AN EXPLORATION OF CAREER PLANNING CHALLENGES
OF THIRD YEAR BA STUDENTS
AT A UNIVERSITY IN GAUTENG

by

FATIMAH E布拉HIM PATEL

MINI-DISSERTATION
submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS
in
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
in the
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
at the
UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

SUPERVISOR : Dr H. D. Krige

MAY 2012
DECLARATION

I, FATIMAH EBRAHIM PATEL, hereby declare that this study is my original work and that I adhered to the correct referencing techniques and to the stipulated guidelines from the Ethics board of the University of Johannesburg.

____________________
F. E. PATEL
07 May 2012
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere appreciation and gratitude is expressed to the following people:

- **The All- Mighty God**, who has bestowed upon me the courage and strength to complete this task. I am eternally grateful for your guidance and bestowing upon me patience when I so desperately sought it.

- **My parents**, for their unfailing support and encouragement. Thank you for believing in me.

- **My husband**, I am thankful for all your motivation and encouragement and the immeasurable ways in which you have supported me during this time.

- **My supervisor**, Dr Helen Krige, thank you for your professional guidance and the confidence that you have bestowed in me.
ABSTRACT

The world of work is changing in ways we could not have imagined, with technological developments creating brand new industries and jobs. We are also a part of an uncertain and unpredictable job market, where one has to not only make due to career planning, but also exhaustive career research before making a career choice. Since the career landscape has changed, it is no longer only the task of school leavers and entry level students to consider future study, but also a pertinent one for final year university students who have to decide on their future career plans. With this in mind, the objective of this study was to explore the level of depression and the career planning challenges of the third year BA students at the University in Gauteng. These challenges were analyzed with reference to career and personal counselling themes. From here, suitable recommendations for student counselling at the University were made.

A mixed method study was conducted with third year BA students who were a part of a non-career orientated degree/course and who had Sociology as a common subject. The reason for this was, according to researchers, those students especially in the 'general subject' (i.e. sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, etc) degrees, are suddenly confronted during their third year with difficult decisions about their future and career planning. Data was obtained quantitatively in the form of the Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ), in order to assess the student’s state of career maturity which is important in the process of career guidance and planning. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) was utilized for this research purpose as it could depict the level of depression that the third year BA students currently feel over there career planning for 2011. This data was qualitatively analyzed.

Data was also obtained qualitatively in the form of in-depth interviews held with the students in order to explore what are their career planning challenges once they have completed their degree.

The raw data was reduced according to the mixed method research data reduction process and consolidated and interpreted within boundaries of a theoretical framework.
Through this research, it was found that the students in this inquiry lack elements of reflection for better self knowledge and the ability of reflection needs to improve.

In addition, knowledge of careers also required further development. It appears as if students have made limited use of their value resources for self exploration and exploration of their environment. Information about studies/careers/occupations also needed enhancement as students reflected that they require better strategies for successfully approaching the decision making process.

Finally, conclusions were drawn from the results obtained and recommendations were made for student counselling at the University as well as for future research.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF OWN WORK i  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii  
ABSTRACT iv  

## CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH 10  
1.1 INTRODUCTION 10  
1.2 BACKGROUND AND RELEVANCE FOR RESEARCH 11  
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT 12  
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 13  
1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY 14  
1.6. METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION 14  
1.6.1 Research design 14  
1.6.2 A Mixed Method Research Paradigm 14  
1.6.3 Rationale and purpose for utilising the Mixed Methods Research Paradigm 15  
1.6.4 Making the worldview explicit 18  
1.7 RESEARCH METHODS 19  
1.7.1 Sample 19  
1.7.1.1 A University in Gauteng 19  
1.7.1.2 The Participants 20  
1.8. DATA COLLECTION METHODS 20  
1.8.1 Qualitative Data Collection 21  
1.8.1.1 Interviews 21  
1.8.2 Quantitative Data Collection 22  
1.8.2.1 Psychological Test: The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) 22  
1.8.2.2 Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ) 22  
1.9 DATA ANALYSIS 23  
1.9.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS IN MIXED METHOD RESEARCH 24  
1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 25  
1.10.1 Consent 25  
1.10.2 Freedom to withdraw 26  
1.10.3 Violation of privacy 26
1.10.4 Dissemination of the findings 26
1.11 RESEARCHERS ASSUMPTIONS 26
1.12 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION 27
1.12.1 Career planning 27
1.12.2 Career choice 27
1.12.3 Non career orientated careers 27
1.12.4 Identity 27
1.12.5 Career decision making 27
1.12.6 Self - Actualisation 28
1.13 PROGRESSION OF RESEARCH REPORT 28
1.14 CONCLUSION 29

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 30
2.1 INTRODUCTION 30
2.2 THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL LEAVER 30
2.3 CAREER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT 32
2.4 CAREER DEVELOPMENT THEORIES 33
2.4.1 Super’s Life-Span Theories 34
2.4.1.1 Super’s Developmental stages 35
2.4.1.2 Application to career counselling in Higher Education 36
2.4.2 Social Cognitive Career Theory 37
2.4.3 Career Self Efficacy Theory 39
2.4.3.1 Applications to career counselling in Higher Education 41
2.4.4 Career Decision Making Theory 42
2.4.4.1 Application to career counselling in Higher Education 43
2.5 GUIDELINES FOR CAREER COUNSELLING AND DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION 44
2.5.1 Critical assessment of the proposed interventions by the National Plan for Higher Education 47
CHAPTER 3: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 QUANTITATIVE DATA</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 Career Development Questionnaire instructions and scoring Methods</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3 Discussion of the Results</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3.1 Self Information</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3.2 Decision Making</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3.3 Career Information</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3.4 Integration of Self Information and Career Information</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3.5 Career Planning</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.4 Conclusions drawn from the Career Development Questionnaire</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.5 BECK DEPRESSION INVENTORY (BDI-II)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.6 Description of the BDI-II</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.7 Discussion of the Results</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.8 Discussion of the BDI-II scores and interpretation</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.9 Relationship of quantitative data (CDQ and BDI-II)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 QUALITATIVE DATA</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1 Interviews</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2 Themes that emerged from the interviews</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3 Discussion of Interview themes</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3.1 Common Personality Characteristics</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3.2 Lack of Adequate Subject Information</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3.3 “A personally enriching course, rather than a vocationally</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beneficial one”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3.4 “No direct and clear career pathway”</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 COLLATION OF DATA</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 CONCLUSION</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION 73
4.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY 73
4.3 DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES 73
4.3.1 Lack of Self Knowledge 73
4.3.2 Limited Self Exploration and Exploration of their Environments 74
4.3.3 Inadequate Information about Studies and Careers 74
4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE 75
4.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 78
4.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH 78
4.7 CONCLUSION 79

REFERENCE LIST 80

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Embedded mixed method design procedure 17
Figure 3.1 Career Development participant profile 55
Figure 3.2 Graphic Representations of the BDI-II Scores 60
Figure 3.3 Correlation of Quantitative Data 61
LIST OF TABLES
Table 1.1   Representation of participants 20
Table 1.2   Table illustrating mixed method trustworthiness 25
Table 2.1   Super’s Developmental stages 35
Table 2.2   Envisaged interventions by the student counseling profession to the challenges in the National plan for Higher Education 47
Table 3.1   Description of the CDQ Scales 52
Table 3.2   Guidelines for interpreting CDQ Scores 53
Table 3.3   Table illustrating CDQ findings 54
Table 3.4   Items in the BDI-II 59
Table 3.5   Score ranges for BDI-II 59
Table 3.6   Summary of BDI-II Scores 60
Table 3.7   Main themes that emerged during qualitative data analysis 63
Table 3.8   Influences on career decision making 64
Table 3.9   Summary table of quantitative data findings 70
Table 3.10   Themes derived from Quantitative and Qualitative data 71

APPENDICES
1.1 Ethical Clearance Letter (APPENDIX 1A) 93
1.2 Permission for Research (Registrar of the University) (APPENDIX 2A) 94
1.3 Permission for Research (Head of the Sociology Department at the University (APPENDIX 2B) 95
1.4 Information Letter and Student Assent (APPENDIX 2C) 96
2 Example of Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ) Instruction manual (APPENDIX 3) 98
2.1 Example of Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ) answer sheet (APPENDIX 3A)

3. Example of the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II) scoring sheet. (APPENDIX 4)

4. Interview Transcriptions (APPENDIX 5)
CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Career choice is one of the most important choices an individual will make. The decision influences an individual’s whole life and future in terms of livelihood, work satisfaction, self actualisation and happiness (Beekman, 2008a). Career choice has become a complex science owing to computer technology and the post-industrial revolution (Maree, 2007). With current uncertainty and unpredictability in the job market, exhaustive research on career possibilities is necessary before making a career choice. In addition, adjustments to the evolving socio-economic conditions need to be made. The career landscape has changed and career choice is no longer the task of school-leaving learners (i.e. adolescents). It is also an increasingly important task of young adults, especially those in their final years who have to decide whether to study further, seek employment or become an entrepreneur. Furthermore, the current labour market is exceptionally complex as a result of new entrants, with qualifications but no experience, who compete with retrenched professionals who have experience (Beekman, 2008b). Unfortunately, many people make career choices without a great deal of career guidance.

With this disparity in mind, the current study explored the career planning challenges of third year Bachelor of Arts (BA) students with Sociology as a major. Kunnen, Holwerda and Bosma’s (2008) research indicate that adolescents have greater problems with non-effective decision making and choosing a career, while young adults have more psychological and life choice problems. The reason for this, according to the researchers, is that students (especially those studying “general subject” degrees such as Anthropology, Sociology, Education and History) are suddenly confronted with difficult decisions about their future in their final year.

This introductory chapter serves to orientate the research. It provides the rationale, problem statement, aim and the methodological framework of the study. In order to contextualize and orientate the research, the challenges of five third year BA
students from a University in the Gauteng region, with regard to future career planning were discussed.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RELEVANCE FOR RESEARCH

In some ways “work” was an easier problem to solve in past centuries than the present. In past centuries, the daily act of survival was the “work” of the human species. The human species had to make a dedicated and tangible effort to secure food, water and shelter (Kosine, Steger & Duncan, 2008). However, with the specialisation of people into their own forte, their work often became further removed from survival and more closely linked to their identities. The world of work is becoming more complex and specialised. Entering into the world of work and moving through occupational positions requires more effort and confidence than it did in the industrial era. Savickas (2007, p.1) states “working in the postmodern global economy entails more risks because, in a substantial way, jobs are being replaced by assignments and organisations by networks”. That suggests that job security has become problematic and individuals require preparation for an unpredictable working environment.

Conversely, with the emergence of new careers and altering expectations of individuals, traditional career paths are in question. The acquisition of qualifications and lifetime training for an institutionalized career, has been replaced by the entrepreneurial route with “side roads, bumpy patches, dead ends, deep holes and occasionally meteoric rises or a spectacular blooming of potential into recognized talent” (Donkin, 2001).

Coetzee (2006), mentions in Beekman and Van Den Berg (in press), that the world of work has moved away from an era of the “one-life-one-career” perspective, which follows a predictable path of childhood discovery, expansion during adolescence, rapid rise in early adulthood, peaking in midlife and decline in retirement. The implication for individuals is that currently employees can no longer depend on a familiar and predictable working environment. Individuals need to rely on themselves for career progression.

Students in South Africa are currently faced with career choice limitations. According to a report released in early 2011 by the South African Institute of Race Relations
(SAIRR), South Africa has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world. It ranked in at 51% in 2010, with the average youth unemployment rate of 12% in the sub-Saharan-Africa and 13% in the world in 2009 (www.sairr.org.za). The 2011 survey conducted by (SAIRR), found that 51% of South Africans aged between the ages of 15 and 24 years old are unemployed. This was more than double the national unemployment rate of 25 percent. Data sourced from Statistics South Africa’s quarterly Labour Force Survey (2011) shows that the unemployment rate declined significantly in higher age groups to 29% for those aged 25 to 34; 17% for those aged 35 to 44; 12% for aged 45 to 54 and 8% for those aged 55 to 64 (www.sairr.org.za).

According to Beekman and Van Den Berg (in press), current students may be forced to make career choices that are not based on personal interest or passion but that have the best prospects for employment. Career choices are also limited because few students have the required symbols in Mathematics and Natural Science, which are gateway subjects required for the most scarce skills careers.

Career choice interventions mostly focus on Grade 11 and 12 learners and first-year entry university students. Unfortunately no specific attention is given to students in their final year of their first degree or diploma. The lack of specific focus on the third or final year students, especially those taking non-career orientated subjects, such as general Social Science or Humanities subjects leaves a gap in student career counselling in Higher Education. This gap is problematic in the current South African career landscape suffering from increased job losses as well as youth unemployment.

