about existing job openings and to help you gain exposure.

2. BE INFORMED AND DO RESEARCH:

- Know where to look: Websites (**www.postmatric.co.za ,** **www.careerguidance.co.za**, **stoogle.co.za,** Careers 24, LinkedIn, Career Junction) Do research on companies and careers that you are interested in.

3. THE CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

- This tells your career-and life-story. Think of things you have done at school, skills you have acquired and experiences you have had. This must be in chronological ordered and proof read for any spelling or grammar mistakes.

4. THE JOB INTERVIEW

- Know your values, strengths and weaknesses. Know what the job entails and what you can add to the company… NB!!!   RESEARCH! Look the part, be enthusiastic and be professional.

My RESEARCH STUDY:

THE FOCUS...

???

The focus of the study is to look at the possible influences social network sites have on adolescents' choices and development when it comes to career education and planning. It will explore how adolescents use various social network sites to explore a range of career options and how it helps them to network and promote themselves online.

The research will take place in three phases. Phase 1 **consists of an essay.** Phase 2 **is a focus group discussion and** phase 3 **is individual interviews with a smaller group of learners.**

IF interested please stay behind for more information and a consent form for your parents.

YOU CAN'T CONTROL **THE WIND** *but* YOU CAN ADJUST **THE SAILS**

APPENDIX G

Essay assignment

PHASE 1: EXPLORATIVE ESSAY

AGE: ....

GENDER: ....

*PSEUDONYM: ....

TOPIC: What are the *possible influences of social network sites on career education and planning among Gr 11 learners? The following sub-questions will guide you during the essay:*

- *How does participating on social network sites make you question yourself and possible future careers?*

- *How does social network sites help you explore these questions?*

- *What information can you get through engaging on social network sites?*

- *What is the possible value of social network sites for you in regards to your career planning and advancement?*

Please provide your essay with an appropriate title.

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THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY☺

APPENDIX H

Interview Schedule for individual interview

PHASE 2: Individual interviews

Briefly explain confidentiality and anonymity. Interview will be recorder and no names will be mentioned. Also allowed to drop out of research study at any point and time with no negative consequences.

TOPICS TO DISCUSS:

A: INTRODUCTION AND REFLECTION ON ESSAY:

1. How did you experience the explorative essay?

2. Discuss what you found interesting about it.

3. What was challenging?

4. Did you discover anything new about yourself while writing the essay? Explain.

5. How has writing the essay influenced your perspective on social network sites?

B: SOCIAL NETWORK SITES:

6. What SNSs do you use most and explain what drew you towards these sites.

7. Discuss frequency and duration of online activity.

8. What are the possible advantages of these sites?

9. What could be the possible downfalls of these sites?

C: CAREER DEVELOPMENT and SNSs:

10. What is your understanding of career planning?

11. Who assists you in this planning or development process? Provide some examples …

12. What are important factors to consider when you think of career development?

13. How if in any way as SNSs assisted you in this matter?

14. How does SNSs help you obtain most of your information in regards to careers?

15. How do people online influence who you are and choices you make or way you think?

16. How does participation on social network sites make you question your career self? Provide examples.

17. Has your participation on social network sites ever made you question a possible future career or made you interested in a career path? Provide examples.

18. Discuss whether social network sites can help you explore these questions that might arise within you and possible careers.

19. In what way can your online activity help you find answers to career questions?

20. Discuss whether social network sites can be valuable in regards to your career planning and career advancement?

21. If any, what could be the downfalls to on line activity in terms of careers and career advancement?

E: IN CONCLUSION:

22. What do adolescents consider most important when planning their future and making career choices?

23. In what way do career education programmes at school help guide you towards future career possibilities?

24. Is there anything missing from these programmes?

25. How can school education programmes improve in terms of learners career planning?

26. In what why can or should adolescents take responsibility for their own career development?

27. Is there anything else do could add value to this discussion/themes that I have missed that you would like to discuss?

28. Would you be willing to partake in a focus group where we will further discuss this topic in a group format?

APPENDIX I

Interview Schedule for focus group interview

PHASE 2: FOCUS GROUP

TOPICS TO DISCUSS:

During this focus group we will discuss various systems that may influence our career thinking process and our career choices. We will specifically focus on social influences such as social network sites. This will also be used as member checking and verifying themes that emerged through the data collection.

