

**ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONAL CAREER SUCCESS  
AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION**

by

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**JANUARY 2001**

**DECLARATION**

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I declare that

**ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONAL CAREER SUCCESS  
AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION**

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



**SL DE VILLIERS  
JANUARY 2001**

## DEDICATION

**I dedicate this thesis to**

**MY CHERISHED DAUGHTERS LETITIA AND ANNEKE  
AND ALL WHO HAVE SUPPORTED AND INSPIRED ME  
WITH THEIR LOVE AND EXAMPLE.**

**IT IS ALSO IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY MOTHER,**

**LETITIA SOPHIA CLARK**

**AND MY DAUGHTER,**

**HELENA VAN DER MERWE.**

**THEIR COURAGE HAS BEEN AN ENDURING LEGACY.**

**I AM PROUD TO BE THE LINK BETWEEN THESE VERY SPECIAL PEOPLE.**

(ii)

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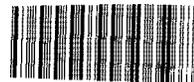
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**SOLI DEO GLORIA**

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**BRIEF CURRICULUM VITAE**

Sarah Leone de Villiers was born in Johannesburg. Early pursuits included reading and ballet. She attended high school at Heidelberg, Transvaal, where special interests were music, mathematics, physics and languages, as well as numerous social and sporting activities. Failing to be accepted as a student for veterinary science because of gender, she completed a BMus degree at the University of Stellenbosch, majoring in history of music and pianoforte, as well as a teaching diploma. Marriage to a business executive was blessed with three daughters. Supporting the family's active school, extra-mural, social and sport activities was interspersed with part time music teaching. After the youngest daughter's death of leukemia, she was encouraged to start studying again, starting with a teacher's diploma at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and an after hours BMus Hons in music education at the University of Pretoria. Particular interest in educational psychology and history of education were followed by specific interest in comparative education as a field of specialisation because of its highly relevant, finger-on-the-pulse approach. This led to an MEd with a dissertation concerning curriculum reform for a multicultural society. After a bursary from UNISA and choosing to be single again, she was able to pursue a long held curiosity concerning career accomplishment balanced with personal prosperity, which has led to the present research. A teaching career has included work at tertiary institutions and with generally gifted learners. At present she teaches piano and music theory at Pro Arte Academy in Pretoria East and has an active life encompassing a wide range of hobbies, social activities and fitness programmes. Enjoying the company of her daughters' families, including three small grandsons, is a particular blessing.

**SUMMARY**

The contemporary world of work is undergoing far-reaching changes as a result of global economic developments and technological progress. This has necessitated an appraisal of the school curriculum in order to identify the life skills necessary for vocational success. As the concept of a lifetime career has become obsolete, the accent has shifted to a life chance approach in education. This approach emphasises the wide repertoire of life skills required by learners for successful participation in a range of career possibilities and in the sphere of their personal lives, the two being perceived as inseparable.

A literature survey investigated the development of professional careers in historical perspective, the contribution of developmental theorists regarding trends in contemporary career progression, various dimensions of success and what motivates successful men and women in their public and private domains. Furthermore, the adjustments required by dual career couples were examined. Various dimensions of life skills for lifespan competence were investigated, with particular reference to South African society. The life orientation approach currently advocated by the new curriculum in South Africa was briefly described. A qualitative study of the life histories of twelve professionals, forty five years and over was conducted in natural settings in order to explore the life skills responsible for career and personal success.

Semi-structured interviews elicited descriptive data from participants, selected by judgement sampling. Data was analysed, discussed and synthesised. The major findings emanated: Success in public and private domains was only possible if a balance between them was maintained. Family background, values and educational experiences created a facilitating environment which contributed to early character development. Certain enabling attributes were essential to achieve both career success and self-fulfilment, even among the less privileged participants. Personal obstacles were confronted and managed. Self-discipline, time management and the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle was vital. The interpenetration of public and private domains was emphasised. A sound work ethic and healthy interpersonal relationships with family, colleagues and the community were crucial. Middle and late adulthood emerged as periods of continuing, dynamic self-development. Based on these findings, recommendations for relevant life skills education were proposed.

**20 KEY WORDS**

**LIFE SKILLS: PROFESSIONAL CAREER SUCCESS,  
BALANCE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DOMAINS,  
CAREER GUIDANCE, DUAL CAREER MARRIAGE,  
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: LIFE CHANCE APPROACH,  
CURRICULUM REFORM.**

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## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND, PROBLEM FORMULATION, AIMS AND METHOD

*Shouldn't we be teaching the most essential skills for life  
to every child - now more than ever?*

Daniel Goleman (1995:3)

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

At the beginning of the 21st century, educational activities are being examined in depth. In the light of the ever-increasing amount of information amassed by humankind, as well as rapidly changing market-place requirements, sociological circumstances and technological innovation, the question is what are the most essential knowledge and life skills needed to empower learners aiming at successful future professional careers. Whether learners would be employed in careers defined as professional or not, the accent of education has become the striving towards a life chance approach for all learners (cf Esping-Anderson 1991:8). Ultimately, the goal is that of helping to create a society in which one is proud to live (Moses 1998:265).

Where the concept of a lifetime career has now become obsolete, it is estimated that a person will have at least four career changes in a lifetime (Dekker 1993:298; Nijhof & Streumer 1998; Moses 1998; Nijhof 1999). Education needs to equip the school leaver to be able to make career changes if necessary, as well as to be able to generate self-employment and take responsibility for his/her own career (Streumer & Bjorkquist 1998:257). Current career issues are the result of a changing environment. Changes are taking place worldwide in the world of work: in the technological and economic fields, in international relationships and as a result of the shift from an industrial to an information era, making the working environment more turbulent than before. Flexibility and the ability to adapt are needed to succeed in any career. Career issues, such as plateauing, job loss, obsolescence and working couples will, as a result of these changes, become the rule rather than the exception (Schreuder & Theron 1997:167; Pretorius 1998:v-viii).