This lack of attention to career planning challenges of third year BA students motivated the researcher to embark on this inquiry.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Career choice interventions are largely done in Grade 11 and 12 as well as the first year of Higher Education. Career choice interventions deal with individuals in the late adolescent stage, which in South Africa is normally between the ages of 17 and 19 years old. The next developmental phase occurs when individuals are in their third
year of study, between the ages of 22 to 24 years and fall into the category of young adults, or emerging adults. According to Watson and Stead, (2006) both of these groups fall within the exploration phase, which is from 14 to 24 years. The major developmental task during this phase is to crystallize occupational preferences, specify an occupation and finally implement a career choice (Watson and Stead, 2006).

Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) describe this stage as one where the late adolescent or young adult explores and searches for career direction. This must be translated into action through studying and job seeking in order to make a living and manage both career and personal life.

Students, especially those in the “general subject” (i.e. Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Education and History) degrees, are suddenly confronted during their third year with difficult decisions about their future. The existence of challenges faced by this group of young adults is not limited to study and work. It extends to personal life domains as well. In other words, a link with identity is made, which is an integrated part of decision making. These challenges causes a ripple effect and students are often found to be feeling vulnerable and faced with self – actualization challenges. Different aspects of identity formation are involved, such as self and vocational identity. This would suggest that career counselling in higher education for students who study general subjects would overlap to a great extent with therapy or counselling, especially because personal barriers, such as identity formation is a core element of personal barriers (Kunnen et al., 2008).

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The above stated discussion and motivation for this study led to the formulation of the following research question:

What are the challenges of five third year BA students at a University in Gauteng regarding 2011 career planning, and what guidelines can be recommended to the student counselling services at the University?
1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study was to explore the career planning challenges of five third year BA students at a University in Gauteng in order to make recommendations regarding student counselling at the University. The study’s main objectives following this aim were to:

- Explore the extent of depressive symptoms surrounding career preparation and other career planning challenges of third year BA students.
- Analyse these challenges with reference to career and personal counselling themes.
- Make recommendations for student counselling in Higher Education.

1.6 METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

1.6.1 Research Design

Merriam (1998, p. 6) states that “a research design comprises the planning of how the research questions are going to be addressed and involves the collecting, organizing and interpretation of data”. According to Creswell (1998), the research design is seen as a plan according to which relevant data is collected. With reference to Mouton and Marais (1992), a research design is a plan which includes every aspect of a proposed research study from the conceptualization of the problem right through to the dissemination of the findings. Mouton (2001) further asserts that there should be adequate reasoning to support the “design type”.

1.6.2 A Mixed Method Research Paradigm

My study’s research paradigm is a mixed methods application. Creswell (2003) views a mixed method study as one that accommodates different perspectives on the same set of data, some of which are quantitative and some qualitative.

According to Creswell (2006), mixed methods research is research with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many
phases of the research process. As a method it focuses on collecting, analyzing and mixing both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. The central premise of mixed method research is that the combined use of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007, p 130) give a definition of mixed method research: Mixed method research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognizes the importance of traditional qualitative and quantitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that will provide the most informative, complete, balances and useful research results.

According to Creswell (2003) mixed method research could use a questionnaire during data collection that includes both open-ended (qualitative) and closed (quantitative) questions. Qualitative research allows for the interpretation of the participants’ words and phrases, reflections and responses during this study. Therefore the essence of qualitative research lies in the interpretative tradition (Creswell, 2003). In the past there were many debates over whether quantitative research was a more reliable method to use over qualitative research (Thomas, 2003). However, Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 18) argue that “both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used effectively in the same project”.

This study is exploratory in nature, as the purpose is to investigate and subsequently gain a better understanding of the research phenomenon.

1.6.3 Rationale and Purpose for Utilising the Mixed Methods Research Paradigm

When both qualitative and quantitative data are included in a study, researchers receive richer results than if they had used one form of data (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska and Creswell 2005).
To determine the career planning challenges of third year B.A students at the University both qualitative and quantitative data was required. Indeed, my study’s qualitative data explained the results obtained from the quantitative data.

The qualitative data offered a perspective on the students’ context. It therefore provided a more holistic view of the student’s career planning challenges.

Mertens (2003) lists the advantages of using the mixed method. She suggests that the mixed methods investigation be used for a better understanding of a research problem by converging numeric trends from quantitative data and specific details from the qualitative component. The method identifies constructs that may be measured through the use of existing instruments or the development of new ones. The method may be used to obtain statistical quantitative data from a population sample and use them to identify individuals who may expand on the results through qualitative data and results. Using both forms of data allowed for a deeper understanding of my research question because general results were obtained from a small sample population.

This mixed methods study will address the career planning challenges of five third year BA students at a University in Gauteng in order to make recommendations regarding student counselling at the University.

An embedded mixed method design will be used. This is a design in which one data set provides a supportive secondary role in a study based primarily on the other data set. According to Ivankova, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), this design is used “when a researcher needs to answer a secondary research question that is different from, but related to, the primary research”. To accomplish this, a researcher will embed one type of data within the methodology associated with the other type of data (Green and Caracelli, 1997).

In the embedded design, analysis in one method is used to complement analysis in another method. The embedded design is used to include qualitative analysis with a quantitative study or vice-versa (Ivankova, Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2007). In the embedded design one approach (quantitative or qualitative) is given precedence and the other is used as a tool to help answer some question generated by the more
important approach. In order words, the results of the lower priority design would not have use or meaning without the results of the higher priority design.

The primary purpose of this study is exploring the career planning challenges of five third year BA students at the University in Gauteng. I planned to collect qualitative data with in-depth interviews that will explore what the career planning challenges of the third year students are. However, to gain a better understanding of these challenges this study makes use of the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II), to ascertain the level of depression related to career planning and the Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ) to determine the readiness of the third year students to make decisions on their careers. These psychometric tests will hopefully contribute to the understanding of the participant’s career planning challenges. The reason for collecting the secondary data is to provide support for the primary purpose. The benefits of this design in my study provides an advantage when an essentially qualitative approach is called for, but the researcher also wants to generate some meaning that is only available with quantitative assistance. In this study, the quantitative data has been analyzed and interpreted qualitatively. The small sample size also made it difficult to utilise statistical data in this study.

I argue that this design was most applicable to my study as unlike the triangulation design there is no expectation that these results have to agree with each other or be given equal priority.

Overleaf, Figure 1.1 is a visual representation of the embedded mixed methods design.
1.6.4 Making the Worldview Explicit

Theoretical frameworks entail more than the drawing on theories: they also involve making the worldview of the researcher explicit. Aerts, Apostel, Moor, Hellemans, Maex, Van Belle, and Van der Veken (1994, p 17) define a worldview as a “system of co-ordinates or a frame of reference in which everything presented to us by our diverse experiences can be placed”. A worldview is a belief or value system. This enquiry is, to a large extent, informed by a pragmatic perspective.

Cherryholmes (1993) sees pragmatism as making use of diverse approaches, valuing both objective and subjective knowledge. Pragmatism draws upon many ideas and uses “what works”. This suggests that, regardless of circumstances, both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used in a single study.
1.7 RESEARCH METHODS

1.7.1 Sample

Sampling is the selection of specific participants from the whole population to gather the information about a larger group (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993, p. 378). Purposive sampling was utilized. Creswell and Plano Clark (2010) view purposive sampling as researchers who intentionally select participants who have experienced the central phenomenon being explored in the study. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand and gain insight into a research question and thus participants are selected on the basis to draw out rich and relevant information.

This study is contextually based and originally consisted of six participants. During the investigation, one participant withdrew from the study. The five participants are in their third year of study at a University in Gauteng. A sample was chosen on the basis that the third year BA students with Sociology as a major are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon under investigation. These students were studying general subjects (such as Philosophy, Sociology or Education) which do not have a direct or clear career path.

1.7.1.1 A University in Gauteng

Graue and Walsh (1995) distinguish between the local context and the larger context. The local context is embedded in the larger context. For this reason, it is necessary to include a brief discussion of the University in Gauteng (larger context) of which the third year participants (local context) form a part.

The University was established in 1967 as the academic home for Afrikaans-speaking students of the Witwatersrand. The University was originally intended through its Afrikaans spirit and character to enrich the culture, philosophies and pursuits of the Afrikaner nation. After 1994, it became an institution with a multicultural vision and in 2005 a comprehensive university.

The University strives to be seen as a prestigious learning institution and sets high standards regarding both academic and sport achievements. The University offers a Centre for Psychological Services and Career Development (PsyCad). It offers
students, clients and stakeholders opportunities to participate and fully utilize services of Registered Psychologists, Registered Counselors and Psychometrists, a Graduate Recruitment Programme Coordinator and professional support staff at this centre.

1.7.1.2 The Participants

The study consisted of five participants after one participant withdrew from the study. All students were BA undergraduates with Sociology as a common major.

Table 1.1 Representation of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>BA Humanities</td>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>BA Sociology</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>BA Social/Marketing Research</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>BA Education</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>BA Psychology</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.8 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study’s paradigm and format determined the nature and implementation of the data collection methods. The purpose of data collection in a mixed method study is to find answers to the research questions (Teddle and Yu, 2007).

Merriam (1998, p.151) notes that “the gathering of data is not an isolated occurrence, but goes hand in hand with the analysis of the data”. According to Merriam (1998, p.67), qualitative data is described as consisting of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions and observed behaviours. It includes direct quotations from people and their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and case histories.

For the purposes of this study, I used both primary and secondary sources to gather information. Primary sources included books, journals, thesis and articles. Secondary sources included explanations and interpretations from other sources.
(Strauss and Myburgh, 2007). The following instruments was utilised in data collection: interviews conducted with the participants, a psychological depression inventory scale completed by the participants, a career developmental questionnaire and observations of the participants.

1.8.1 Qualitative Data Collection

1.8.1.1 Interviews

“An interview is a conversation, but, a conversation with a purpose”
(Merriam, 1998, p.71)

In qualitative research, interviews are considered a major source of data needed for the understanding of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998). Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, thoughts or how people interpret the world around them. It aims at gathering data concerned with the lived experience of a respondent (Strauss and Myburgh, 2007, p.49). According to Morse (1994, p.300), “interviewing is one of the methods used to obtain not only verbal, but also non-verbal information from the respondents”.

In my study, the purpose of the interviews was to elicit information from the respondents with a view of obtaining details relevant to the research focus. In depth interviews were conducted with the selected participants in an attempt to obtain explicit knowledge, which was motivated by intent and founded in certain assumptions (Morse, 1994).

According to Schulze (2002) the researcher using in depth interviewing will develop questions spontaneously in the course of the interaction with the interviewee. In this investigation, the researcher limited her contribution to an absolute research question, i.e. ‘career planning challenges of third year BA students at a University in Gauteng’. Rubin and Rubin (1995, p.66) mention that interviews are conducted to gain knowledge and validate specific themes.

For this study, I continued interviewing until no new information or themes emerged. This is viewed as the point of saturation (Seidman, 1991).
1.8.2 Quantitative Data Collection

1.8.2.1 Psychological Test: The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II)

The Beck Depression Inventory – Second Edition (BDI-II) was utilised for this inquiry. The BDI-II is a 21 item self-report instrument for measuring the severity of depression in adults and adolescents aged 13 years and older. This inventory was developed to address the need for an instrument that would reliably discriminate anxiety from depression while displaying convergent validity (McDowell and Newell, 1996). The BDI-II has become one of the most widely accepted instruments for assessing the severity of depression in diagnosed patients and for detecting possible depression in normal populations (Archer, Maruish, Imhof, and Piotrowski, 1991; Piotrowski and Keller, 1992). The 21 symptoms and attitudes listed in the BDI are based on the verbal descriptions by patients and were not selected to reflect any theory of depression (Beck, Brown and Steer, 1987). These items are further described in Chapter Three.

The BDI-II was administered to the participants. The participant’s scores were tallied and the data assisted the researcher in identifying levels of depression and adjustment challenges with regards to career planning upon completion of their degrees. Suitable recommendations and referrals were also suggested for the participants with elevated scores.

1.8.2.2 Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ)

The participants completed the Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ) in order to determine their readiness to make decisions on their careers. This questionnaire examined the five dimensions of career development, namely: self information; decision making; career information; integration of self information with career information, and career planning (Langley, du Toit and Herbst, 1992).

The CDQ is chiefly based on the developmental approach, with the aim of determining the level of career development of the individual concerned. This questionnaire assists in determining the individual’s state of career maturity which is important in the process of career guidance. Super described career maturity as the extent to which a person is able to master those career developmental tasks that are applicable to their particular life stage (Langley, du Toit and Herbst, 1992).
Thus the information derived from this instrument assisted the researcher in determining the individuals’ career development tasks that required attention. By giving attention to these career development tasks, the individual’s readiness to deal with career planning requirements could be enhanced.