A: INTRODUCTION AND REFLECTION ON ESSAY:

1.   How did you experience the interview process?

2.   How has this process influenced your perspective on social network sites and career education?

B: SOCIAL NETWORK SITES:

3.   Discuss motives behind frequency and duration of SNSs.

4.   Which sites are most often used among your peers and elaborate.

C: CAREER DEVELOPMENT:

5.   What is your understanding of career education and career planning?

6.   How do programmes at school facilitate this?

7.   Value of LO at school

8.   What is missing from these programmes or what would you like to add?

9.   What responsibility does adolescents have with regard to their own career planning and education?

10. Any advice you would give to next year's Gr 11's?

D: SOCIAL NETWORK SITES LINKED WITH CAREERS:

11. How can SNSs assist in career education and –planning? Discuss …

12. Elaborate on the value of a broad network of contacts on SNSs.

13. How do you learn more about a career field through engaging on SNSs?

14. How does participation on social network sites make you question yourself? Provide examples.

15. In what way can your online activity help you find answers to career questions?

16. Discuss whether social network sites can be valuable in regards to your career planning and career advancement?

17. If any, what could be the downfalls to on line activity in terms of careers and career advancement?

18. Discuss presentation of self online and influence of online visibility.

19. Views on Real self vs Online self

E: IN CONCLUSION:

20. Discuss value of real life experiences like job shadowing, open days at universities etc.

21. Discuss other social systems that might influence our career choices and behaviour.

22. What is more value, real life interactions or online interactions and experiences? Discuss.

23. Is there anything else do could add value to this discussion/themes that I have missed that you would like to discuss?

APPENDIX J

Excerpt from essay coding

Excerpt of essay coding from Learner 2

Whilst on social media networks, a number of questions begin to arise with regards to the overall atmosphere of the career you would like to enter at a later stage in life. Majority of the time people enter a career, because they fit into the stereotypical lifestyle and mannerisms of that specific career. Our generation is so driven by social media, and often we judge people based on what they portray online, and we assume that is who they are in their daily lives, when this is not necessarily the case. The word reputation is somewhat important in this specific question, because impressions last a considerably amount of time and are often altered, and this becomes problematic later on in life when approaching the establishment of career which you can be denied of purely because of how you behaved or portrayed yourself earlier in life. It's incredibly important that my daily life and my life that is displayed on social media platforms correlate with one another, so that my morals and beliefs reflect either way without contradicting one another.

Preoccupation with SNSs

Presentation of 'self' online

In the past, many people where unable to access information on certain questions they were seeking answer for, due to the inaccessibility of the required information, purely because majority of information was gained via a one-on-one approach, which was rather tedious and required a larger amount of time and effort. Social network sites now alleviate the personal one-on-one approach and make information accessible to numerous people, at a much more insightful level. Social media sites allow you to ask direct questions that can be compared to other information to see which set of information prevails and proves more informative.

Accessibility

Question

Social network sites are used by an abundance of people, so inevitably questions will get answered, and if not answered, you will be guided in a direction that could be more beneficial to you.

Connecting & Networking

Personally, social network sites allow me to gain small amounts of information at a time, because often when large amounts of important information is compiled it can be rather overwhelming which essentially causes me to not acknowledge certain key points.

Information

Through engaging on social network sites, I am able to gain insight into certain fields that i am interested in, by comparing different institutes, and viewpoints of other people who have been through the process i am going through currently. Getting into tertiary education institutions is becoming more gruelling as the years go by, so by speaking to other people in the field they direct you in a different path that will eventually lead you to the degree you want, furthermore the career you want, however it might just take longer to achieve, but nevertheless you can achieve it. In Secondary Institutions, in the subject of Life Orientation in particular we are provide with information on career planning and advancement on an extremely superficial level, which in my eyes is very problematic, and demotivates certain learners, purely because they show us that if you don't get certain marks or don't have certain requirements you most definitely will not be able to enter to field you want. By implementing social network sites that show the various pathways that can be taken, there would be in influx of learners who are more willing to try and enter their field of work which they admire instead of settling for career in which they will have a very mediocre mind set towards. For me medicine is my passion, so by being able to get my foot in the door, in the medical field it is a step in the right direction