The successful professional may have innate intellectual and temperamental abilities, but it is believed that education should contribute maximally towards developing skills and characteristics that would be of help in establishing prosperous professional careers (cf Nelson-Jones 1991; Covey 1992; 2.13; 3.3 and 3.4). In the post-industrial era training in these skills would differ vastly from what has been required of education in the past. Continuous curriculum reform is vital if education is to be relevant, with the traditional South African approach to education having become outdated and irrelevant (Pretorius 1998:viii-ix). At the same time it must be remembered that what South Africa needs is education that is relevant for all its people, with, most importantly, a change of heart towards accepted norms for conduct as point of departure (Van Rensburg 1992:317-327, original emphasis; interview 1999).

Personal observations throughout life have created an awareness of certain characteristics and behaviours of people observed to be both successful in their careers and in personal relationships. The antithesis has also been observed: that people who have been seen to be less successful have certain negative characteristics and behaviours, as well as lack of skills, which may have been contributed directly to their inability to be effective in their careers and personal affiliations (own observations leading to this study). Goleman (1995:231-260) refers to this lack of skills as “emotional illiteracy”, which has immense costs to society. New skills and combinations of skills are required for adapting to new contexts for globalisation (Nijhof & Streumer 1998:12).

The accent no longer falls on memorising factual knowledge, but on skills needed in everyday living and requirements of the world of work.

(Pretorius 1998:xi)

Moreover, acknowledged professions have been overwhelmingly male dominated throughout history; yet relevant education should have to include educational preparation of women for coping with the dual contemporary role of worker and mother and homemaker. Far from being a concession to women, it is worthwhile to realise that women constitute half of the nation's most valuable resources in human talent. The reverse is also most urgently needed: that education should equip men with the skills for coping with an added responsibility as co-homemaker and parent with additional responsibilities in home management and child-rearing (cf Lemmer 1989; Hage & Powers 1993; Wheelock 1990).

It is believed possible to educate school learners towards acquiring many of the marketable and social skills needed for career and personal success and achievement (cf Burstyn 1986; Nijhof & Streumer 1998; Steinberg 1998; 2.5, 2.9. 2.10).

### **1.1.1 Education for a changing workplace**

Where countries worldwide grapple with similar societal changes, South African education has to adapt to fundamental changes in educational provision. The move towards Outcomes Based Education is indication of an awareness of an urgent need for change. Skills required in the contemporary world of work are different to those of even a few years ago. Yet Moses (1998:140) believes that there is no such thing as the perfect, “must-have” set of skills or an all-purpose tool kit that would empower them for professional success. Apart from a healthy work ethic and increased proficiency in basic literacy and numeracy, the modern workplace demands increased ability in the following fields as generic skills for multitasking in the workplace:

- ◆ competent communication skills
- ◆ interpersonal skills
- ◆ problem-solving skills
- ◆ the lifelong ability to learn independently
- ◆ critical and creative thinking as higher order thinking skills
- ◆ computing and technological skills
- ◆ adaptability and
- ◆ the ability to function well in a team in a spirit of co-operation.

(Pretorius & Lemmer 1998:i; Pretorius 1998:v-viii; Van Wyk 1998:3-4)

In addition, the contemporary world requires urgent attention to be paid to proficiency in the basic life skills of emotional control and empathy (Goleman 1995:287). A curriculum that intentionally cultivates a variety of kinds of intelligence should be developed to enable children to develop a full range of abilities that they can draw on to succeed in their careers and as fulfilled human beings. In this way schools will become an education in life skills (Goleman 1995:37). Socio-political change has brought about major changes in the life-world of learners having to prepare

for careers and for being able to adapt successfully . Many learners and adults view the school experience as something completely alien to the “real world” and feel that they are “disengaged” from schooling which is not connected to “life (which is) happening” (Steinberg 1998:2-3). The challenge for educators is to seize opportunities to make schools of the 21st century come alive, to be places of energy, excitement and relevance for all who are involved with them. Schools not wanting to be doomed to anti-intellectual mediocrity will have to ask the most rigorous and critical theoretical questions about current practices and the kind of education they are presenting if they are to help shape responsible future citizens and social leaders (cf Fraser 1998:vii-viii; Steinberg 1998:1-107; Goleman 1995; Nijhof & Streumer 1998).

To become internationally competitive, South Africa should maintain high educational standards, keep pace with technological developments and adapt in relevant ways towards building a dynamic corps of skilled workers (Pretorius & Lemmer 1998:viii).

### **1.1.2 Characteristics of professions**

In 1965 a profession was defined narrowly as:

An occupation that properly involves a liberal education or its equivalent, and mental rather than manual labour; especially one of the three learned professions, law, medicine or theology. Hence any calling or occupation other than commercial, manual, etc., involving special attainments or discipline, such as editing, music, teaching, etc; also the collective body of those following such a vocation.

(Funk & Wagnall in De Witt 1979:7).

An older 1894 definition cited in De Witt (1979:8) includes more of the characteristics of what would be accepted to be a profession, which has since become more widely accepted:

A profession in ideal represents service to the community; in method, selfforgetfulness; in force a sufficient body of co-workers to demand the loyalty of each other; in condition, a devotion of one's powers to the demands of the calling. A profession also exacts certain tests for admission to its rights and privileges.

(Boone in De Witt 1979: 8)

Downie (1990:147) defines a profession as

a full-time occupation by which a person might earn his living, and which is characterised by a body of knowledge and skills.

(Cf 2.2.and 2.3 for a more detailed discussion of careers and professions).