1.9 DATA ANALYSIS

“Data analysis is a constant comparative method where formal analysis begins early in the study and is nearly completed by the end of the data collection”

(Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p.72)

In mixed methods, “research consists of analysing separately the quantitative data using quantitative methods and qualitative data using qualitative methods. Mixed methods also involve analyzing both sets of information using techniques that mix the quantitative and qualitative data and results” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2010, p. 206). In this study, the quantitative data was scored according to general psychometric principles and then analysed qualitatively.

It is an interactive process throughout where the investigator is concerned with producing believable and trustworthy findings (Merriam, 1998). According to White (2002, p.82) qualitative research requires “logical reasoning as it makes considerable use of inductive reasoning and organizes data into categories”. Patterns are later identified among the categories. The researchers approach, consider and make sense of the data depending on the different theoretical perspectives that they hold (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

In this study, the approach to data analysis followed is based on the mixed method research process model which incorporates Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie’s (2003) seven stage conceptualization of the mixed method data analysis process. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.9), the seven data analysis stages are data reductions; data display; data transformation; data correlation; data consolidation; data comparison and data integration.

Data reduction involves reducing the dimensionality of the qualitative data (via exploratory thematic analysis) and quantitative data (via descriptive statistics and clustering). Data display involves describing pictorially both the qualitative data (e.g. graphs, charts, rubrics and diagrams) and quantitative data (e.g. tables and graphs). This is followed by the data transformation stage wherein quantitative data is
converted into narrative data that can be analyzed qualitatively, and/or qualitative data is converted into numerical codes that can be represented statistically (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). This stage, however, is optional. Data correlation involves the quantitative data being correlated with the qualitative data or the qualitative data being correlated with the quantitative data. This is followed by the data consolidation stage where both quantitative and qualitative data are combined to create new or consolidated variables of data sets. The next stage is data comparison which involves comparing data from the quantitative and qualitative data sources.

Data integration characterizes the final step whereby “both quantitative and qualitative data are integrated into either a coherent whole or two separate sets” (i.e. qualitative and quantitative of coherent wholes) (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.9).

1.9.1 Trustworthiness in Mixed Methods Research

A research enquiry is considered to be trustworthy when other researchers are convinced of its worth and if it accurately describes the experiences of the research participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The study was evaluated by the tenets proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.290). The criteria to support the rigour of qualitative and quantitative research include truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (Krefting, 1991, p.217; Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). The principals posited by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.290) propose to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings from both qualitative and quantitative research. Within these main principles the researcher evaluated the study in terms of validity and reliability.

Validity refers to how the research findings coincide with reality and asks the question, “Do we have an authentic portrait of what we are looking at?” (Merriam, 1998, p.204). The constructs of validity, in terms of qualitative research are triangulation, member checks, long term observation, peer examination, participatory of collaborative modes of research and researchers biases (Merriam, 1998).

In quantitative research, internal validity refers to “how the research findings coincide with reality” (Merriam, 1998, p.201). On the other hand, external validity refers to the
generalization of the research findings and to what extent the findings can be applied to another situation (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1989).

Below, the table illustrates the aspects of mixed method Trustworthiness. In terms of this study, I utilised the following aspects.

**Table 1.2 Table illustrating mixed method trustworthiness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Qualitative Approach</th>
<th>Quantitative Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truth Value</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Internal Validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Description of background information</td>
<td>✓ Instrument validity (BDI-II and CDQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Member Checks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Triangulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicability</td>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Description of background information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Purposive sampling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Dependability audit</td>
<td>✓ Exploratory research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Triangulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutrality</td>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Objectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Confirmability audit</td>
<td>✓ Rigour of methodology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Krefting (1991).

**1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This study was conducted according to the ethical measures and guidelines stipulated by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at a University in Gauteng (Appendix A). Permission from the Registrar of the University was sought before collecting data (Appendix 2A). I sought permission from the Head of the Sociology department before collecting data from the third year Sociology students (Appendix 2B). Assent was also obtained from the Sociology students themselves (Appendix 2C).

**1.10.1 Consent**

The research study’s question was explained to the participants. Letters were provided to explain the purpose of the study. Adequate information was made
available to participants so that they could make informed decisions regarding their participation in the study.

The participants were made aware of the study’s procedures, the duration of the study and the possible advantages and disadvantages of participation.

1.10.2 Freedom to Withdraw

All participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time. No form of deception was used to ensure the participation of the participants.

1.10.3 Violation of Privacy

The identity of the participants was not compromised at any time as their names were not used in the data collection process. No private information was divulged and the right to confidentiality of all the participants was respected. The data was locked safely away and not easily assessable to anyone. The principle of trust was not violated.

1.10.4 Dissemination of the Findings

The results of the study were communicated to the participants after interpreting the findings of the data. All the participants were informed that the Centre for Psychological Services and Career development (PSYCAD) offers student counselling support and in certain instances, the necessary referrals of participants to the centre were made.

1.11 RESEARCHERS ASSUMPTIONS

Owing to the nature of the mixed methods research method, the researcher’s values, beliefs and perspectives inevitably influence the research observed and how it is interpreted. It was therefore necessary for me to declare any presuppositions and assumptions in order to reduce researcher bias and ensure reliability and objectivity of the research. It is important to note that the researcher is closely involved with the University where the participants are from.

I needed to guard against positive bias for the institution and conjure up impartiality regarding the investigation. It was imperative for me to stand back and regard the descriptions of the study with neutrality. In order to avoid research bias, Tomal
(2003, p.35) asserts that the researcher should conform to high standards of ethics and integrity. This involvement with the University of Johannesburg, however, can also be viewed as an asset, as it allowed me to see the broader picture of how students at this institution can be better supported.

1.12 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The study’s key concepts are clarified below:

1.12.1 Career planning

Hall, (1986, p. 45) defines career planning as a deliberate process of becoming aware of one’s self, opportunity, constraints, choices, consequences as well as identifying career related goals. Leibowitz, Farren and Kaye, (1986, p. 27) concur with this definition, when they define career planning as “a process by which individuals determine their skills, interests and values”.

1.12.2 Career choice

Career choice is defined as “the decisions that individuals make at any point in their career about particular work or leisure activities that they choose to pursue at that particular time” (Sharf, 2002, p.3).

1.12.3 Non-career Orientated Careers

The study of general Social Science subjects include History, Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology, History, Geography, Psychology and Education, that do not lead to an obvious or direct career path.

1.12.4 Identity

Personal identity is the degree to which the individual has a clear picture of his or her goals, interests and talents (Stead and Watson, 2006). Similarly, vocational identity is an important goal of many career development interventions and is dependent upon acquiring sufficient occupational and self information (Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey, 2006, p.54).

1.12.5 Career decision making

According to Beach (1997), making career decisions is a lifelong process. It involves exploring and experiencing the world of work. It is also requires that the individual
has an understanding of personal ability, interests, skills, values and experiences. These characteristics must be combined to create a meaningful framework for life.

1.12.6 Self - Actualization

Maslow (1954), defined self actualisation as the ongoing actualisation of potentials, capacities and talents as fulfilment of a mission (or call, fate, destiny or vocation) and acceptance of the persons own intrinsic nature as an unceasing trend toward unity, integration or synergy within the person. Maslow (1954) believes that man has a natural drive to healthiness, or self actualization. He believed that man has basic, biological and psychological needs that have to be fulfilled in order to be free enough to feel the desire for the higher levels of realization. He also believed that the organism has the natural, unconscious and innate capacity to seek its needs.

1.13. PROGRESSION OF RESEARCH REPORT

The study adhered to the following structure:

Chapter One contains an introduction to the focus and context of the proposed study. The study’s research question, aims and objectives are stated together with a detailed explanation of the research methodology. In addition, an overview of the research approach and methods of data collection and analysis is provided. The researcher’s paradigms and presuppositions are also discussed. The ethical considerations, validity and trustworthiness of the research inquiry are included.

Chapter Two comprises of the theoretical framework, which entails the literature consulted and reviewed for the research.

Chapter Three contains the description of the research. The research findings are analyzed. Integration of literature study findings and empirical research findings is presented.

Chapter Four provides a summary of the study discussing the findings and limitations as well as providing recommendations for students and the University’s student counselling services.
1.14 CONCLUSION

Career choice and planning is one of the most pivotal decisions individuals make which influences their whole lives. It is a proven fact that individuals in the current working population will undertake approximately five to seven occupational changes throughout their lifetime (www.alis.alberta.ca). This means that individuals are continually evaluating themselves, their past experiences and what they would like to achieve.

The lack of adequate career guidance has been identified as a challenge for final year university students. With the world of work growing more complex and specialized, many students and graduates need to prepare for an unpredictable working environment.

This research study explored the career planning challenges of third year BA students at a University in Gauteng. The subsidiary aim was to make recommendations for student counselling services at the University. The research process was designed according to a mixed-method approach. Data collected in this inquiry included in-depth interviews and psychometric questionnaires.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a literature review and a detailed description of additional research that has been conducted on the exploration of career planning challenges. These challenges are also explored with direct reference to career and personal counselling themes. Recommendations and guidelines for student career counselling in higher education are included.

2.2 THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL LEAVER

Current school leavers and university graduates are faced with the daunting task of finding work in a sophisticated world of employment. In the last few decades the world of work has undergone rapid changes as a result of the information explosion, the internet and globalization. This has resulted in general uncertainty regarding unemployment (Beekman, 2008b). Twenty-first century economies are sophisticated and technologically complex and work demands a much higher and wider range of skills and higher levels of education than ever before (Beekman, 2008a).

Current occupational prospects seem far less definable and predictable, with job transitions more frequent and difficult. These changes require workers to develop skills and competencies that differ substantially from the knowledge and abilities required by twentieth century occupations (Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, 2009, p.240).

Job security is becoming an elusive experience. There is a decline in the number of available jobs in South Africa. The National Manpower Commission (1998) asserts that there are unemployed people with experience who compete with school leavers, and it is therefore crucial that young people are placed correctly in terms of career choices.

Job security has become problematic and individuals need to prepare for a capricious working environment. This could force insecure workers to use
sophisticated technologies to maintain employability and create their own employment opportunities (Savickas et al., 2009).

Students in South Africa are currently faced with career choice limitations because of an unemployment rate of approximately 25% for those who are actively seeking work and an overall unemployment rate of about 42% (Statistics SA, 2009). According to Beekman and Van den Berg (in press), students might be forced to make career choices that have the best prospects for employment, whether they have a passion for the chosen career or not. Career choices are also limited because few students have the required symbols in Mathematics and Natural Science, which are the gateway subjects needed for most of the scarce skills career categories. Career choices are also influenced by the fact that the Government and Industry mainly focus on promoting careers in the scarce skills categories, which are Technology and Engineering, Science and English Education, Health Sciences, Financial Sciences, Mathematics and careers in the Built Environment, to name a few (Skillsportal, 2006). In addition, bursaries are awarded mostly for scarce skills categories and universities receive higher subsidies for students in these study fields (Beekman, 2008a). These limitations influence career information and opportunities given to groups in schools and career counselling to individuals.

To further add to this dilemma, the focus of career choice interventions is mostly on Grade 11 and 12 learners and first-year entry students, although no specific attention has been given to students in the year in which they complete their first degree or diploma. The lack of specific focus on the third year or final year students, especially those in non-career orientated careers, such as general Social Science subjects (Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, History, Education) leaves a gap in student career counselling in higher education, especially in the current career landscape where the world is in recession, jobs losses are increasing, and where South Africa has the third highest unemployment rate out of 73 countries (Schussler, 2009). Career choice is no longer just the task of late adolescents but of young adults too. Young adults, especially in those in their final year, must decide whether to study further, seek employment or become an entrepreneur.
A comparative study conducted by Kunnen, Holwerda and Bosma (2008) indicated that study choice problems in young adults who had just completed their first degree might be more serious than those of the adolescent school-leaving group.

The results indicated that the adolescent group mostly had problems with non-effective decision making and choosing a career, whilst the young adults had more psychological and life choice difficulties.

According to the Kunnen, et al., these young adult students, especially in “general subject” degrees, are suddenly confronted with difficult decisions about their future during their third year. These young adults were faced with challenges in their personal lives as well as in their study and work domains, which are linked to identity problems.

These students are vulnerable and faced with self actualization challenges. Different aspects of identity formation are involved, such as self identity and vocational identity. These findings suggest that career counselling in higher education for this group of students should overlap to a great extent with therapy, to assist students in their personal and vocational domain.

2.3 CAREER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Career planning is currently strategically important for individuals because of the overwhelming time spent at work or with colleagues. For this reason the process of career planning lasts a lifetime, from the moment of college or university graduation until retirement. To make career planning successful, the individual must attempt, early on, to identify suitable work and follow the chosen path firmly.

Research conducted by the Arts faculties of 27 universities by Golde and Dore (2001) on education and career preparation found that 10 percent of Sociology and general subject students said that one should “not expect that the work you do in university will land you a great university professor job”. Another comment made was that “good jobs are few and far between these days and there are a lot of unemployed and underemployed undergraduates and thus it is worthwhile to learn some skills that translate as useful outside of academics (in Sociology, for example,
statistics and survey design are useful in government, business, and private research institutes)."