Connecting & Networking

LO

Information

APPENDIX K

Excerpt from interview coding

Excerpt of coding from interview 7

Melany	Ok, so the first part of the research study was the essay that you had to write. I was wondering how your experienced the essay? What was it like for you?	
Lexi	==The essay made me realise how much social media actually means to me and especially in terms on what I want to do one day. SO realised that everything that I see online influence me in some or other way, which is actually a bit scary==. So it was a bit of a shock to me.	*Own experience of the study*
Melany	Can you explain a bit more about how it influences you?	
Lexi	So, there is a lot of different things that I want to do. ==I either want to be a film director or I want to go into science. They are kind of opposites. But I would see a preview of a movie on Instagram and be like, wow, that is so cool. And then I would see a cool experiment on the next page or a new type of plastic that was invented and then be into that again…so it shows me the fun parts of these jobs and it's a bit more than just the theory we do in class==.	*Exposure and motivation*
Melany	Yes, so actually seeing what you could be doing one day excites you.	
Lexi	Yes, ==seeing what my job could be like one day and knowing in like 20 years' time I might have invented that plastic or made that movie that someone else is watching==.	*Motivation*
Melany	So I hear that it is exciting and also confusing at times?	

Lexi	Yes, I think it confuses me because I have lots of different interests and ideas and I am not a very decisive person. So, it does confuse me, especially when I see the negative side as well. Like most recently, I saw how one of the actors got injured and the movie is being permanently suspended. So that's scary and could have huge financial risks. Then other the other side, science is also a bit boring at times, and many people post jokes about it. So you see the reality of it all.	*Insight into realities of a career* *Exposure to career*
Melany	Ys, I like that…the reality of it. The negatives and the positives of both your potential careers. Was there anything you found challenging about the essay?	
Lexi	At first the whole idea was challenging. I was like there is no way SNSs can influence my career, because they are two different things. So first I procrastinated and scrolled on Instagram. Then by doing that I realised that it does actually affect me just by looking at my feeds. Then on Facebook I found a bush of adverts on UNISA and SASOL advertises learner-ships on Facebook, so I saw that it does directly influence me.	*Experience of research study* *Advertising*
Melany	So you are exposed to so much that you weren't even noticing at the beginning?	
Lexi	When I was younger I followed the New York University of Film on Facebook and I only now realised that reading all their updates has influenced me in many ways. It has kept this desire of me wanting to go into film alive all these years	*Network, inspire & exposure*

APPENDIX L

Excerpt from focus group coding

L1   The woman that I was placed with at Woolworths was super nice and she actually started following some of my accounts and then I followed her back. She is an intern now and gave me some great advice. She even messaged me afterwards and said that she hopes everything goes well with my future studies and if I ever need any advice or help to just contact her.

Networking & Job shadowing

Int   Wow, that is amazing. So now you have a connection when you are looking for a job one day…

L1   There are so many people at Woolworths, so it definitely helps knowing some people. This intern also introduced me to so many people in different departments, the admin staff, clothing people, the graphics and design team…so I really appreciated that.   I also realised how important networking is, although everyone has their own roles at Woolworths, they all depend on the other person in some way. So by the end of the day I walked out knowing so many new people.

Int   Ok, so face to face networking and now you are keep in touch through SNSs.

L1   Yes, exactly. The one guy even gave me advice on where to go study and which institutions have the best courses. He is even willing to be my reference. At the end of the day, I am so amped to go into retail quantity surveying and I am so glad that I did the project.

Job shadowing

L2   A similar thing happened to me. The surgeon I was shadowing told me that if I ever wanted to sit in a surgery or need some advice, I could contact him. Now that he knows me, he will organise more experiences for me. It's not like using people, but making contacts that can help you with your career one day. It's about who you know and now that he knows me, my work

etiquette, that I am reliable and stuff like that, so I think I would have a better chance to work with him one day.

Int   So what would you guys say is the value of having a big variety of contacts online? Or disadvantages?

L5   My issue is with privacy. I don't want just any one to follow me and screen shot my photos. So not everyone can be trusted.

Downfalls

L1   Well, networking. By knowing a name you could contact someone online and ask them for advice or some info. You also learn through their experiences. So I follow this model that travels quite a lot. So I follow her travels, tips and experiences. So when I save up enough money and would like to go to some of those place and go and volunteer where she has volunteered. Everything that she learned, I now know. So you do learn through contacts online.

Networking

L2   That makes me think of how fast information can spread through social media, not just the gossip and scandal stuff, but information about events and volunteering opportunities or like countries in need.