These definitions imply that there are a wide range of abilities needed by the learner in order to succeed in various careers and professions. The role of education would then be to empower learners to succeed in various professions or careers. This would include not only intellectual skills, but emotional ability to succeed and to cope with diverse career possibilities. Goleman (1995:36, emphasis added) contends that academic intelligence alone offers virtually no preparation for the turmoil or opportunity that life's vicissitudes bring; that emotional aptitude is a meta-ability which would enable people to use whatever skills they have to be able to thrive, including raw intellect.

### 1.1.3 Characteristics of career success

Success has various definitions as a concept and may be seen to include acknowledged ability, as well as the concepts of **public success** and **personal success** (Sheehy 1976:290 and 323):

Human beings reach the highest expressions of their existence when their entire essence as a being is blended into the synergic involvement of all their capabilities at once.

(Maslow & Mead in Sheehy 1976:292)

After a twenty year longitudinal study Harrington and Boardman (1997:4, 71 and 77) came to the conclusion that schools may open opportunities for career success or block advancement, with the role of teachers being extremely important in shaping the character of learners. They regard success as being “seen as belonging to the upper-middle and professional classes” and that

there are many degrees of mobility and career success, as well as a considerable range in the number and severity of obstacles the person has ... had to overcome; ... they further required that careers not just be high in status fields, but sufficiently

developed to be unambiguously recognized as successful by others in that occupation.

(Harrington & Boardman 1997:25)

#### 1.1.4 Life skills education and professional career success

Global trends have indicated that there has been a change in the skills needed in the work place. Intense competition, at home and abroad, is forcing the world of business to streamline operations and search for ways to increase productivity (Mayer 1990:11; Pretorius 1997:1). Investors in the USA are wary of investing in the South African market because of the lack of skills of workers (Classic FM Radio, Market report April 2000). Apart from the basic three R's literacy of the past, there are many contemporary skills which need to be developed at school level for participation in a competitive market place; these include higher order thinking skills, communication and co-operation between employees, as well as for being successful in personal management and relationships with significant others (cf Goleman 1995). Van Rensburg (1992:45, citing McLaren 1988:213) states:

Literacy has ceased to be treated solely as a technical discourse for entrance into the world of work. In fact, the use of the term has changed dramatically in recent years. Once restrictively defined as providing students with specific technical skills related to reading, writing, and speaking, the term literacy has also come to mean educating students to be culturally literate; that is, to be bearers of certain meanings, values and views.

(McLaren 1988 in Van Rensburg 1992:45)

Life skills education may be seen as developing competencies with which to lead a successful career- and personal life (cf Nijhof & Streumer 1998, emphasis added). This would include abilities not necessarily included in the prescribed curriculum. Apart from the teaching of reading, writing and numeracy, this would include emotional and social skills people need to keep their lives on track (Goleman 1995:xiii). According to Nijhof (1998:20) the changing educational scene includes helping learners prepare for life, for an occupation, for employability and for citizenship (cf chapter 3). Achtenhagen (1998:138, emphasis added) sees key-qualifications as being operationalised by introducing a threefold structure of competence:

- ◆ **individual competence** (treating the cognitive domain as well as the emotional, motivational and moral domain),
- ◆ **professional competence** (mainly deep domain specific knowledge, together with procedural or heuristic and conditional strategies), and
- ◆ **social competence** (such as team work, communicative behaviour, common complex solving and empathy).

These skills would include learning to understand and manage the relationship with the self, with significant others, time and resource management, health and adaptation to changing gender roles (cf Goleman 1995; Arnold, Noble & Subotnik 1996; Harrington & Boardman 1997; Van der Horst & McDonald 1997; Nijhof & Streumer 1998).

## 1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION

In the light of the above discussion it is necessary to gain insight into the experience, abilities and skills of people who have been successful in professional careers, so as to be able to make recommendations for the life skills education for coming generations.

The problem can be divided into the following questions:

- (a) How are careers, and more specifically, professional careers, defined in the light of theories of career development? What are the characteristics of a professional career success and factors impacting on career success?
- (b) What constitutes life skills education, what are the different models and how are they assessed? How are these skills transferred into real life?
- (c) What are the experiences of a small sample of career professionals with reference to strategies and life skills required for career success?

- (d) What are recommendations for the way in which life skills education can be improved so that learners develop skills required for career success?

### 1.3 AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION

The objectives of this investigation are formulated as follows:

The present investigation aims at providing a thorough background of what constitutes a professional career in the light of theories of career development. This will be done by investigating career developmental theories with a view to understanding what can be done at school level to empower learners towards career success. Factors which contribute to and impede career success will be examined.

This study aims at examining the dynamics of life skills education at school level. The differences between basic curricular skills taught at school and skills enabling learners to achieve career success, as well as leading balanced personal lives, will be examined.

As career expectations are changing at the turn of the century, this study will endeavour to gain insight into skills expected by the world of work influenced by changing needs. The life-world of selected successful professional men and women will be examined with a view to suggesting guidelines for improving the education system concerning life skills education. This will be examined in a qualitative, ideographic study by which data will be gathered in order to identify skills for career success which may be incorporated into educational programmes. Data gathered will be used to formulate grounded theory and suggest educational innovations.

The investigation aims at interpreting the findings of the qualitative study into guidelines for the improvement of educational practice enhancing the educational preparation of learners for future success in professions.

#### 1.4 METHOD OF STUDY

Although a more detailed clarification of the methodology, the rationale for choice of methodology and the research design are presented in chapter 4, a basic overview is presented here. The primary method of investigation used in this study has been a qualitative analysis of the life-world of a small sample of professional people (six men and six women), who have been chosen by purposeful sampling as having been successful in their careers, leaders in their fields of expertise and also prosperous and competent in their personal relationships with their families, friends and communities.