Students in general subject graduate programmes around the nation are becoming increasingly alienated and bitter because their social position and career expectations do not compare favourably with those of their mentors. Whereas their professors typically have jobs, tenure and a future in Sociology and Social Sciences, they have a scant hope of attaining any of those precious rewards (Grusky, 1993 cited in Sabin, 1997).

Brown and Brooks (1990) state that career development constitutes for most people a lifelong process of preparing to choose, choosing, and typically continuing to make choices from among the many occupations available. The concept of career development was first advanced by Ginzberg, Ginsberg, Axelrod and Herma (1951) who proposed that occupational choice is a developmental process that occurs over a number of years. Patton and McMahan (2001) mention that their original theory, which assumed that the process was completed in early childhood, was later revised to recognise occupational choice as a lifelong process of decision making. Sears (1982) acknowledged the importance of career development over the lifespan and views career development as the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical and economic factors that combine to shape the career of individuals over the lifespan. Watts (1997, p.35) claims that individuals exist in an era of “do it for yourself career management”. There is now a period of where individuals are being challenged to play a greater role in constructing their own career development, an epoch where “careers are now forged, not foretold”. Taking these aspects into consideration, current undergraduate students and career counsellors need to adequately prepare for these possible challenges of career development and planning.

2.4 CAREER DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

For the purpose of this dissertation three relevant typologies of theories were chosen to explain important concepts. These typologies are:

- Life-span theories, with reference to Super’s theory of development
• Social Cognitive career theory, with reference to self efficacy
• Decision making theories, with reference to Tiedeman’s theory.

2.4.1 Super’s Life-Span Theory

This theory deals with how individuals cope with career development issues over their entire lifespan. Donald Super (1957) and other career development theorists recognise the changes that people go through as they mature.

Career patterns are determined by socio-economic factors, mental and physical ability, personal characteristics and the opportunities to which individuals are exposed. Research by career development theorists indicates that individuals seek career satisfaction through work roles in which it possible to express the sense of self and implement and develop self-concept. Self-concept is an underlying factor in Super’s model. Super mentions that vocational self-concept develops through physical and mental growth, observations of work, identification with working adults, general environment and general experiences. The broader experiences become in relation to awareness of world of work, the more sophisticated the vocational self-concept formed (Zunker, 1994).

According to Super (1990), an individual’s self-concept changes with time and experience, which brings about the process of stages characterized by exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline. These stages are further characterized and have age limits. A main concept in Super’s theory (1970) is that career maturity is manifested in the successful accomplishment of age and stage developmental tasks across the lifespan.

Langley (1989) worked with Super and his international research team and consequently translated a range of Eurocentric theories and instruments for use in the South African context. For example, Langley (1989) translated the Career Maturity Inventory (CMI) into the Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ), to accommodate the cultural differences in South Africa. The (CDQ) is an inventory that assesses the readiness to make career choices in this investigation. The sub-components of this battery of tests are career planning, career exploration, world of work information and knowledge of preferred occupational group.
Super’s theory is appropriate for my study as the theory discusses the link and integrates personality development along with career development. Super’s approach is also relevant because it has generated a great deal of interest and research into how the self-concept and mental growth are related to career development, which provides additional insight to the participants’ perspectives of this investigation.

2.4.1.1 Super’s Developmental Stages

The notion of stages and sub-stages is essential to Super’s life span theory and his contribution was the formalization of stages and developmental tasks over the life span.

Table 2.1 Super’s Developmental Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Birth to 14 or 15</td>
<td>Form self-concept, develop capacity, attitudes, interests, and needs, and form a general understanding of the world of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory</td>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>&quot;Try out&quot; through classes, work experience, hobbies. Collect relevant information. Tentative choice and related skill development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment</td>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>Entry skill building and stabilization through work experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>Continual adjustment process to improve position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>Reduced output, prepare for retirement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People change with time and experience, and progress through the following vocational development stages:

Table 2.2 Vocational Developmental Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOCATIONAL</th>
<th>AGES</th>
<th>GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS/DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crystallization</td>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>Developing and planning a tentative vocational goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specification</td>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>Forming the vocational goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>Training for and obtaining employment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although Super (1979) originally presented the stages and tasks in a sequential manner, he later added that we cycle and recycle throughout our lifespan as we adapt to changes in the self as well as to the trends in the work place. Understanding these ages and related stages of career development helps the career counsellor to select appropriate responses and activities (Zunker, 1994). Thereafter, Super and Thompson (1979) identified six factors in vocational maturity: awareness of the need to plan ahead; decision making skills; knowledge acquisition and the use of information resources; general career information; general world of work information, and detailed information about occupations of preference.

The participants of this investigation typically fall into the exploration stage which includes a vocational developmental task termed as crystallization (Super, 1984). This stage is characterized by making an occupational choice, becoming more specific in the choice, and implementing it by finding and choosing a job. Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) see this stage as one where the late adolescent and young adult explore and search for career direction that must be translated into action through studying and job seeking in order to make a living and manage career and personal life.

The concepts of Super’s theory can be related to the career counselling process in Higher Education and the career counsellor can easily derive a counselling approach by utilising aspects from this theory.

2.4.1.2 Application to Career Counselling in Higher Education

According to Sharf (2006) information about the field in which the student is interested may help to determine the kind of counselling that is required. The applicability of Super’s theory in career counselling in Higher Education, lies in making use of Super’s maturity concept to assess the student’s readiness for career decision making. If the student has the opportunity to explore career choices, there is likelihood that the student will become more vocationally mature.
Career counsellors may utilise tests or integrate the concepts that are part of the tests within the counselling strategy (Sharf, 1997; Pietrofese, 1980). The applicability of Super’s constructs to the South African context is evident in the CDQ.

Super’s approach is developmental in that it anticipates future adjustment problems owing to the progressive nature of development. Intervention is therefore carried out with a view to negotiate future developmental tasks successfully. Savickas (2009) views vocational guidance as no longer confined to intervening at transition times and making predications or proposing suggestions on the basis of present stock taking, but should include a markedly preventative role. In the framework of career counselling in higher education, this means taking an interest in students’ future.

Guidance has to be given much earlier than when students are in the process of facing the difficulties of transition, so that their actual choice opportunities can be increased with special attention devoted to at risk-situations (Savickas, 2009).

2.4.2 Social Cognitive Career Theory

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) has been chosen as the theoretical foundation for this study for several reasons. Firstly, SCCT has utilised well-defined constructs that have undergone rigorous consolidation through a prolonged history of research and testing in a variety of psychosocial domains. Secondly, it is a contemporary career development theory that has been formulated from an integrative perspective (Chen, 2003). Thirdly, SCCT ascribes to constructivist epistemology, acknowledging humans as active agents or self-constructing living systems. This basic approach, considering people as active rather than passive agents, underpins the cognitive revolution that many contemporary theorists are embracing. Essentially, the developers of the theory view career development as a process of adjustment and influence between active agents and their environments (Nel, 2006). More importantly, this theory was chosen because of its emphasis on the importance of contextual variables. The contribution of cognitive approaches in providing relevant theoretical frameworks for understanding career development of socially diverse populations and changing contextual influences affecting career opportunities is well documented and many studies have contributed an empirical base to support this approach (Hackett, 1995; Lent and Maddux, 1997; Tang, 1999).
SCCT was developed by Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994), building on Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory. The theory suggests that career behaviour is a result of interaction between self efficacy, outcome expectation and goals. Self efficacy is defined by Bandura (1986, p.391) as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance”. Thus the focus is on the strength of the individual's belief that they can successfully accomplish something and this belief is more powerful than interests, values or abilities. The variable that interacts with self efficacy expectations is outcome expectations.

SCCT emphasises how some individuals’ career opportunities are restricted by social and cultural differences. Some individuals are unable to pursue their interests and this has an effect on self efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

SCCT needs to be applied understanding of the clients’ situations and to the development of the counsellor role (Larson, 1998). The responsibility of career counsellors to develop an explicit awareness of how, consciously or unconsciously, their own belief systems and worldview can intrude in the interview with students has been identified by Constantine and Erickson (1998). The intrusion of the counsellor beliefs can reveal how biases and values can determine the questions asked of clients and can undermine clients' self efficacy beliefs and sense of self agency. Betz (2004) suggests that one of the first tasks to be addressed by a career counsellor is to investigate client self efficacy and to understand how the individual approaches career decision making and their self beliefs. Citing Rockwell (1987) they raise concerns about how more traditional approaches to career counselling may limit opportunities for clients to discuss the range of factors that affect the career options being considered. Beekman and Van den Berg (in press), mention the challenges to student counsellors and how they have to think about students in a new way that is personal, holistic, flexible, possibility-oriented, “round” rather than “square”.

This flexibility on the part of counsellors is especially important in South Africa because the entire face of student demographics in Higher Education institutions has changed. The demographic profile of the student population has changed because of educational, political and workplace transformation. Student characteristics are also
changing because the South African society and family are undergoing transformation as a result of socio-economic opportunities and social and cultural changes. Students themselves change because of generational influences (Beekman and Van den Berg, in press).

2.4.3 Career Self-Efficacy Theory

Self efficacy theory was initially developed by Bandura (1977) and has provided a valuable framework that can be used to understand and explain the career development process. According to Bandura (1977), self efficacy is concerned with the individual’s belief that a given task can be performed successfully. From this conception of self efficacy, it could be argued that an individual would succeed in whatever task provided that he or she believes in the ability to succeed. Hackett and Betz (1992) proposed that efficacy expectations might influence achievement behaviours, academic and career decisions as well as the career adjustment process.

In a study conducted by Arnett (2006) on self-efficacy, perceptions of barriers, vocational identity and the career exploration behaviour of students it was noted that at least 96 percent of those surveyed expect to find a job that is “well paying and personally fulfilling”, and “an expression of their identity rather than simply a way to make a living”, irrespective of educational realities. Discovering what work suits their abilities and interests during their twenties assists young people in attaining life goals and eventually settling into vocations (Kolone, 2006.) As young people begin to feel comfortable in the work environment and adopt the work as their own, their identities change to reflect the values of a particular corporate, institutional or labour group. Kolone (2006) uses the term “vocational identity” to refer to the work identity that an individual develops as attachments to their occupation, employer and workplace are established.

A study by Waidtlow, (2004), observed that vocational identity develops when workers take their career directions seriously and identify a form of work that suits them and offers a reasonable expectation of finding a job, earning a living and experiencing success.
On the other hand, decision making self efficacy has been identified as an important variable in the career development of high school students and young adults.

Career decision making self efficacy refers to the degree to which individuals feel confident in their ability to successfully engage in tasks associated with making a career choice and with commitment to a career (Taylor and Betz, 1983). Flores and O’Brien, 2002 cited in Kolone, (2006) found that self-efficacy for non-traditional careers were negatively related to traditional career choices. The research indicated the potential influence of career decision making self efficacy and perceptions of barriers on vocational identity.

Kolone (2006) asserts that the central task of adolescence is identity development. In an effort to solidify a self image, adolescents attempt to understand their emotions, beliefs, and values (Erikson, 1963). They are also likely to seek a sense of meaning or purpose in their lives and have a tendency to look towards the future in the conceptualisation of an adult identity. Integral to the process of identity formation is the establishment of a vocational identity, which is a clear and stable sense of personal interests and abilities as well as the ability to establish goals and make career-related decisions (Holland, Daiger and Power, 1980). Super, Savickas and Super (1996) observe that the establishment of a vocational identity serves as the basis for making occupational choices that are a good “fit”, consequently ensuring optimal adjustment outcomes.

In a study conducted by Solberg, Good, Fischer, Brown, and Ward (1994), it was found that the degree to which individuals believed that they could successfully perform a variety of career exploration tasks was related to the number of career-related activities performed. Blustein and Noumair (1996) also found evidence that suggests that college and university students with higher levels of career decision making self-efficacy were more inclined to engage in career exploration behaviour than students with lower levels of career decision making self efficacy. Blustein’s study suggests that career exploration behaviour is an important construct to consider in the context of student career development and possible career planning challenges. The findings in Blustein’s investigation indicated that career decision making self-efficacy may significantly influence student’s career development, not
only in relation to vocational identity but also in relation to concrete career exploration behaviours. Thus, career counsellors who work in higher education need to inquire about the student’s self-efficacy beliefs and work together to enhance their career decision making self-efficacy.

Arnett (2006) mentions that career educators and counsellors should incorporate counselling strategies designed to help students gain a sense of mastery over and self-confidence in specific career-related tasks. These strategies should guide students and help them ascertain their interests and obtain information about the world of work. In addition, Kolone (2006) suggests that career counsellors may want to explore, or at least consider, social cognitive factors when working with students on areas of potential difficulty specified by traditional career theories (e.g. vocational identity; vocational maturity; career commitment; knowledge of the world of work) or when trying to help students broaden the scope of their interests.