Information

L7   …like the "Ice Bucket Challenge". Almost everyone online did it, donated money and definitely helped spread awareness.

Int   So how has online networks helped you with your career path so far?

L7   I think you get some honest insights into what the career involves and what your future could look like by following some people in the field that you are interested in. So you can read in textbooks, on Google or where ever…but that can only tell you so much. You need more real life experiences and opinions and that you can get by chatting to people online or looking at their pictures and profiles. When someone tells you personally about their job it hits home harder, because it's more real.

Insights into realities of careers

L2   I follow a lot of medical professionals. They always post healthy stuff and that makes me realise that I also need to change my

life style and become more aware of my own health if I want to help other people.

L7 You can kind of see if they are happy as well, I mean your social media pages does reflect who you are and what your life is like. So you can kind of see if people are happy and if their life is something you would want.

Int So let's talk about how these online contacts inspire and motivate you?

L5 You see all the nice stuff people have and where they live and then you also want that. It kind of gives you a goal, something to work towards or strive for.

Inspire

Int And in regards to information…how have you recently used SNSs to gain more information about a career you were interested in?

L1 Say you follow a few people that are in the career field that you are interested in, somehow you can search their followers and see what they post and links they share.

Information & networking

L2 Well, some of the doctors I follow say they are medical practitioners' at…..… and then give the link. So you can go to that link and see what hospitals they are working at or their company name. There is also a lot of information on their bio page, with internship programmes available and where they studied and so on. You find out a lot of back doors and alternative routes to go into the medical field.

Int That makes me think of the hashtag thing that many of you mentioned in the interviews. So those hashtags also help you filter and find certain topics to research or find information.

L2 Well I told you in the interview about my hashtag medical student, or stellies…but I also sometimes need inspirations quotes and then I will hashtag that to get me motivated. Or medical quotes…

Information & inspiration

L5 I use Pinterest for that…

L1   Yes, Pinterest lets you make so many inspirational boards and it has links that send you to the direct page, so you can find a lot of information and support that way. So the photos take you directly to the website that will have more information and detail in.

Int   And in terms of Colleges, Universities, bursaries and things like that…?

L1   I feel like social media shows you more of the social side to Universities and does not give you so much information about the academic side. For example Stellenbosch has a variety of pages on social media and all their feeds link to Facebook. They would tweet something or post a picture on Instagram and then it goes to their official Facebook page too. My dad saw it, and said you can't go there, because you are never going to work.   *University networks*

L2   It depends what course you do…I follow some students who study BA or teaching and it looks like they just have a joll. Whereas the medical students that I follow, post pictures or their study notes and hashtag "prepping for finals". So through that I realise that it's not jolling, but medicine will be hard work. In a weird way it makes me excited, because that's what I want to do.

Int   That is true…so how does SNSs keep you up to date with new trends or events that is happening? Let's think locally and globally…

L5   Snapchat has like live videos, so you can see what people all over the world are busy doing at that moment.   *Popular SNSs*

L7   They call it "live snaps". So there is lots of different people at the same time and they take short video`s and share it online.

Int   Ok, there is something new that I didn't know. I will have to go look for that. So in what way has SNSs helped you explore different parts of yourself and a possible career path.

L2   Well, personality wise you see what would be required from you by a certain career and then you can assess whether that is you   *Question*

or not. Like for me, wanting to be a doctor…I have to have empathy, but can't be too soft. So by looking at their post you can see if you have that balance like other doctors.

Int   So it also makes you questions different parts of yourself?

L1   Yes, all the time…recently I am on this whole positive buzz. So I am following lots of positive psychology posts. Some people have said I am too negative, so I have set myself a mission to be more positive an online quotes have really helped me.

L5   Also by seeing others post, you compare yourself to them and wonder if that could be you one day.

L7   By looking at my post I realised that I have various themes and taste that comes up in my feed because of what I have liked and who I have flowed. So Facebook and Instagram suggests a few other people that correlate with my likes and interests. That has opened me up to a lot more information and different people.

Int   Ok, and in what way has SNSs helped you research a specific career?

L1   I use Careers 24 to help me see how many jobs there are available in my field. You know, see if there is a need. Which in my case there is a big need for female quantity surveying.