Preceding the qualitative investigation is a thorough study of the relevant literature concerning professionalism and various prevalent views of success, as well as life skills education. In this regard it is emphasised that a literature study fulfils a particular function in a qualitative investigation: it investigates the present state of research, identifies crucial issues in past research, identifies various perspectives into the field under investigation, as well as areas where investigation is needed (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:153). Considerations appear which could be further explored in the qualitative inquiry. Such issues are expounded in chapters 2 and 3 and form a framework for the in-depth interviews with professional persons discussed in chapter 5.

The design of the qualitative inquiry can be delineated as follows: taped semi-structured interviews (Wheelock 1990:7) were used to elicit data from twelve professional people in the age cohort 45 to 65 years of age, who had proven themselves successful according to certain criteria valid for the fields of expertise. Research participants were selected by means of judgmental or purposive sampling techniques, not by random sampling. Judgement sampling is a technique commonly used in qualitative research aimed at providing an intensive study of a particular group, character or trait (Honigman 1982:80). Interviews were recorded on audiotape and transcribed at a later date for more precise analysis. Analysis and interpretation of findings took place at the same time when interviews of this kind were conducted, not only after completion. Interviews done at a later date were adapted to include new questions and topics proposed by earlier participants. Data analysis and explanation then took place according to a grounded theory approach (cf 4.2.8). Grounded theory does not use *a priori* assumptions or categories into which

data are slotted; rather data are grouped according to themes or patterns and then into categories which then become theoretical explanations, that is theory grounded in data. Thus theory is discovered from data gathered and not the other way around. Ultimately, findings are supported by data which are presented and discussed in descriptive terms.

Research undertaken in this study is designed to be exploratory and descriptive. No attempts are made to predict behaviour or to establish cause and effect relationships under experimental conditions used for the study. The primary aim is to understand and describe how the professionals interviewed experienced their education and training, their career developments and the personal characteristics which were utilised to their advantage in the process; also, how they were able to attain a balance between their careers and their personal lives. Their own frame of reference was used to formulate their personal experiences for qualitative analysis, guided by a framework of exploratory questions formulated from the sources cited in chapters 3 and 4, as well as from personal experience and observation.

Informal discussions were held with experts in the field of human working-power in research and education in the RSA, the USA and the Netherlands, as well as regarding the changing roles for men and women, especially regarding major household tasks (Wheelock 1990:14 & 63). In this way supplementary background material was obtained and methodological considerations were deliberated; final research findings were compared with similar contemporary research and the implementation of educational programmes for professional training in the fields under discussion were examined.

## **1.5 CHAPTER DIVISION**

The second chapter places the phenomena of careers and professional practice in historical context. Contributions of career and development theorists are taken into consideration to form a background for improved understanding of what constitutes professional success in the professions under investigation, as well as in the various domains of personal success. The dynamics of the road to professional success are explored, paying specific attention to factors

which influence career success, problems encountered during career development and the role played by education in determining career and personal success.

In the third chapter life skills education is examined in the curricula and practice of various countries, including the USA, the UK, the Netherlands and the RSA.

Chapter four deals with the research design and an exposition of the qualitative methodology employed for the empirical investigation. The rationale underlying the choice of method is discussed, as well as the design of the study and the procedures used.

Chapter five presents the findings acquired by means of the semi-structured interviews. These are discussed according to particular themes from which possible life skills for professional career success are identified.

The sixth and final chapter presents a synthesis of research findings. Guidelines for educational provision are proposed with regard to life skills education for supporting professional career development and management. These recommendations are made on the basis of findings of the empirical investigation into the experiences of professional people. In addition, suggestions are made for future research and the limitations of the study are outlined.

## **1.6 SUMMARY**

In essence this study is motivated by a realisation of the need to ascertain the course of successful professional career development and to propose measures whereby this mastery may be attained, as well as to suggest measures whereby educational provision may be planned for optimum foundational education and training for this accomplishment.

Research into this field has not been developed sufficiently in the RSA , in spite of the need for maximum efficiency in consolidating current knowledge and equipping school leavers for adaptability in the market place and in their personal lives. A common pattern observed is the dropping out of candidates at school, university or in the world of work. The development of

the necessary life skills at school and at tertiary level are viewed as crucial for being able to survive in a world of intense competition. The disintegration of personal and family life is observed as part of the price paid for not being assisted adequately at school, university, early professional and personal levels, as well as not being supported with regard to appropriate supplementary courses during the course of a career.

As prospective professionals school leavers require a sound basic education and vocational guidance which would enable them to cope with exacting professional training, as well as requiring continuous education to keep abreast of professional developments in their field. Personal work and family strategies need to be developed, as well as interpersonal skills for dealing with technological advancement, colleagues and employees, patients, clients, learners or students, spouses, children, friends and relatives.

This study was conceived as a means of increasing the available knowledge of the needs of aspirant professionals and the need for balancing their work and private lives. The aim of the study is to integrate these findings into grounded theory regarding career development of men and women desiring to follow challenging and rewarding vocations as a service to their country, to fellow human beings and creation in general, as well as striving towards a life of quality in both professional and private domains. These findings may serve as an addition to existing life skill education programmes at schools in South Africa.

## CHAPTER 2

### PROFESSIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT: A GROWTH PERSPECTIVE

*To be scientific is to be inquisitive, to challenge your sources of information for their rationale.*

Russel A Barkley (1995:ix)

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The qualitative investigation into the career development and experiences of professional men and women described in this thesis (cf chapter 5) is founded upon theoretical and empirical research into the careers of professionals in various fields and has links with a multiplicity of disciplines. A thorough investigation of previous research is therefore necessary and is carried out in this chapter with an overview of relevant literature concerning professional career paths, pitfalls and expectations. This is followed in chapter 3 by a discussion of literature concerning life skills education. This chapter aims to provide a broad background to this field by bringing together material from various viewpoints concerning the different experiences of men and women in professional careers.