Numerous authors note that if students perceive barriers to a career as insurmountable, there will be little motivation for them to engage in career exploration (Brown and Lent, 1996; Lent et al., 1994). Career planning challenges will inevitably arise. Blustein and Noumair (1996) mention that career counsellors and teachers should help students understand actual (rather than perceived or imagined) barriers to their career plans. Training for educators and career counsellors should explore variables that may realistically impinge on students’ career plans and address issues such as students’ career perceptions and self-efficacy.

2.4.3.1 Application to Career Counselling In Higher Education

Career counsellors generally agree that students need to understand the relationship between interests, abilities, the world of work and how to identify and act on education-related information (Barker and Satcher, 2000). Students’ career and academic decision making can be improved by utilising the Career self-efficacy Theory with its focus on self-efficacy, outcome expectations, barriers and goals. Specifically, counsellors can explore how individuals may perceive each of the major constructs identified in SCCT. Gibbons and Shoffner (2004) assert that counsellors must challenge students’ perceptions of barriers that will stop them achieving their goals. It is essential that the counsellor provide the student with opportunities to
create new perceptions around the career barriers and raise awareness of the career support available.

Gibbons and Shoffner (2004) feel that providing students with role models and exposing them to university graduates successful in their careers is also a worthwhile endeavour.

2.4.4 Career Decision Making Theory

Tiedeman and O'Hara (1963) suggest that career opportunities are not static entities but are more like flowing oceans – avenues for success are turbulent at times and smooth during others. Tiedeman and O'Hara (1963) believe that adaptation is a natural and essential part of career development. Challenges are essential for human growth and happiness because without them individuals would not have the opportunity to understand the self in a new context (Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990). Duys, Ward, Maxwell and Eaton-Comerford (2008) mention that in order to address career development in a holistic way, Tiedeman (1961) enhanced traditional congruence approaches by positing that the client is an active participant in the career development process.

Tiedeman (1961) was influenced strongly by White’s (1952) individualistic approach to the study of human beings striving for competence, as well as the developmental work of Erikson (1959). Super’s (1957) developmental perspective also played a role in the construction of Tiedeman’s theory.

This resulted in the articulation of career decision making stages. Tiedeman’s (1963) work is characterized by his concern regarding the uniqueness of the individual and the complexity of the decision making process. Tiedeman describes a process of career development in which individuals continually redefine their career interests and commitments through different decision making phases. The model supports the notion that individuals who are better at navigating these phases and maintaining flexibility in the job market are more likely to experience career success. Duys et al., (2008) posits that unlike the stages in Super's developmental model, Tiedeman's phases may be implemented in non-linear and multi-directional ways to achieve that success.
Tiedeman and O’ Hara (1963), cited in Sharf (2002), view the process of career decision making as parallel to the individual’s commitment to and gradual development of a choice. Career decision making involves two stages: the anticipation of a choice and adjustment to it. Tiedeman and O’ Hara (1963) divide the anticipation stage into four phases: exploration, crystallization, choice and clarification. The activities within the anticipatory process are reflective of Super's (1957) growth and exploration stages. These phases can guide the career counsellor to understanding the individual’s internal cognitive and affective processes. The participants in my study can be described as being in the phase of exploration, where an individual builds awareness of career options and explores possible avenues for work. Thereafter, crystallization occurs in which decisions focus on a specific career path. The choice phase includes the specific selection of a career path from career options considered in previous phases.

2.4.4.1 Application to Career Counselling In Higher Education

Tiedeman's (1961) perspective on decision making and vocational development is an excellent resource for practitioners and career counsellors who are helping students adapt to a changing marketplace. According to Duys et al., (2008) Tiedeman's approach places primary emphasis on assessing a client's subjectivity. This is considered essential because perceptions and choices contribute to intentionality with which one engages in a career trajectory. Specifically, counsellors are encouraged to examine the unique aspects of a client's career decision making, how that decision making has affected self-understanding and how the client tolerates and experiences uncertainty and unexpected working conditions. Tiedeman's (1961) model can be used to help counsellors conceptualize the complexity of a client's career decision making process.

Tiedeman's (1961) model lends itself easily to the counselling process. Using Tiedeman's perspective, a counsellor can comfortably engage the client in many different phases of career development. A client can move from the maintenance phase to the exploratory phase without the counsellor believing that the client is going backward or losing ground. In this way, counsellors can empower clients who may not be following a traditional career developmental path. Counselling
interventions using Tiedeman's concepts can be useful for clients struggling with unforeseen career challenges or for those anticipating possible difficulties in the future. Counselling interventions that create hope, flexibility, resourcefulness and adaptive cognitive processes can be made more effective. Such interventions can assist clients to step back, gain new perspectives, and review decisions in conjunction with contextual factors (Pelsma and Arnett, 2002). Duys, et al., (2008) state that counsellors can adapt the cognitive phases to the individual and explore past careers, current career paths, and future career expectations. The idea of nonlinear movement, flexibility and individual development that Tiedeman's model explores makes it an excellent resource for counsellors helping clients contend with a volatile labour market. It is essential that career counsellors have empowering methods available to help clients develop their intentionality and more fully understand their career decision making process.

2.5 GUIDELINES FOR CAREER COUNSELLING AND DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Herr and Cramer, defined career counselling in the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) report (2001), as:

a largely verbal process in which a counsellor and counsellee(s) are in a dynamic and collaborative relationship, focused on indentifying and acting on the counsellee’s goals, in which the counsellor employs a repertoire of diverse techniques and processes, to help bring about self-understanding, understanding of behavioural options available, and informed decision making in the counsellee, who has the responsibility for his or her own actions.

The UNESCO report (2001) affirms that career counselling assists individuals in exploring, pursuing and attaining their career goals. The report mentions four essential elements of career counselling: (a) helping individuals to gain greater awareness in areas such as interest, values, abilities, and personality style; (b) connecting students to resources so that they can become more knowledgeable about jobs and occupations; (c) engaging students in the decision making process in order that they choose a career path that is well suited to their own interests, values, abilities and personality style, and (d) assisting individuals to be active managers of their career paths as well as become lifelong learners (in the relation of professional development).
According to Cloete, Fehnel, Maassen, Moja, Perold and Gibbon (2002), during the mid-1980s, career counselling and student services were not informed by an overtly articulated philosophical framework or explicit theory. However, since then the field of student services in higher education has made great strides and significant progress through the Society of Student Counselling in Southern Africa (SSCSA). SSCSA has set out an advocacy framework for state-level policy and institutional planning related to the role of the student counsellor in Higher Education. The student and career counsellors (as part of the student services) are required to uphold the standards that govern practice and accreditation with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). Another contribution can be offered by the educational psychologist as the Health Professionals Council of South Africa is in the process of making an amendment to the scope of practice for Educational Psychology. Once the alterations to the scope of practice have been promulgated by the Minister, educational psychologists are no longer restricted to working only with children and are no longer bound to the school setting.

Educational psychologists will then be afforded the opportunity to work with children and young emerging adults within the broader context of learning and development. The challenge, however, arises for the institutional counselling and careers department to utilise these professionals’ services and develop and implement suitable programs to assist Higher Education students with regard to career planning and exploration. Furthermore, student counsellors are faced with the challenge of developing programs and individualised counselling interventions that address the unpredictable changes in the labour landscape (Cloete, et al., 2002).

The need for effective career guidance programmes and counselling in Higher Education institutions is apparent. A Human Science Research Council (HSRC), survey that was mentioned in the National Manpower Commission (1998), noted that after a study with companies and private undertakings, there appears to be a lack of appropriate career information and resources for school leavers. According to Beekman and Van den Berg (in press), the overall purpose of Career Counselling and Development Services (CCDS) is to provide career counselling and career development services that enhance the employability, academic and career success of students. It is seen as a major outcome expected from the institutions’
management and Department of Education. Beekman and Van den Berg (in press), further asserts that most students undertake Higher Education study with the expectation that their qualification will lead to employment upon graduation.

Career counselling services need to consider the changing context of Higher Education and the shifting profile of students. Other factors to take into account are the demands of the labour market and the varying career landscape. Stakeholders involved in the career counselling process are enrolled students, alumni, parents, sponsors, bursary providers, industry, the wider university community and the school community (Beekman and Van den Berg, in press).

Career and development services in Higher Education need to take a community approach that involves programmes and services for learners in Grade 9 (when subject choices are made) and alumni and employers (Beekman and Van den Berg, in press). However, career counselling and development services largely depend on the resources available at Higher Education institutions.

Table 2.2, overleaf, indicates the envisaged interventions by the student counselling profession to the challenges in the National Plan for Higher Education. According to Cloete, et al., (2002), the current challenge for institutional counselling and careers departments is to translate the strategic intent set by the profession into the programmes that can be implemented and accessed.
Table 2.2 Envisaged interventions by the student counselling profession to the challenges in the National Plan for Higher Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
<th>INTERVENTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased participation</td>
<td>Provision of professional career guidance to secondary schools and parents to prepare prospective students to enter Higher Education at an increased rate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased graduate output</td>
<td>Provision of cognitive skills programme, study and learning skills and life skills training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadening social base of students</td>
<td>Recognition of prior learning via general career guidance or counselling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased recruitment from SADC</td>
<td>Provision of acclimatization, language and information technology based programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed enrolments by fields of study</td>
<td>Interpretation of career trends to students and the community, community outreach and pre-admission programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced cognitive skills</td>
<td>Provision of cognitive skills development program in collaboration with the academic department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity in access and success rates</td>
<td>Provision of programs that focus on students who meet the minimum entry requirement, at risk students, minority groups and students with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Student Services Handbook, available online at www.chet.org.za

2.5.1 Critical assessment of the Proposed Interventions by the National Plan for Higher Education.

The transformation trajectory by the Higher Education institutions in compliance with the changing external environment necessitates that these institutions undertake to be more responsive to society’s needs. In spite of the envisaged interventions, very real challenges still need to be overcome. Much work needs to be done in increasing the gross higher education participation rate. According to UNESCO (2001), the
The Higher Education participation rate in South Africa increased only one percent (from 15% in 2001 to 16% in 2007) according to the UNESCO report. This is far from the goal of 20% that was set out by the National Plan for Higher Education (2001) to be reached between 2011 and 2016.

The Strategic Framework (2010-2020) outlines the challenges of the high drop-out rates of students in Higher Education, particularly during the first year of studies. A study performed by the Department of Education showed that only 38% of students enrolled at universities in 2000 had graduated by 2005, by which time 45% of enrolled students had dropped out of Higher Education. These low graduation rates and high drop-out rates clearly point to problems in the Higher Education system. The number of graduates per annum in undergraduate study is considered to be a proportion of total headcount enrolments per annum, varied between 14% to 15% between 2000 and 2007 (Strategic Framework, 2010-2020).

These figures mask another challenge for Higher Education institutions. While more Black and Coloured students have gained access to Higher Education since 1994, few of them successfully completed their undergraduate studies (Strategic Framework, 2010-2020). This highlights the need for equity in student access to be matched by equity in student success.

2.5.2 Academic Quality of School Leavers

In spite of the interventions proposed by Higher Education, one must also consider the overall levels of preparedness of school leavers for Higher Education study. The Strategic Framework, (2010- 2020, p. 7) mentions that strategies at widening access at universities have not been accompanied by strategies aimed at ensuring student success. (The brochure’s views are based on submissions by vice chancellors in Higher Education.)

At universities a variety of student support services and interventions are aimed at bridging the educational gap that exists in the school system. These services include student counselling with regard to issues related to studies; general life matters; future work challenges; aptitude assessments; mentorship programmes, reading and
writing centers and computer literacy programs. Universities are however, finding that despite all these efforts they are not succeeding in closing the gap between initial access and eventual success. In fact, a concern at many universities is that they are in danger of instituting school-related learning activities as a formal component of tertiary education.

If objectives at Higher Education institutions are to be attained, a concerted effort needs to be made at schools to improve career and study guidance skills. This will enhance levels of preparedness of school leavers for Higher Education.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Career development and planning is a lifelong process and good decision making skills are essential in the modern-day vocational context. Authors argue that in this era, individuals are challenged to play a greater role in the construction of their career development. Taking this notion into consideration, undergraduates as well as student career counsellors need to adequately prepare for possible challenges of career planning and development.

This chapter discussed the theoretical literature with regard to career development and the implication on career counselling in Higher Education. The Lifespan Theory, Social Cognitive Theory and Decision Making Theory was explained in order to gain a better understanding of how individuals cope with career development issues, how self efficacy influences career development and how decision making affects career planning. Furthermore, application of the theory into a practical career counselling context was explored.