L2   For me I use various sites. If I just briefly want to see people's views I go onto Twitter just like the topic name and from there if you want to know more go to the links like News24 and so on to read more about it.   *Information*

Int   And you mentioned following different dentistry accounts? Tell the group a bit about that.

L5   So I follow a dentistry account on Instagram and on the account you can see videos that they post and lots of captions that explain the process. So it shows me what dentistry would be like and I can assess for myself if I would be able to handle it or not.

Int   Ok, and what about other influence. A lot of you are still concerned with your online image. So let's think about how that online self vs yourself influences you and your career dreams.

L7   My mom is extremely scared of SNSs. They have idea of people stalking you. I know many times companies look at your online profile and then they judge your competency and morals based on what they see online. So that's way my mom stays off. But I think you need to access what you should share and what you shouldn't share online.

Online image

L1   There is like a work profile now, LinkedIn and if you are on that site and people Google your name that is the first profile that comes up. So all your skills, interests and work experience can be loaded on to that site. Twitter for me also something that I watch, I try not to like weird stuff and post inappropriate stuff because you never know who will see it and it could cost you a job in the future.

L2   How I think of people is often influenced by their online profile.

APPENDIX M

Excerpt from the collation of overall categories, themes and subthemes

Type of SNSs, time spent on SNSs & reason	Experience of research	Networking and connecting	Access to information	Platform for research and explore	Space to question and find answers	Source of inspiration and motivation	Understanding of career education and -planning	View of LO in schools	OTHER
WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter L2	"it made me realise that just as I follow medical people, my friends follow other people in their interests … so their profile and feeds, is almost a kind of indicator as to what they want to do after school or like, who they want to be one day". (interview L2)	"SNSs are used by an abundance of people, so you have a larger and more diverse network of influence" (essay L2)	"Many years before SNSS, many people were unable to access information due to the inaccessibility and because the majority of the information was based on a one-on-one approach. This was rather tedious and required large amounts of time and effort" (essay L2)	"enables me to compare different institutes and viewpoints of other people who have been through the process that I am going through currently" (essay L2)	"Whilst on SNSs, an number of questions arise with regards to the overall atmosphere of the career you would like to enter" (essay L2)	"I am interested in the medical field and realised that my profile actually makes it more obvious than I thought as I follow a lot of people and institutions associated with this field. It's almost like a source of motivation for me" (interview L2)	"For me career planning is like the steps you implement to get where you want to be in your career. Steps like, research that needs to be done, where you can go and study, what courses and paths are available, who you need to know, what subjects you need" (focus group L2)	"School work can be boring and seem a bit like a hassle some time. But if you could incorporated using online sources on your phone or school computer, there is more ownership for the student to look for information and investigate the relevant topic." (interview L2)	"we often judge people based on what they portray online" (essay L2)
"many times the older generation will question the amount of time we spend on our phone and I agree that it could be impersonal and look like a waste	"Gain some insight into somebodies life. So yea … that was kind of a helpful realisations when I was writing my	"speaking to others in the field so they can help guide you" (essay L2)	"SNSs makes information accessible to numerous people at a much more insightful level" (essay L2)	"So if you're a doctor I check your profile to see where you studied. Sometimes hashtags (#) will also help. People will # stellies,	"Social media allows you to ask direct questions that can be compared to other information and give you more alternatives or	"I follow specific people because they motivate me and encourage me to follow my dream of where I want to be one day, but it's not like that specific	"At the end of the day, you will get those kids who sit back and don't do anything. And if you are one of those that actually has a plan for your life	"So the learners control what they learn and how they learn it. It would certainly be easier and more fun." (interview L2)	"impressions last a long time and become problematic later on in life when you want to establish a career" (essay L2)