##### 2.1.1 Organisation of material

For the purpose of the organisation of material in this chapter, professional career development is discussed from five main viewpoints:

Firstly, the career development of men and women differs in the historical unfolding of involvement of both genders. Whereas men have been involved in these occupations since the beginning of recorded history, the direct inclusion of women is a fairly recent occurrence. Secondly, changes in global labour markets have created new directions in career development not envisaged in any other era of human history. Technological inventions and changes in the world of work have brought about changes which have immense sociological implications. Thirdly, far-reaching changes in the developmental course of the differing life-spans of men and

of women have an impact on career expectations and planning. Developmental psychology has made contributions towards the understanding of the implications of improved health, life-expectancy and family, as well as of working conditions. The concept of the dual-career couple has become a matter of great importance, as the majority of professionals are married and have children. Lastly, factors contributing to professional success are discussed, as well as those impeding career success.

This chapter provides a broad survey of the professional world of work as a framework to the ensuing study of professional career experience and expectations.

## 2.2 PROFESSIONAL CAREER ORIENTATION

### 2.2.1 Introduction

While the world of work includes many different careers, there is a distinction to be drawn between a career or occupation and a profession. Clarity regarding these distinctions is necessary. It is useful to keep the 1984 definition of work in mind: numerated, paid, full-time and continuous activity which takes place outside the home (Evans in Wheelock 1990:74, emphasis added). As this scenario has changed somewhat, **work**, for the purpose of this study, might be defined as: **specified, full-time or part-time activity which takes place in- or outside the home with a view to obtaining or augmenting an income (cf work 2.2.6).**

### 2.2.2 Origins and meanings of the concept of a career

- ◆ Root of word: rapid motion, a rushing onwards; the gradual improvement of status through life; profession or business providing means of personal advancement; [from French *carriere*, and from Latin *carriara*: carriage, carriage-way, course] (Smith & O'Loughlin ny:171).
- ◆ Careerist: a person whose whole aim in life is personal advancement and success (Smith & O'Loughlin ny:171).

- ◆ According to Cairo (1992:297) the word career means different things to different people. Hall (1976 in Cairo 1992:297) states that some view a career as synonymous with advancement or vertical mobility, while for others it is regarded as a lifelong sequence of work-related experiences and attitudes regardless of their direction. The accepted view, according to Cairo (1992:297) is to distinguish between *career planning* and *career management* processes (cf Gutteridge 1986). Cairo (1992:296, emphasis added) states that there is a strong movement towards career planning and development programmes of all kinds in general training, as work strongly influences the overall quality of people's lives. Cairo (1992:302) views an inherent characteristic of the concept of career planning as to prepare people to respond effectively to changing circumstances by applying their competencies to whatever opportunities are available, thus enabling employees to be more flexible and to use their skills to take advantage of what opportunities exist.
- ◆ Hall (1976 in McDougall & Vaughan 1996:36) states that a career may be defined as the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of a person's life.

According to Arthur, Hall and Lawrence (1989 in Adamson 1997:245, emphasis added) the concept of career has, in the literature encompassing the last seventy years, the key themes of the individual in interaction with the own self-concept and self-esteem, with society at large represented by the realities of the organised world of work, as well as with the perspective of time. The research of Adamson (1997:245) has led him to the following conclusions regarding careers:

(T)he career can be viewed fundamentally as a 'vehicle' for the continuous realisation of self, or more accurately, a vehicle through which an individual may begin to construct a clearer conception of self and self in the world.

According to Hall (in Schreuder & Theron 1997:14) there are four distinct meanings assigned to the concept of career, namely:

- ◇ career as advancement;
- ◇ career as profession;

- ◇ career as lifelong sequence of work experiences. and
- ◇ career as lifelong sequence of role related experiences.

Schreuder and Theron (1997:14-15, original emphasis) see the most popular definition being that of *career advancement*, evaluated by the number of upward moves (promotions) during an individual's career life, also referred to as the linear career pattern. The *external career* identifies the route of progress normally indicated on a *curriculum vitae*. However, the definition of career as a *lifelong sequence of work experiences* is what presently carries the most weight. As organisations are changing and becoming more flexible, introducing fewer work structures, contracting out services, using more freelance workers, careers are to be viewed rather in terms of lifelong learning than in terms of upward movements. Hall and Mirvis (in Schreuder & Theron 1997:14-15) argue that a new definition of career development should be that of being *protean*. This term, taken from the Greek god *Proteus*, who could change shape at will, describes a process which the person, not the organisation, is managing. It consists of all the person's varied experiences in education, training, work in several organisations and changes in occupational field. The protean career is not what happens to the person in any one organisation, but a career shaped more by the individual than by the organisation and may be redirected from time to time to meet the demands of the person. In this type of career, performance is defined by the person's own criteria of good performance (or psychological success), valuing freedom and growth, and is characterised by a high degree of mobility, whereas in the traditional career the organisation defines success in the form of a salary and position.

### **2.2.3 Career planning, development, management and paths**

Since the earliest years of human life, people have been confronted with an endless series of problems which they have to solve, or alternatively, decisions they have to make: biological, environmental, personal and societal. Choosing a career may present all four types of problem in one decision, which makes it an extremely significant decision (Pryor 1985:231).

Super (1992:416) maintains that 'career choice' is not an event, but rather a process and that career choices are not made, rather, they emerge. Schreuder and Theron (1997:15-17, original emphasis) see *self-knowledge* as a prerequisite for successful career planning, which is seen as a

process, with or without specialist assistance, whereby individuals obtain knowledge about themselves and short- and long-term career goals. It involves one's interests, skills, values, strengths and weaknesses. *Career development* may be seen as the ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, confronting different issues during each. Knowledge is required, meaning that the career needs of the trainee, the mid-career person and the person approaching retirement are not the same. *Career management* is an ongoing process whereby the individual, self-employed or in an organisation, obtains knowledge of various aspects related to the world of work. *Career paths* indicate a sequential pattern of work experiences. The perception of promotion as the only purposeful career route is now outdated. Career paths should, *inter alia*, provide a possibility for both horizontal and vertical improvement, not define any standard speed of progress, compensation priorities or conditions, but specify conditions and offering skills and knowledge for various career possibilities (cf Greenhaus & Callanan 1994; Schreuder & Theron 1997:17-25).