This chapter demonstrated a lack of research in this area of inquiry and critically looked at the proposed interventions by the National Plan for Higher Education.
CHAPTER THREE
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the empirical data obtained from the individual interviews and psychometric testing and focused on different themes that were derived from the data. The results of the study are reported in this chapter. Firstly, the results from the BDI-II and CDQ were compiled, interpreted and presented. Thereafter, themes from the interviews conducted with the participants were discussed. The chapter concludes with an examination of the correlation between the various data collected.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS

Data was collected both qualitatively and quantitatively. The researcher conducted:

- A Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ) was administered in order to determine the readiness of young adults to make decisions on their careers.
- The Beck Depression Inventory Test (BDI-II) was conducted in order to identify levels of depression and adjustment challenges.
- Five in depth individual interviews with third-year BA students who have Sociology as a third year subject. (See Chapter 1, Table 1.1).

3.3 QUANTITATIVE DATA

3.3.1 Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ)

This questionnaire was utilised in this study in order to determine the readiness of the third-year BA students to make decisions on their careers. It examined the dimensions of self information; decision making; career information; integration of information on the self with career information and career planning. This is a valid and reliable questionnaire and can be used for individuals and groups (Langley, du Toit and Herbst, 1992). This instrument assists in determining the level of career development of the individual concerned (Langley, et al., 1992). The instrument was scored according to the relevant psychometric principles set out in the manual of the instrument. In this study, the quantitative data was qualitatively analysed.
This CDQ identified the following developmental areas to indicate whether the individual's achievement is inadequate. Should the CDQ ascertain inadequate achievement, remedial steps can be taken to bring the individual up to the career development level expected of the appropriate life stage group. Using Langley’s study (1989) as a base for my study, eleven developmental areas were identified:

- The identification of needs in career development
- Evaluation of relative importance of various life roles
- Identification of values strived after each life role
- Detection of vocational interests
- Evaluation of relevant factors (personality, intelligence, school/university subjects, aptitude, self-image, family functioning)
- Reaching an appropriate level of career maturity
- Acquisition of decision making skills
- Adequate information on careers
- Integration of self information with career information
- Making career decisions
- Planning a career and implementing the plans.

This above information about the individual can assist career counsellors to clarify the individual's career planning situation.

**3.3.2 Career Development Questionnaire Instructions and Scoring Methods**

The CDQ consisted of 100 items and was divided into five scales. Each one of these scales relates to career developmental tasks that lead to career maturity and provides an indication of the individual’s readiness to make effective decisions. Table 3.1, overleaf, describes the CDQ scales.
Table 3.1: Description of the CDQ scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self – Information (SI): Items 1-20</td>
<td></td>
<td>This scale is concerned with the testee’s knowledge of the importance of life roles, work values and occupational interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making (D): Items 21-40</td>
<td></td>
<td>This scale is concerned with the testee’s ability to make effective decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Information (CI): Items 41-60</td>
<td></td>
<td>This scale evaluates the testee’s knowledge of careers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of Self Information and Career Information (I): Items 61-80</td>
<td></td>
<td>This scale is concerned with the testee’s ability to integrate relevant self information with information on the world of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Planning (CP): Items 81-100</td>
<td></td>
<td>This scale evaluates the testee’s ability to make a career decision and to implement a career plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants were given a CDQ (Appendix 3) that contains a number of statements relating to career development and maturity (see Table 3.1). An answer sheet was provided (Appendix 3A) in which students were given a True or False option. Students were expected to answer “true” if they agree or generally agree with the statement. Students were expected to answer “false” if they disagree or generally disagree with the statement. (There are no correct or incorrect answers to this questionnaire.)

Scoring the CDQ followed the procedures set in the manual (Langley et al., 1996, p.11). The scores were then transferred to a profile at the back of the answer sheet and analysed according to the interpretative guidelines. Each questionnaire was then analysed individually. The CDQ test manual does not contain conventional construct-referenced norm tables. However, Langley et al. (1996) do offer qualitative guidelines for the interpretation of the CDQ’s career maturity scores. These guidelines are demonstrated above in Table 3.1.

Table 3.2, on the following page, stipulates the guidelines for interpreting CDQ scores are based on statistics from the standardization sample (Langley et al., 1996). The maximum score for each scale is 20 and indicates career maturity.
Table 3.2 Guidelines for Interpreting CDQ Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Self Information (SI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 – 20</td>
<td>The testee has adequate self knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 14</td>
<td>The testee’s self knowledge can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 10</td>
<td>The testee’s self knowledge is inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 6</td>
<td>The testee has little self knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Decision Making (DM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 – 20</td>
<td>The testee has the adequate ability to make decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 14</td>
<td>The testee’s ability to make decisions can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 10</td>
<td>The testee’s decision making skills are inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 6</td>
<td>The testee has little knowledge of decision making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Career Information (CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 – 20</td>
<td>The testee has adequate career information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 – 11</td>
<td>The testee’s knowledge can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 7</td>
<td>The testee’s career information is inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>The testee has little knowledge of careers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Integration of Self Information and Career Information (I)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 – 20</td>
<td>The testee adequately integrated self information and career information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 14</td>
<td>The testee’s integration of self information and career information can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 10</td>
<td>The testee’s integration of self information and career information is inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 6</td>
<td>The testee’s self knowledge and career information have not been integrated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Career Planning (CP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 – 20</td>
<td>The testee has enough knowledge to carry on with career planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 14</td>
<td>The testee’s ability to plan a career can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 8</td>
<td>The testee’s ability to plan a career is inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 6</td>
<td>The testee does not have the ability to plan a career</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overleaf, Table 3.3 offers a representation of the findings. The findings of each participant are stated and the guidelines which correlate with their scores are presented below.
Table 3.3: Table illustrating CDQ Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Self Information Scale</th>
<th>Decision Making Scale</th>
<th>Career Information Scale</th>
<th>Integration of self information and career information</th>
<th>Career Planning Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Has adequate self knowledge</td>
<td>The ability to make decisions can be improved</td>
<td>The knowledge of careers can be improved</td>
<td>Participant has adequately integrated self and career information</td>
<td>Participant has enough knowledge to carry on with career planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Participant’s self knowledge can be improved</td>
<td>The ability to make decisions can be improved</td>
<td>Participant has adequate career information</td>
<td>Participant has adequately integrated self and career information</td>
<td>Participant has enough knowledge to carry on with career planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Has adequate self knowledge</td>
<td>The ability to make decisions can be improved</td>
<td>The knowledge of careers can be improved</td>
<td>Integration of self knowledge and career information can be improved</td>
<td>Participant has enough knowledge to carry on with career planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Participant’s self knowledge can be improved</td>
<td>The ability to make decisions can be improved</td>
<td>Participant has adequate career information</td>
<td>Integration of self knowledge and career information can be improved</td>
<td>The ability to plan a career can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Participant’s self knowledge can be improved</td>
<td>Participant’s decision making skills are inadequate</td>
<td>Participant has little knowledge of careers</td>
<td>Integration of self knowledge and career information can be improved</td>
<td>The ability to plan a career can be improved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1 on the following page, demonstrates the level of the participant’s career development. These results are useful in identifying the participant’s career development problems, especially problems needing related to career development tasks specific to particular life stages. The CDQ’s subscales are good indicators of career maturity and points to the career planning challenges of the third year BA students at the university.
3.3.3 Discussion of the Results

3.3.3.1 Self Information

*Self Information* implies the awareness of certain aspects which includes needs, life-roles, work values and interests. *Self Information* includes having an idea of the type of the environment one would enjoy working in and the financial status and position an individual would like to achieve. An example of an item in this subscale is, “*I know my strengths and weaknesses.*” From Figure 3.1 above, it is evident that only two of the five Participants (Participant one and Participant three) had adequate self knowledge. Both Participant one and Participant three had realized that the individual must observe work environments from several perspectives, i.e., work requirements; personal-environment-fit and one’s personal needs. Participants with a score below 15 (Participants two, four and five) can improve on their self- knowledge by obtaining additional knowledge on their abilities, personalities and values.

These scores also suggest that these participants need to be exposed to instruments that will assist in self-exploration and self-information so that they can make suitable career choices.
3.3.3.2 Decision Making

The Decision Making scale deals with the ability to make effective decisions. In this scale, most participants’ scores were in the lower range, suggesting an inability to make effective career decisions at a time where career decision making is essential. Participant’s one, two, three and four fell within the category where their ability to make decisions needed improvement. “I do not know how to make a planned decision” is a typical example of an item that is included in this subscale. Only Participant five reported an ability to make effective decisions. Ineffective decision making skills relates to the participants potential inability to study further or to find work after graduation.

3.3.3.3 Career Information

The Career Information scale investigates the testee’s knowledge of the world of work. An example of an item in this subscale is: “I am aware of related occupations in the occupational field that I am interested in.” Participants two, three and four appear to have adequate career information. Participant one, on the other hand, needs to improve his knowledge of careers. Results for Participant five indicate that the testee has very little knowledge of careers at this stage.

Students who possess adequate information of the world of work may lead to acquire a more positive conception of employment. The results suggest that there has to be a stronger relationship between students and school guidance counsellors and higher education career counsellors.

The Career Information scores are important in career counselling as they provide an indication of the participant’s ability to make a career decision.

3.3.3.4 Integration of Self Information and Career Information

This scale sheds light on the testee’s ability to integrate the self information with information on the world of work. An item in this subscale includes “I would very much like to work in an occupational environment in which I can be myself.” Only Participants One and Two’s results indicated that they had the ability to adequately integrate self information and career information. The scores of Participants Three,
Four and Five indicated that their integration of self and career information can be improved upon.

3.3.3.5 Career Planning

The Career Planning scale assesses the ability to make career decisions and plan a career. An example of an item in this scale is “I think that it is unnecessary to plan a career as there is nothing I can do to make things happen”. All participants’ scores (except for Participant four) indicated that they have enough knowledge for career planning. Participant Four's responses indicate that an improvement can be made regarding career planning.

Being in the third year of Higher Education, students need to be at the stage where they are able to construct their occupational plan. Career planning will provide their studying with meaning, in a personal sense as well as educationally and occupationally.

3.3.4 Conclusions Drawn from the Career Development Questionnaire

The study’s aim was to explore what the career planning challenges and career-related anxieties third year BA students might anticipate upon graduation. The CDQ findings provide an understanding of some of the challenges that the students experienced. The results suggested that participants have an inadequate level of self information. This lack of self insight may contribute to choosing employment that does not necessarily correlate with their personality types and value systems. Poor personal knowledge could result in a poor person – job “fit”.

The results show that the participants’ decision making abilities can be improved upon. Exposure to various resources may assist with career decision making abilities. Input from family members, communities and employed individuals could contribute to students making effective decisions.

The participants’ career information knowledge can be improved upon in multiple ways. More exposure to career exhibitions, tertiary education open days, job shadowing and assistance with subject choice can contribute career information knowledge. Students must access career information earlier than their third or final year of study. The reasons for this, is that making decisions based on inadequate
information may lead to unwise subject choices in both school and university. It is essential that students receive more career input before they decide on what to study in Higher Education.

Super’s Lifespan Theory (discussed in Chapter 2) applies to the CDQ findings and to career maturity. Super and Thompson (1979) identified six factors in vocational maturity. These factors are: an awareness of the need to plan ahead; decision making skills; knowledge and use of information resources; general career information; general world of work information, and detailed information about occupations of preference. The task of acquiring these skills entails the individual’s ability to make planned and informed career decisions. It is evident from the CDQ results that the students have not as yet attained vocational maturity. However the scores reflected that the students have adequate knowledge on planning a career. The participants in this investigation typically fell into Super’s exploration stage (Sharf, 2006). This “crystallization” stage is characterized by the making of an occupational choice, becoming more specific in the choice, and implementing it by finding and choosing a job.

3.3.5 BECK DEPRESSION INVENTORY (BDI-II)

3.3.6 Description of the BDI-II

Piotrowski, et al., (1996) report that the BDI-II ranks amongst the top twelve psychological instruments used most frequently by mental health professionals. This instrument has been found to have reliable psychometric characteristics (Beck, Steer & Garbin, 1988). The BDI-II relates to the current feelings of the client as well as feelings of two weeks prior to when the instrument was administered. The BDI-II consists of 21 items that assess the intensity of depression. The items on the BDI-II provide information on environmental triggers by asking specific questions about the types of situations that elicit depression. The 21 symptom and attitudes categories of the BDI-II are listed in Table 3.4 (Beck, Steer and Brown, 1996).
Table 3.4 Items in the BDI-II

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The items consisted of a list of four statements of particular symptoms of depression. These statements are arranged in increasing severity. The statements’ numerical values of 0, 1, 2 and 3 indicate the degree of severity. The participants selected the statement in each item that fits best with their current mood. (See Appendix 4 for an example of the test sheet).

The total score is obtained by adding the ratings for all of the items. The scores can be classified as normal, mild, moderate, or severe. Table 3.5 below shows the guidelines for interpreting the cut off scores.

In this investigation, the BDI-II was not used to diagnose depression, but to estimate the level of depression that the third year BA students experience over career planning challenges for 2011. The data was also qualitatively analyzed.