Type of SNSs, time spent on SNSs & reason	Experience of research	Networking and connecting	Access to information	Platform for research and explore	Space to question and find answers	Source of inspiration and motivation	Understanding of career education and -planning	View of LO in schools	OTHER
of time, but the essay made me realise that not all my time spent on SNS is a waste" (interview L2)	essay" (interview L2)			#medicine #premed or something like that. These hashtags then send me to other people that have also tagged the same term or theme. It can even referred to suggested friends to follow." (interview L2)	options" (essay L 2)	with all my followers. For example, when I write maths … if I get anxious or feel like I am going to fail, I go to certain peoples pages that inspire me or links that encourages me. They remind me of what I want to be and what I have to do to get there. So it makes me work harder and push through." (interview L2)	and wants to achieve something, you will go out and find the answers or information that you need." (focus group L2)		
"But I never really thought about why my phone is always on. So that made me question what I am spending all my time doing on my phone" (interview L2)	. So as I said in the beginning when I really looked at who I followed and why, I realised it was all medical related. And I was like wow … I never realised that, there is some link to careers" (interview L2)	"I follow specific people because they motivate me and encourage me to follow my dream of where I want to be one day, but it's not like that specific with all my followers. They remind me of what I want to be and what I have to do to get there. So it makes me work harder and push	"So if you're a doctor I check your profile to see where you studied. Sometimes hashtags (#) will also help. People will # stellies, #medicine #premed or something like that. These hashtags then send me to other people that have also tagged the same term or	"... I use various sites. If I just briefly want to see people's views I go onto Twitter just like the topic name and from there if you want to know more go to the links like News24 and so on to read more about it." (focus group L2)	"So I realised that it's almost like comparing myself to these medical professionals and seeing how our lives differs. What would happen if the difference is too fast or if I am not comfortable with what they portray … and that could be my life one day, that will be a problem	"seeing a blog or article of someone traveling or someone helping children in Africa excites me and makes me want to experience that as well" (essay L1)	"I would love to have the opportunity to investigate topics for myself. Teachers could give us a few good websites and we could source the relevant information on the topic. It would also be great to add to the information that teachers	"I think there are a lot of open ended questions in LO, so if teachers could provide a few resources and online sites and then let us find the answer for our self it could be more rewarding. The information would also be more relevant to the kids' needs and unique	if I follow my doctor on Instagram and he post something that doesn't fit with my idea of what a doctor should be, in that case it would make me question whether I would trust him or want to go to him again. Then, what if I posts things that doesn't fit in with my ideal image,

| Type of SNSs, time spent on SNSs & reason	Experience of research	Networking and connecting	Access to information	Platform for research and explore	Space to question and find answers	Source of inspiration and motivation	Understanding of career education and -planning	View of LO in schools	OTHER
		through." (interview L2)	theme. It can even referred to suggested friends to follow." (interview L2)		for me" (interview L2)		give us in class" (interview L1)	interests." (interview L2)	could it damage me? (interview L2)
It's quick and easy. With Instagram it's a bit younger. You know, more youthful. So a lot of teenagers use it. So you chat with pictures and hashtags. It's such a fast way to communicate and captures a lot without saying anything" (interview L2)	"as I got started I was like WOW, I never knew the impact SNSs has on my career choices. I actually should have noticed this a long time ago. This essay really made me think about my online activity in a lot more depth" (interview L2).	"but with social media, these groups or influences can mix, so you get a far wider range or exposure and not just one way of thinking or looking at the world." (interview L2)	"and it is not just from the few people you now, but actually from people all over the world that use that hashtag. So you can see what others do and find new information, even international intuitions and options." (interview L2)	"it makes researching faster and you can always find an answer" (essay L1)	"if I follow my doctor on Instagram and he post something that doesn't fit with my idea of what a doctor should be, in that case it would make me question whether I would trust him or want to go to him again. Then, what if I posts things that doesn't fit in with my ideal image, could it damage me?" (interview L2)	"I have this app that shows you different inspirations according to the things that you like. If you looking for beauty, fashion or travel … you like those things and it creates inspiration boards for you. So basically things you relate to and that can help you" (interview L1)	"it feels like we do the same thing every year. But I do see the point in it. However they only cover the basics in class and only use traditional examples like a doctor for instance. So teachers never go in-depth with careers, like Quantity Surveying. So in LO class you get option A, but not really an option B or C" (interview L1).	"this cannot all be learned in LO class, you need to do some of your own research as well. Teachers just give you a broad frame work to kind of find a career in, or a pamphlet … but you need to do the rest, I think. So Google, Blogs and online groups can be extremely helpful." (interview L2)	"if a doctor post pictures of himself drinking and smoking, well that does not fit in with the healthy lifestyle or advice they give their patients. How could you trust someone like that to treat you? So, I take careful consideration when …" (interviews L2).