It is presently conceivable that organisations can be formed without any permanent employees, trusting on individual workers to take responsibility having the knowledge to move freely from one location of work to another without changing their residence, enabled by new effectiveness of communication and transportation technologies (Streumer & Bjorquist 1998:257).

#### 2.2.4 Definitions of a profession

- ◆ Root of the word: declare: to confess, affirm; to accept and practice as a religion; to follow as a calling; to pretend or feign; to declare oneself to be [from Latin *professus/profiteri*].
- ◆ Profession: a confession or statement; a learned calling as distinct from a trade; the members and practitioners of such a calling; [from Latin *professio*: declaration] (Smith & O'Laughlin ny:833).
- ◆ A full-time occupation by which a person might earn his living and which is characterised by a body of knowledge and skills (Downie 1990:147).

- ◆ An occupation that properly involves a liberal education or its equivalent, and mental rather than manual labour; especially one of the three learned professions, law, medicine or theology. Hence any calling or occupation other than commercial, manual, etc., involving special attainments or discipline, such as editing, music, teaching, etc.; also the collective body of those following such a vocation (Funk & Wagnalls 1965:1 006).
  
- ◆ A vocation in which a professional knowledge of some department of learning or science is used in its application to the affairs of others or in the practice of an art founded upon it. Applied specifically to the three learned professions of divinity, law and medicine; also to the military profession. In a wider sense: any calling or occupation by which a person habitually earns his living. Now usually applied to an occupation considered to be socially superior to trade or handicraft, but formerly, and still in vulgar (or humorous) use including these (Shorter Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles: 1 593, in De Witt 1979:7-9).
  
- ◆ De Witt (1979:8-9) cites the 1921 verdict of British Chief Justice Scrutton in a High Court test case involving whether the avocations of a herb doctor and a horse trainer were professions:
 

Formerly, Divinity, Medicine and Law were known as the professions or learned professions. The word in the present use of language involves the idea of an occupation requiring either purely intellectual skill, or else manual skill controlled, as in painting, sculpture or surgery, by the intellectual skill of the operator, as distinguished from an occupation which is substantially the production or arrangements for the production or sale of commodities.
  
- ◆ A 1957 USA publication, a Dictionary of the Professions (in De Witt 1979:9) contains the names of 35 000 'recognised professions'.
  
- ◆ De Witt (1979:9-20) cites Huggett and Stinnett concerning general criteria for testing whether a profession should be regarded as that or not:
  - ◆ the rendering of a unique and essential social service;

- ❖ the importance of intellectual knowledge concerning the field in question;
- ❖ comprehensive autonomy for both the individual practitioner as well as for the professions a whole;
- ❖ emphasis on service rendered, rather than on financial remuneration connected to the service;
- ❖ comprehensive autonomous organisation of the profession;
- ❖ a clear and unambiguous code of conduct adapted to the renewed demands of the profession;
- ❖ continued in-service growth, indicating that practitioners would be required to keep in touch with contemporary research, and
- ❖ commitment to a life avocation and permanent membership of the chosen profession.

According to Nijhof 1999 (personal correspondence) **vocations encompass all forms of work, while autonomous professions require higher education throughout.**

Goertzel and Goertzel (1965:267) stress that the public demands certification for professional workers. It is the lawyers, teachers, doctors and engineers, for example, who have the most formal training. Downie (1990:148) believes criteria should include at least five years training, while Spokane (1992:50) states that occupations, and especially the professions, are protected by successively impenetrable layers of information which serve as social constraints to that occupation. In teaching, for instance, there are both the information or knowledge base needed, as well as the ability to communicate the specific knowledge which is applicable. In addition, Downie (1990:148-154) believes that it is important to stress that the concept of a profession is a developing one and that a definition should not be statically solidified around traditional professions, as new areas of knowledge are opening up and bringing with them new possibilities. Nonetheless, Downie firmly states that a professional person should be well educated, as distinct from being merely trained (cf 2.5.8), adding that even the mode of dress of professionals has as its criteria the expression of middle class values.

Where work is a form of action intended to bring about control or change, a profession may be seen as a highly advanced form of work involving expertise in complex tasks engaged in on behalf

of others (Sagen 1986:125). Esping-Andersen (1991:11-25) sees the professional hierarchy in the post industrial society as being determined by meritocracy, with 'classes' of vocations divided as follows:

- (a) professionals and scientists
- (b) technicians and semi-professionals (school teachers, nurses, social workers, laboratory workers, technical designers)
- (c) skilled service workers (cooks, hairdressers, policemen)
- (d) unskilled service workers, or service proletariat (cleaners, waitresses, bartenders, baggage porters).

There is often reference to professional sportsmen/women. Downie (1990:147) adds that nursing, social work, advertising and the work of estate agents is often included when discussing professions, but that there are many borderline cases laying claim to this name tag. The literature studied refers to many modern professions, architecture, engineering, accountancy and management being among those most frequently mentioned, all needing post-baccalaureate education (Brown 1997:295).

### **2.2.5 Definition of a qualification**

The publication by Nijhof and Streumer (1998) concerning the International Research Network on Training and Development (IRNETD) was issued after a conference in Milan in 1994. The following was the definition of a qualification, accepted at the conference as a point of departure (Hoof & Dronkers 1980 in Hövels 1998:51):

a qualification is the whole of knowledge, skills and attitudes that enables workers to supply differing work performances.