Table 3.5 Score Ranges for BDI-II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 13</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 - 19</td>
<td>Mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 28</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 – 63</td>
<td>Severe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.7 Discussion of the Results

Once the scores were calculated and categorized within a particular range, the participants’ level of depression surrounding career planning challenges were evident.

Table 3.6 illustrates the BDI-II scores of the participants.

**Table 3.6: Summary of BDI-II Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total Scores</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2 is a graphic representation of the participants’ scores.

**Figure 3.2 Graphic Representations of the BDI-II Scores**

3.3.8 Discussion of the BDI-II Scores and Interpretation

The BDI-II scores indicate that Participants two and three fall within the category of experiencing “minimal” depressive symptoms about their future prospects. Both participants experienced no significant changes in their mood when it came to items focusing on their future. Both responded as saying that they “are not discouraged about their future”. With regard to levels of decisiveness, both were reported to have said that they “find it more difficult to make decisions than usual.”
On the other hand, Participant one tested with a “mild” level of depressive symptoms, with regard to career planning. This participant felt more discouraged about the future than normal and experienced greater difficulty in making decisions than usual, according to the items chosen on the BDI-II. Factors pointing to the mild range of depressive symptoms are a loss of energy; a change in sleeping patterns; increasing levels of fatigue; concentration difficulties; a change in appetite and irritability. The participant’s CDQ scores also affirm that levels of decision making need to improve at this stage. Furthermore, Participant one needs to improve his level of career information at this point in time. These factors could be causing the mild depressive symptoms in terms of making future career decisions.

Participants four and five fall within the range of “moderate” depressive symptoms when it comes to exploring their careers for the following year. Participant four showed general indecisiveness; a change in sleeping patterns; difficulty with concentration and self dislike, resulting in elevated scores. Participant five felt pessimistic about her future stating on the BDI-II Score sheet that, “I feel my future is hopeless and will only get worse”. She finds it “more difficult to make decisions than usual”.

Feelings of sadness, loss of pleasure, guilt feelings, self criticalness, irritability and concentration difficulties were amongst the factors that contributed to the moderate depressive symptoms.

3.3.9 Relationship of Quantitative Data (CDQ and BDI-II)

The relationship of the BDI-II and CDQ findings made data findings richer and more valid. Figure 3.3 shows how the BDI-II results correlate with that of the findings obtained in the CDQ.

**Figure 3.3: Correlation of Quantitative Data**

Participants who scored within a “minimal”, “mild” or “moderate” range of depressive symptoms in the BDI-II

Also reflected challenges with

Decision making abilities

(Evident in the CDQ)
Figure 3.3, indicates that the students’ decision making abilities can be improved upon. It appears that the students’ inadequate decision making capabilities may impact on their level of depression regarding their future career planning. Students are possibly feeling overwhelmed and experiencing symptoms of depression because of a lack of self knowledge and career information, as well as the inability to integrate these two aspects. This reiterates the need for student counselling in Higher Education, in order to assist with more effective decision making skills; opportunities for self insight and for exposure to careers in the ever- changing world of work.

The following themes emerged from the quantitative findings obtained from the BDI- II and CDQ:

- Students identified with career decision making challenges, placing them within the minimal to moderate depressive range.
- The lack of self and career information as well as the inability to integrate these two components impacted on the students’ level of depression surrounding future career planning.

3.4 QUALITATIVE DATA

3.4.1 Interviews

The purpose of conducting in-depth interviews with the selected participants was to obtain explicit knowledge, from the five BA students with Sociology as a major. The interviews focused on the absolute research question – “career planning challenges of third year BA students at a University in Gauteng”.

During data analysis and reduction, certain categories and themes became evident. In my study, Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie’s (2003) seven stage conceptualization of the mixed method data analysis process was utilised. Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003) state that the seven data analysis stages are as follows: data reductions; data display; data transformation; data correlation; data consolidation; data comparison and data integration. In the qualitative section, main themes were drawn out of the in-depth interviews and discussed.
3.4.2 Themes that Emerged from the Interviews

Table 3.7 illustrates the main categories which emerged from the in-depth interviews. Appendix 5 indicates how these themes were drawn out.

Table 3.7 Main themes that emerged during qualitative data analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Common personality characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of adequate subject information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘A personally enriching course, rather than a vocationally beneficial one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A degree/course with no direct and clear career pathway</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.3 Discussion of Interview themes

3.4.3.1 Common Personality Characteristics

The theme of common personality characteristics refers to the link between psychological factors (such as the participants’ personality type) as well as sociological factors (i.e. characteristics of academic disciplines). In this research, participants selected certain academic majors which correlated with their personality types.

The Participants possessed various personal characteristics, such as open-mindedness, creative thinking, sociability and being opinionated. Four out five of the Participants perceive themselves as individuals who enjoy socialisation and peer interaction. These students felt that it was important to have their voices heard and believed that a significant part of their personality is the ability to question and interrogate aspects of life. This was illustrated by one Participant who stated: “I feel that I need to question most things rather than just accept things as a given. I love having my voice heard and can be seen as rather opinionated”. Another said: “I have an enquiring mind and feel the need to interrogate everything that is presented to me. I’d like to believe that I have an open mind”. Another participant commented, “I am a social and outgoing individual, who loves company and people. I love to debate with others and hear what others have to say about certain things. I love learning about people, diversity and nature of society interests me greatly”.

Since studying sociology is largely about the study of analyzing social behaviour, many of the participants chose a subject that tends to match their personality types.

These above findings can be closely linked to the Trait and Type theories which, according to Sharf (1997), contend that, career choice is viewed as expressions of personality. In addition, Holland’s Personality Constructivist Theory (1997) relates to a personality-job ‘fit’, and can carry value for the student counsellor/educational psychologist in its implication for guidance and counselling. Holland’s Personality Constructivist Theory is based on the understanding that individuals are categorised into personality types and people search for work environments that best allows them to exercise their skills, abilities and express their values and attitudes (Holland, 1997). Holland’s Personality Constructivist Theory helps to classify the student’s particular type of personality, which then provides a guide to the students in which occupational group to explore (Pietrofesa, 1980). This can facilitate the process of choosing a career or profession that best suits ones abilities, skills and personality, in conjunction with other variables mentioned in Table 3.8.

### Table 3.8: Influences on career decision making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual variables</th>
<th>Social context</th>
<th>Environmental context</th>
<th>Other factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-concept</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Time perspective (past, present and future)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Aptitudes</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Community groups</td>
<td>Change over time Interdependence of influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attributes</td>
<td>World of work knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Patton, W. & McMahon, M (2001, p.13).

From the above table, it is evident, that in developing career education programmes for Higher Education students it is important to be aware of the context in which career development and career decision making occur. It is seen above in table 3.8 that specific influences impact on an individual's career decisions.
3.4.3.2 Lack of Adequate Subject Information

One of the most important decisions a student needs to make regarding their future is what subjects they will be studying in Higher Education. It is not an easy decision and takes careful consideration and planning to decide, as major subjects may be the gateway to their career. It often requires obtaining a great deal of knowledge about what is covered in the subjects required. Thus, it is not something that should be taken lightly and sufficient background information on subject content is essential.

In the research conducted, participants did not have adequate subject information before choosing their major subjects. The findings suggest that many of the participants did not seek or access the information which was necessary for rational decision making and subject choice selection. This information was made available via academic brochures, online and through subject choice advisors on campus. One participant said: “I wasn’t sure when I picked Sociology that it was the right course for me”. Another stated, “It was not really what I expected. In fact I did not really fully understand the core elements that these subjects would focus on and basically just went along with it. If I had to choose them again, I would not.”

These findings suggest that greater importance needs to be placed on career guidance. According to Bimrose and Barnes (2007), in their study of career learning in Higher Education:

In seeking to assess and measure the effectiveness of career guidance, it is crucial to understand and take account of the complex inter-relationships and variables that exist. These include the way that individuals vary in respect of their personal circumstances such as gender, age, ethnicity and attainment; the contexts of which students operate vary in relation to their domestic situation geographical location, mobility and labour market status.

There is a large body of evidence that is reflected in the Skills Commission report of 2008 that indicates that when young adults are provided with high quality information, advice and guidance they make better progress through the education system and with more successful transitions.

It is clear that many of the participants interviewed may have benefitted from greater knowledge and understanding of their subjects as well as careers. The lack of career education and training options has resulted in many of these participants experiencing career planning challenges. Education and training options should be made available to the participants in the future.
3.4.3.3 “A personally enriching course, rather than a vocationally beneficial one”

Participants in this research study felt that studying a general subject (such as Sociology) is personally enriching, rather than directly beneficial, in terms of their possible career choice. This was exemplified by a statement that a participant made: “It was more of a personally enriching course, rather than a vocationally beneficial one. There was no direct relevance; it provided me with skills and things like that, but that is it.” Another participant reported,

> Whilst it is great that it has opened up my mind so vastly and paved way to be a critical thinker, I feel that studying this simply ends here. I don’t see how it will open up a career path for me. I really have no passion for research, teaching or social work. I feel this course is purely a personal development course rather than a course that will help me professionally. So yeah, I did learn and develop from this course, but it really does not help me much will what career I want to follow.

According to Dean (1989), when compared to other disciplines, Sociology appears to be at a distinct disadvantage since sociologists have relatively fewer outlets in which they can disseminate results of their research. If sociologists want to shed the image held by society that they are largely a group of researchers who debate abstract, quasi-philosophical notions about the nature of society, they need to give some serious thought to stressing that has practical value for solving world problems and concerns (Bryant, Forsyth and Palmer, 1995).

> In other words, this means that in the current complex job market, sociologists should “sell” the importance of their work to the public as well as to students.

Although personally enriching courses, which promote open-mindedness and critical thought are important, participants felt that these courses did little to impact on their possible career choice and created a high degree of uncertainty regarding their career path after graduation.

3.4.3.4 “No direct and clear career pathway”

At the University, students who wish to qualify for a BA Degree are required to take a minimum of 14 semester modules with Faculty of Humanities subjects (unless another home faculty is explicitly specified). According to recent undergraduate regulations in the Humanities Faculty, a minimum of six semester modules (two each in three different subjects) on second year level is required to qualify for a BA degree (www.uj.ac.za). This means that students have to select major subjects in conjunction with ancillary subjects.
Themes (derived from the interviews) revealed that studying Sociology, and other related courses, opened up no clear career pathway, leaving students in a pool of career uncertainty. One participant said: “I would change the ancillary [Sociology] subject, to more Psychology subjects. These [the ancillary] had no direct value to me and I had to do them anyway so that I could just complete my degree.” Another reported, “[I] wish the subjects we could choose actually have more relevance to my majors. I guess that having these subjects kind of broaden up ones career prospects but it does not specialise in knowledge when one is rather sure what they want to get into after studying.” The data analysis indicated that the participants often felt overwhelmed with the ancillary subjects and felt it detracted from them concentrating on their selected majors.

The completion of ancillary subjects is necessary in all tertiary institutions for fulfillment of a degree. The major concern arising from this research stems from the inadequate subject knowledge that students have, which results in students often choosing subjects that have little or no relevance to their majors or possible career choice. This contributes to feelings of frustration, disappointment and career indecision and uncertainty. The University of Johannesburg could increase career support when students are choosing their subjects in their first year of study to avoid this.

Participants in this study who opted for a Sociology major appear to lack career certainty and it has left participants unsure of what career prospects lay ahead. A participant stated,

I am not really sure, there are options of research, being a teacher, doing social work, just because I have all these subjects, but honestly after this degree, I am not so sure if this degree alone will actually get me the job I want. Perhaps I will need to consider furthering my studies. But just don’t know how my marks will be.

Others felt the Sociology course to be ineffective and wished to study a different field altogether, “I am to complete my psychology degree and go into that field. What difference vocationally did these subjects contribute to me, being a prospective psychometrist, I am yet to find out” said one student. One interviewee has made plans to study in a complete different faculty and said,

I am only 21 and have a lot of options. This degree does offer many, even though it is not [directive] career paths. Like studying my degree one can do teaching, or research, social work perhaps, working in government too. So one does have various opportunities. I however have enrolled for a B.Com. degree in Finance at the University, which is what I feel I can have a career in.
Only one of the participants interviewed considered studying further in Sociology.

I think I enjoyed the course enough to want to study further in it, perhaps Honours and something like that, but after the completion of that, I am not entirely certain what I would want to do with it. I think at that point in time, I will definitely need to have career guidance.

Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia, defines Sociology as the study of the social lives of humans, groups and societies. It concerns itself with the social rules and processes that bind and separate people not only as individuals, but as members of associations, groups and institutions (http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology). As Sociology is a subject that is driven by values, it questions the objectivity of the discipline itself. Certain Participants felt that Sociology is a subject that influences further thought, but also found it to be a “wishy washy subject”. Certain Participants felt that “philosophy and sociology contains a lot of subjectivity”. Another added that having Sociology as a major “was all airy fairy, as there is no substantial basis on the theories, it has a high level of subjectivity and there is not really an objectivity component.”