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"I don't think I should confess this … probably about 5-6 hours a day … I used it all the time, in between school and sport. I have like a daily routine" (interview L-2).	"it made me realise how much social media has really impacted my live . You know, what did I use to do without it? Now, it's just like constantly checking your phone … and why?" (focus group L2)	"I learned a lot about Stellenbosch studies through this. See, I follow a few Stellenbosch medical students. You know to kind of help me see what it is like and what they are up to." (interview L2)	"teachers can't tell you that. So there are back routes and alternatives that you can only know about, by talking to experts in the field." (interview L2)	"my parents told my they think I would be good at Quantity Surveying, First I had no idea what that was, so I googled it and it took me to a variety of sites and webpages that gave me all the info I needed. So reading up on that gave me an idea and gave me the space to think about that career and whether it would be good for me and whether I would enjoy it" (interview L1).	"videos and photo's which you see online, often let you decide if that is something you would love to experience one day" (essay L1)	"Yes, all the time … recently I am on this whole positive buzz. So I am following lots of positive psychology posts. Some people have said I am too negative, so I have set myself a mission to be more positive an online quotes have really helped me." (focus group L1)	"If teachers talk about something in class and I want to know more about it, or more detail, then I would go home and investigate for myself at home online. SO by reading up extra I can see whether it's just a phase I am in, or I am interested in, or something I want to pursue … if you think of careers now. I could take the basics that the teachers give us and add my unique needs to it, by researching online" (interview L1).	"teachers can't tell you that. So there are back routes and alternatives that you can only know about, by talking to experts in the field." (interview L2)	"I think, I would like to be seen as a real person. What you see is what you get. For me, it's not like I have two personalities. I don't have to keep up appearances or have anything to hide."
"Instagram is definitely the new thing that most of us use. With Facebook it's too much reading, you know causal banter between people and it just goes on too	"I had to think about it for a long time … um, to like decide what I was going to write about. It was a bit difficult in the beginning, I started with a rough draft, but … as soon as I	"So by talking to different people online form different medical universities you actually get a broader idea of what life would be like as a doctor and the different paths	"A positive example is again, Stellenbosch University. So if they post stuff I can see it, it keeps me up to date with their open days and gives me an	SNSs gives you the opportunity to research things or careers that you are interested in. For example, you can just search teacher on any social platform and find	"seeing some posts make me question whether or not going into the corporate world after school is for me?" (essay L1)	"Pinterest lets you make so many inspirational boards and it has links that send you to the direct page, so you can find a lot of information and support that	"... we learn the same things over and over." (focus group L1)	"honestly, I don't feel that LO has helped me at all. In high school in particular I don't see the benefit. Teachers try to teach, but they are not into it and the learners just talk over	"many people have not met you, but maybe they have heard of you and need to check your profile for some reason, like prefect for school … ? So, I think your profile

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long." (focus group L2)	got started I was surprised how much I actually use social media and what I actually use it for" (interview L1).	you can follow to become one" (interview L2)	idea of what courses are available in an interactive way." (interview L2)	a large amount of connections, gourps and information about that career" (essay L3)		way. So the photos take you directly to the website that will have more information and detail in." (focus group L4)		them. So it's like a free lesson, we are not taking in any information. They give you the basics career options and then you have to research on your own." (focus group L2 L2)	should give people insight about you as a person. If the real you and the online you don't match up, people will notice it quickly and that could cause issues." (interview)
"With Instagram it's one picture and a few words, maybe some links and hash tags if you really want to know more. So it's, quick, informative and you can move on to the next picture." (focus group L2)	"I always have my phone on me. But I never really thought about why my phone is always on. So that made me question what I am spending all my time doing on my phone." (interview L1)	"I meet a lot of people. I play for a variety of hockey teams and clubs, so you just add team members to your contacts and you can get hold of them quickly and share information, events and photos." (interview L2)	"fashion or local travel tips" (essay L1)	"Most of my friends use social media to research careers that they are interested in" (essay L3)	"it allows you to find simple answers to the career path you want to follow" (essay L1)	"I on like Instagram I follow a lot of tumbler feeds. It gives me inspirational quotes and photos." (interview L5)	"I get why LO is tough the way it is, we need to repeat some things a few times, otherwise we would forget it by the time we really need it. And it's like building blocks, so it seems the same, but the topics actually build on each other." (focus group - 1)	"They make you do things the way they want you to do it. You can't think for yourself at all or explain what the topic means to you. For me, that's just a waste of time." (focus group L2)	"The surgeon I was shadowing told me that if I ever wanted to sit in a surgery or need some advice, I could contact him. Now that he knows me, he will organise more experiences for me." (focus group L2)
"It's genuinely like part of my morning routine. I will wake up, check my phone, see what everyone got up to and then go the "explore	"That the majority things that are in my feeds … are all in the same category. So, stuff that I enjoy, things that interests me … I	"you get a broader input and a better perspective, as you are connected to such a large network. Also because it's not	"SNSs give you insight into what the future could hold" (essay L1)	"SNSs enables you to look if there is a big demand for the career you want to pursue." (essay L4)	"I would much rather want a career that challenges me daily and allows me to travel and meet new	"You see all the nice stuff people have and where they live and then you also want that. It kind of gives you a goal, something to work towards	"I also know that LO isn't my teacher's main subject and many of the teachers get bullied into giving LO. They don't even like it,	"give us some information on companies that we can approach for specific jobs, how to find them, what questions to ask	"My profile shows exactly who I am. You see my love for hockey, medicine and my family online. There is not much that I