Professional qualifications go beyond firm specific qualifications and strengthen the individual's position in internal and external labour markets. A most important option has to be a dynamic concept of professions instead of a rather traditional and static one. Career qualifications refer to the abilities of people to arrange their own career in concordance with other aspects of life

(Meijers 1996 in Hövels 1998:61). Nijhof and Streumer *et al.* (1998:13) suggest that two concepts be used as a frame of reference for demarcating education and training regarding professions and careers. *Professions* refer to both the 'market'- as well as the 'utilisation'-value of qualifications (Geurts 1989 in Hövels 1998:61). Professional qualifications go beyond firm specific qualifications and strengthen the individual's position in internal and external labour markets. A most important option has to be a dynamic concept of professions ('*Neue Berufe*') instead of a rather traditional and static one. *Career qualifications* refer to the abilities of people to arrange their own careers in concordance with other aspects of life (Meijers 1996 in Hövels 1998:61).

According to Hövels (1998:61, emphasis added), the contemporary view of a profession is more of an institutional one, while a career is more of an individualised one. Both concepts are fundamentally linked with initial vocational education/training and the responsibilities with participants involved include offering to young people and adequate ground for coping with changing requirements and the mastering of these. Lifelong learning, mobility in internal and external labour markets and reducing barriers between different labour market segments are important challenges; the concepts of key -qualifications should be elaborated both along the more institutional track of professions and the more individualistic track of career-qualifications.

### 2.2.6 Alternative views of the world of work

The meaning of work embraces the significance that work or working has in people's lives (cf 1.1, 2.2.1 & 6). Work sustains life in the sense of biological survival and it can also sustain the quality of life. Different meanings can be derived from different *concepts* associated with work, for example work seen as a means of making a living, of being occupied, fulfilling a vocation, developing and utilising skills, fulfilling needs or as a contribution to an all-embracing life style. Individual meanings of work are derived directly and indirectly from *socio-cultural influences* in the context of family or school socialisation, group affiliations and work experience. Socio-cultural influences are embedded in *historical contexts* giving rise to changing meanings of work over time (Schreuder & Theron 1997:2, original emphasis).

Reuling (1998:63-64) perceives no difference between the German term *Beruf* and the Anglo-American interpretations of the contemporary terms 'job', 'occupation' and 'profession', except that there may be developments in the dimensions of the systematisation of the knowledge and skills required and in the social orientations of the work stage, becoming an extremely complex situation in the hierarchy of vocational classification in Germany (cf Reuling 1998:65-75). Onstenk (1998:127) regards the difference between occupations as diverse levels of expertise regarding the ability to solve core problems, which are essential characteristics of professional tasks: professionals are expected to find an efficient and effective approach and solution. The abilities, according to the Dutch experience, are on the level of making decisions, choices, speed and deliberate applications of knowledge and skills determining the degree of expertise. (The deduction may then be made that these levels refer to levels of expertise such as seen in the fields of nursing, general medical and medical specialist fields, cf Onstenk 1998:127).

Super (1992:422, original emphasis) regards the following as innovative views of older ideas regarding work, jobs and careers:

- ◆ *work* is the expenditure of effort, which may be *paid* as in employment or self-employment, or *unpaid* as in homemaking, civic activity or a hobby;
- ◆ *a job* is created when others are willing to pay for a service or a product, and normally means working for an employer or for oneself (it can also mean a task or a contract, such as painting a fence or writing a book, and may mean one or many positions, filled by many people doing much the same work);
- ◆ *an occupation* is a group of similar jobs, which may be in different organisations and locations, and
- ◆ *a career* is the sequence of positions, jobs, and occupations that a person occupies and pursues during the course of a life of preparing to work, working, and retiring from work.

Ryan (in Moses 1998:21-26) states that "We do not go to work only to earn an income, but to find meaning in our lives". Moses believes that many people's sense of self-worth is tied to their

ability to make a contribution to their organisation, to have dignity, gain respect, be challenged and to be stimulated. This is part of what makes people human.

### **2.2.7 The concept of a work ethic**

With the advent of Protestantism work values were sanctioned by religion, postulating that work has moral value, that humans have a calling to work, to develop talents and that all people should work, including the rich (cf aspects of the work ethic 2.10.2). Material wealth was seen as a sign of God's grace. The work ethic was, furthermore, associated with the development of Western capitalism and the pursuit of profit through diligence, self-reliance and achievement motivation, with John D. Rockefeller believing that the secret of success is in doing ordinary work exceptionally well. Although this belief has declined among many people, research findings suggest that it has spread to Asian countries. High productivity in Japan, for example, is in part ascribed to the work ethic (Schreuder & Theron 1997:4-5), where it may also result in total overwork and sudden death (*karoshi*). Overwork has become a major health problem for many people, resulting in an increase in stress-related illnesses. The balanced and "life-friendly" view is the more valuable one (Moses 1998:88 & 202).

## **2.3 PROFESSIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.3.1 A brief historical perspective of recorded Western history regarding professional career education**

The informal education of primitive times was aimed at teaching the young the skills needed for survival, conserving and perpetuating the sum total of social experience in a subsistence society (Brubacher 1966:1-2, 76-77). An overview of professional education in Pre-Christian society and early Christian professional education indicates that the earliest recorded Western formal education was mainly for the males of society, who were the only people able to choose a career outside the home. Women's world of work was that of the home and of rearing children. Ancient formal education, since before the time of Moses, c 2000 BC (Alexander & Alexander 1977), for example Egyptian education, was for the hereditary learned nobility which "embraced the whole

circle of knowledge of ancient times” (Painter 1905:34-36). Among many other skills for living, the ruling class learned not only religious duties, but medicine and law.

The education of the Greek civilisation found its peak in the teachings of Plato (427-347 BC). His philosophy concerning the proper education of the leaders of the country “is that which gives to the body and to the soul all the beauty and perfection of which they are capable” (Painter 1905:68). His pupil, Aristoteles, regarded a life of leisure and of philosophy concerning virtue as the supreme good, with professional skills being too utilitarian. Plato observed that the children of the leaders were the first to begin their education and the last to leave off (Brubacher 1966:78).