The student statements suggest that students need better support and understanding of the content of what they are going to study before they select their subjects.

This theme stems from the idea that whilst most students attend Higher Education institutions because they believe that it will lead to better employment. It is however, a journey of many choices including selection of a college/university, selection of a major, and preference of courses. It is interesting to note that none of these choices mention the word “career.” Since careers are related to employment, simple logic suggests that if you are attending Higher Education to obtain better employment, there should be a relationship between majors and careers. While it is true that some majors (such as education or nursing) do relate to specific careers, but most majors do not. In fact, most majors will only help students prepare for career possibilities and are designed for academic purposes rather than for career purposes. The reality is, that perhaps an undergraduate degree on its own is no longer enough rather than the irrelevancy of a particular subject.

Sociology does not lead to a direct career path, but it does contribute positively to other subjects and careers. Sociology offers preparation for careers in Journalism, Politics, Public Relations, Business, Public Administration, Social Work or research.
Students choose Sociology because they see it as a broad liberal arts base for professions such as Law, Education, Medicine, Social Work and Counselling (www.assnet.org). With increased career education and career support in higher education, students may benefit from choosing a subject that contributes to so many career possibilities, instead of feeling career uncertainty.

3.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

Table 3.9, overleaf, summarizes the data obtained quantitatively from the CDQ and BDI-II.
Table 3.9: Summary table of quantitative data findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Career Development Questionnaire</th>
<th>Beck Depression Inventory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SI</td>
<td>DM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Has adequate self knowledge</td>
<td>The ability to make decisions can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Participant’s self knowledge can be improved</td>
<td>The ability to make decisions can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Has adequate self knowledge</td>
<td>The ability to make decisions can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Participant’s self knowledge can be improved</td>
<td>The ability to make decisions can be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Participant’s self knowledge can be improved</td>
<td>Participant's decision making skills are inadequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.10 below, identifies the themes derived from both quantitative and qualitative data.

**Table 3.10: Themes derived from Quantitative and Qualitative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES DERIVED FROM QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QUANTITATIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Students identified with career decision making challenges, placing them within a “minimal”, “mild” or “moderate” depressive range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ The lack of self knowledge and career information as well as the inability to integrate these two components impacts on the level of career depression and results in the students exhibiting depressive symptoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUALITATIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Common personality types were more inclined to choose Sociology as a subject. (E.g. Open-minded, free-thinking, social and outgoing individuals.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Lack of adequate subject information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ ‘A personally enriching course rather than a vocationally beneficial one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ No clear and direct career pathway</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research yielded the following themes derived from the above:
- Lack of self-knowledge
- Limited self exploration and exploration of their environments
- Inadequate information about studies and careers

**3.6 COLLATION OF DATA**

This study explored career planning challenges and to determine the level of depression related to career planning of the third year BA students at the University of Johannesburg. When data from the quantitative and qualitative processes were collated, it suggested that the participants lacked reflection for better self knowledge.
This ability of self reflection needs to be improved. Knowledge of careers also required further development.

It appears as if the students in this study made limited use of resources for self exploration and exploration of their career/work environment. Moreover, students revealed that access to studies/careers/occupations can be improved upon in order to equip themselves with better strategies for making career decisions.

The research findings of my study assisted me in establishing how these above-mentioned elements contribute to the career planning challenges of the third year BA students. From this information recommendation for student counselling at the University of Johannesburg could be made.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The research pursued a threefold objective. The first objective was to explore the career planning challenges of third year BA students. The second objective was to analyze these challenges with reference to career and personal counselling themes. Thirdly, the research aimed to make recommendations for student counselling in Higher Education. This chapter examined both the qualitative and quantitative data collection and the themes that emerged from it.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a brief review of this mixed method research study. The research aim was to explore the career planning challenges of five third year BA students with Sociology major at a University in Gauteng, in order to make recommendations regarding the University’s student counselling. The study’s objectives were to explore these students’ levels of career depression and analyse the career planning challenges, with reference to career and personal counselling themes. The study intended to make recommendations for student counselling in Higher Education institutions. This chapter provides a summary of the research findings. The study’s limitations are mentioned and recommendations for future research have been proposed.

4.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study set out to explore the career planning challenges and to determine the level of depression related to career planning of third year BA students with Sociology major at the University in order to make recommendations for student counselling in Higher Education. The theories proposed could assist career counsellors when dealing with students with career planning challenges. Data was collected quantitatively but analysed using qualitative data analysis in order to depict the level of depression that the third year BA students currently felt over their career planning for 2011. The participants’ career maturity was assessed in order to determine which career developmental aspects required attention. Data was also obtained qualitatively in order to elicit pertinent information from the students, particularly what they perceived as career planning challenges.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES

4.3.1 Lack of Self Knowledge

Themes that arose from the research suggest that students lacked elements of reflection for better self knowledge. Having the ability to explore knowledge of self
(interests, skills and values), influences individuals’ capability to successfully engage in career problem-solving and career decision making.

Gonzalez (2007) asserts that students must be aware of their personalities, abilities, skills, self-concept, academic record, education and work experience, interests, values and their lifestyle. These characteristics should then be congruent with their career choices.

4.3.2 Limited Self Exploration and Exploration of their Environments

The students’ knowledge of careers also required further development. It appears as if the students made limited use of their resources for self exploration and exploration of their environment. Students need to be motivated to learn about the world of work so as to enhance the development of occupational knowledge. Creed and Patton (2003) suggest that further discovery be undertaken in self exploration and the influence that is has on students in developing a stronger sense of responsibility and ownership for engaging in career exploration and planning. These are methods of improving career maturity.

4.3.3 Inadequate Information about Studies and Careers

Research clearly indicates that there is a need for effective career development programmes to provide students with competencies in career decision making abilities and promote career development (Powell and Luzzo, 1998; Bernard-Phera, 2000; Watson and Stead, 2006; and Repetto, 2001).

Students revealed that they require better strategies for successfully approaching the decision making process in relation to their studies and careers. Legum and Hoare (2004) report that students involved in career exploration activities in primary school are more likely to establish an effective programme of study for high school. This supports the notion that career interventions need to begin at the primary school level to be effective.

In a qualitative study of over 5000 young adults, Sargant (2008) respondents’ comments suggest that learning information and advice is lacking and better provision might aid students especially educationally disadvantaged groups.
In a study undertaken by McGiveny (1996) findings indicate that a lack of pre-enrolment course information and advice is associated with increased drop-out rates of mature students on further education courses. Morris, Rickinson, Stoney and Benefield (1999), produced similar findings to McGiveny’s (1996) in relation to young people’s experiences in further education. Their research suggests that some young adults lack sufficient knowledge about content and workload courses. They reiterate that access to “good quality” career guidance is key fostering a positive attitude towards vocational training.

It is clear from the investigation conducted, that when planning their careers, young adults need more career support, including challenging their ideas to ensure that the decisions taken meet the career goals to which they aspire. Furthermore, they need to understand the consequences of those choices. Students also need more individualised career support and referrals to career counsellors/educational psychologists for meaningful support must be made. Career planning needs to leave behind outdated theories of “career matching” and assist young people in understanding that on-going skills development will broaden their career options. Counsellors must offer advice that integrates current learning choices and long-term career goals.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

It is evident that many students in Higher Education lack knowledge regarding their own abilities, skills, values, education and work experience and these result in poor career decision making. The University’s student counselling services should be made aware of these challenges. A recommendation for service learning is suggested as it supports career planning, personal and professional preparation. According to Scot and Jackson (2005), service learning is a method of encouraging student learning and development through active participation in organised service that is conducted in, and meets the needs of the community. Eyler, Giles, Stenson and Gray (2001) list no fewer than fifteen studies providing evidence that service learning contributes significantly to career development. Through their participation in service learning, students would be able to clarify their values and gain valuable insight into their personal strengths and weaknesses.
According to Bates (2007), students can develop both self awareness and self efficacy by being involved in service learning opportunities. A well-designed service learning project would allow students to acquire and sharpen their professional skills, such as teamwork; critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and leadership. These skills are vital for success in the workplace. It would also allow students to demonstrate productive work habits. Bates (2007) asserts that service-learning assignments support students' work in their majors and their career interests.

As students provide service to their communities they can systematically examine career options and opportunities and gauge their readiness for the workplace. Students can use the experience to gain clarity about their career choices and to finalize their career decisions.

The lack of self knowledge and work knowledge is a challenge for students when it comes to career planning and development. Academic advisers or student counselling services can play a pivotal role in helping students articulate their career choices based on an assessment of their interests, abilities, and experiences. The advisers or counsellors can provide guidance and answers specifically about service learning to prepare students for future careers. Advisers should discuss the students' career goals and direct them to the resources and services available to help them achieve those goals.

Whilst service learning is evident in the Education Faculty at the University in Gauteng, a more dedicated programme can be implemented in the Humanities Faculty (the Faculty participant's belong to). It is recommended that the University provide effective service learning related advice by having student counsellors and service-learning program administrators collaborate with the Humanities Faculty. This combination help students seize service learning opportunities and explore careers and skills to ultimately make the transition from university to work.

The University also needs to develop the career guidance or education received by students in schools. Beekman (2008b) states that the services that fall within the
broad mission of Higher Education institutions are education, research and community service.

Higher Education institutions have a responsibility to local communities in terms of sharing resources and providing professional assistance as these communities feed learners into tertiary education. Career counsellors or educational psychologists need to be better involved in projects at schools where teachers are empowered and where research is done to the benefit of the school community, career counselling services, and the Higher Education institution. These projects might be in the form of school-Higher Education institution partnerships.

Students are expected to engage in self exploration and utilise career planning resources in their first or second year at the University. The University should require that all students take a career planning course through a curriculum component during their first or second year. This course could be the starting point for one-to-one appointments with students who require further career counselling. In addition, academic advisors and student counsellors should provide personal and career related opportunities. (For example, a job-shadowing programme could be developed.)

Assistance with subject choice and planning is a major concern. Subject advisors and student counsellors need to be available to help students develop the tools for deciding on a major and/or career path. The University would benefit by providing counselling opportunities for those first year students who require pre-registration career counselling in order to make appropriate programme and subject choices. In addition, findings in my research correlate with the conclusions in the study conducted by Upcraft, Gardner and Barefoot (2005). In their study, it was found that students during their first and second year of study need to alter their career goals, as their chosen career does not suit their interests or that their performance in the major that would prepare them for the initial career choice is inadequate. This further creates a need for remedial career counselling intervention in order to re-explore personal aspects, such as interest, abilities, values and personality. Career intervention is necessary and referrals might be necessary for personal and vocational support. Furthermore, students in their final year of study, especially those
who graduate with general subjects, need to have career intervention that provides information about further studying and career opportunities.

The findings in this investigation indicate that inadequate self knowledge, the lack of appropriate career information and choosing non career-orientated subjects affect career planning negatively. The University in Gauteng presently offers career and personality assessments at the PSYCAD. These services need to be better utilised by prospective and enrolled students when choosing a course or degree. Students could also gain self insight through one-on-one interviews with career counsellors or educational psychologists. Moreover, an effective screening process would be beneficial to put in place to assess the appropriateness of the course/programme choice against students' career goals.

4.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted with only five participants out of a large group of third year BA students with Sociology as a subject. The use of only five participants limits the study’s ability to compare different outcomes and arrive at alternative conclusions. My sample may have also consisted of particularly negative, depressed Sociology students and thus a generalisation to other Sociology students cannot be made. Other students who also took general subjects (such as Anthropology) may have had a different perspective. Comparisons between a greater number of BA students and using quantitative analysis may have produced richer data.

4.6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research into devising more effective student counselling services at the University would make a valuable contribution to the Educational Psychology field.

Extended research into developing career planning modules and courses can be introduced into the school and university curriculum. In addition, the initiation of a service learning programme to assist students' with self exploration and career development would be worthwhile. Student counselling services are already available at the University, but can be improved upon. This can be done by
developing programmes in the areas of career development, counselling and academic support.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the findings of the analysed data were interpreted and discussed in relation to an existing theoretical framework (see Chapter Two). During the research process of data gathering and analysis, a number of themes emerged. The dominant themes that emerged indicated that the third year BA students, with Sociology as a major at a University in Gauteng, had inadequate self knowledge and insufficient information regarding subjects, careers and work. Inadequate self knowledge and insufficient career-related information resulted in students experiencing career planning challenges and depression regarding their future prospects. From these themes, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made for student counselling services at the University.

Student counsellors or educational psychologists at the University would play a vital role in the implementation of the mentioned recommendations and could assist students experiencing career planning challenges. Counselling services could prepare students for changing market trends and provide assistance and support to the many that are unsure of their future career plans.
REFERENCE LIST