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page" and procrastinate some more …" (focus group L2)	always thought a feed is a feed and normally a feed consist of random things, but it grouped (INTERVIEW L1I	so personal and you are chatting or following groups that you don't always directly now, you can honestly share parts of yourself and not feel ashamed (INTERVIEW L2			people" (essay L1)	or strive for." (focus group L5)	so how are we supposed to like it if they don't?" (focus group L1)	in an interview. Informative stuff like that." (focus group L2)	hide." (focus group L2)

APPENDIX N

Excerpt from the Gr 11 Life Orientation, Job shadowing task

GRADE 11 Life Orientation 2016
ASSESSMENT TASK 3: Careers and Career Choices

80 Marks

This task comprises of three activities:

<u>Activity one:</u> **Letter of application and CV (<u>To be completed in class in Term 3</u>)** [30]

<u>Activity two:</u> **Job-shadowing Report including Supervisors Report** [30]

Due date: First LO class of Term 3

Follow the *Instructions and guidelines for your job shadow experience.*
- Decide on a career/ job field that you would like to shadow.
- Once having completed your job shadowing experience, have your supervisor complete the Supervisor's Report.
- Compile a report based on all the questions in point 4 of the instructions.

<u>Activity three:</u> **Oral presentation** [20]

Due date: Weeks 2 – 4 in class

- Prepare a three minute talk on your job-shadowing experience including basic information about the job and an overall impression about your experience. Using the information gathered for Activity 2, state whether you are still interested in pursuing this career and why.
- Your presentation should be useful and informative to other learners who want to know more about the job you shadowed.

Total: [80]

INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR YOUR JOB SHADOW EXPERIENCE

1. Decide on what career / job field you wish to shadow – take into account YOUR circumstances and those of the job you choose. EG. It will not be possible to shadow a teacher as you are required to shadow during the holidays.

2. Contact the organisation where you wish to shadow – speak to the Human Resources person – (ask him / her for the contact details of the person you will shadow).
   - Be polite, courteous and professional!
   - Remember, they will be doing YOU a favour – encourage them to allow you to shadow by mentioning that you will be willing to help with tasks.
   - Scan in or email the letter from the school.
   - Forward a copy of your CV and a letter of application to job shadow.
   - Wait for an answer – don't just ASSUME that you may job shadow.

3. A week before the time, phone to confirm with the person that you will be shadowing – ask:
   - Dress code
   - Venue
   - Time you must meet them
   - Lunch arrangements

4. Some questions you might like to ask when you are shadowing:
   - How did you become interested in this work and how did you get hired?
   - What interests you or is most exciting about this work?
   - What is the thing that you like the least?
   - What kind of challenges / problems do you have to deal with?
   - What skills / abilities and personality do you need in order to meet these challenges, or generally for the job?
   - Where can one train and how long does it take?
   - What sort of starting salary can one expect for this type of work?
   - What are the opportunities for promotion and growth in this type of work?
   - What is the demand for people in this work, here, in other areas of the country, and overseas?

5. Get your supervisor to fill in the form so that you can hand it in with your project.

6. Remember to thank the person / people who have helped you during your job shadowing. This means thanking them when you leave, but ALSO writing a thank-you note (it may also be a nice gesture to give the person a small gift – a chocolate or whatever you feel is appropriate).

7. Write a report about your job shadowing experience – use the attached instructions.