Roman civilisation is seen by Painter (1905:77) as “the bearer of culture to the modern world” through the conquest of large parts of Europe, with a functional and pragmatic spirit, aimed at framing laws, constructing aqueducts and highways, declaring wars and leading armies. While men, as servants of the state, were unlimited masters of their households as well, the wives, by their virtues and tact, softened the sternness of this authority and arrived at undisputed control in the household. The higher education of young men of fifteen or sixteen, enabled them to choose a calling and direct subsequent studies in reference to this vocation, which included arms, politics, law, oratory and agriculture. The world was to be subdued and reduced to order.

The Greeks and Romans of antiquity viewed work as a *burden* that contaminates the mind. It was regarded as contrary to the ideal of exercising the mind to think about truth concerning matters of philosophy, politics and art. Manual labour was the domain of slaves while, as Cicero proclaimed, the only forms of work worthy of free men were big business, agriculture and the living of a retired country gentleman. The Hebrews also saw work as drudgery, but additionally as providing *expiation of sin* and regaining of spiritual dignity, while the early Christians shared these views, but also incorporated the meaning of work as *charity*, as a means to maintain life and the ultimate life was the life hereafter. In ancient Persia work had an *ethical connotation*, that of the conquest of good over evil, while in non-Western countries, Islamic thinking held that those working honestly receive the grace of God, and in Buddhist writings labour was seen as spiritual growth (Tilgher 1962 in Schreuder & Theron 1997:2-3).

In all these civilisations mentioned, men were educated for civil duties, exclusively for the class they were born into. Women were trained to be good wives and mothers; Painter (1905:41) succinctly describes this education and only career choice for women as that “the mother trained her daughters to household duties and domestic virtues”.

### **2.3.2 An overview of early professional education**

#### **2.3.2.1 *Medicine as profession (from Latin medicus: physician)***

Sickness may have been defined as being an inescapable companion of the human race. Survival, as well as coping with pain and disability has challenged every society and culture throughout human history, prompting the development of strategies designed to explain the events, give meaning to life and death and ameliorate suffering. Since time immemorial, healing functions have occupied a prominent place in human affairs as a necessary response to illness (Encyclopaedia Americana 1985:624). The earliest physician whose name has survived was Imhotep, who lived and worked as priest-magician and medicine man to the Pharaoh of Egypt, c 2725 BC. The role of dentistry was a recognised speciality and the role of the midwife was the first in which any woman was mentioned in connection with medical practice. Hebrew medicine was unique in its marked emphasis on preventing disease described in the book of Leviticus.

By the 6th century BC Greek medicine had become thoroughly secular, stressing clinical observation and the brain being identified as the physiological seat of the senses. This knowledge reached Rome by the 1st century BC. Medicine in the Middle Ages stagnated in Europe, but the Arabs did much to elevate professional standards by insisting on examinations for physicians before licensure, c 910 AD (Encarta Encyclopaedia 1997). Establishing ethical and practical standards for conduct and action constituted an important step toward the professionalisation of medical careers (Encyclopaedia Americana 1985:627). Renaissance medicine was influenced by artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci c 1500, who undertook the study of human anatomy. A milestone in medical history was the publication of a great treatise on anatomy by the Belgian Vesalius in 1543. The dawn of modern medicine was during the 17th century with the study of the circulation of blood by the British physician Harvey, with multitudinous discoveries having been made since then, especially during the 20th century (Encarta 1997).

### 2.3.2.2 *Theology as profession (from Greek: theos, pertaining to God or gods)*

In preliterate societies there was no significant difference in the roles of medicine men and priests serving their gods. In Palestine the ancient Hebrew priesthood had the responsibility of compiling hygienic regulations, while more primitive modern societies still combine the roles of medicine man and priest, as was done in ancient civilisations such as Egypt, where priests were regarded as the highest class. This learned nobility was strictly hereditary, practising law as well as medicine. These priestly castes enjoyed the greatest educational advantages, with the most advanced instruction reserved for the priesthood alone (Painter 1905:33-38).

According to Encarta Encyclopaedia (1997) the oldest systematic theology was that of the Greek philosophers, which was based on rational reflection on God/the gods, the world and human life. This philosophical concept is in contrast to that of the Old Testament, which places the oldest studies of the relationship between God and human beings in antiquity, recorded in the writings of Moses, c 2000 BC (Alexander & Alexander 1977:118-122). Van Warmelo (1978:22) states that in Roman antiquity, c 753-509 BC, the priests or *pontifices* formed an extremely influential group. Together with the ruling elite class or *patricii* they prescribed laws, as in any other primitive society, determining exactly what the individual was allowed to do within the rules of their community. The priests and ruling elite were grouped together as the entities controlling all social power, with this order continuing throughout most of the world's recorded history. Invariably, the only groups allowed the highest forms of education available were the boys from these elitist classes.

### 2.3.2.3 *Law as profession (from Latin: legis, Old English: lagu)*

Law was seen as a body of official rules and regulations used to govern a society and to control the behaviour of its members, developing as society evolved. Historically the simplest societies were tribal, the visible authority being the ruler or chief, with the will of the gods being revealed to the tribal head or priests. The most significant historical example was Roman law, which influenced most of the legal systems of the world. In the 8th century BC the law of Rome was a blend of custom and interpretation of the will of the gods, with the widespread belief that fairness in law demands that it be in written form (Encarta 1997). From c 750-509 BC the groups of

farmers and tradesmen living around the seven hills of Rome developed into an extremely powerful centre of commerce. The rulers were kings and magistrates or *praetores* who formed laws and who made decisions governing property and conduct. In the period until c 250 AD the jurists and the military were the main builders of the mighty Roman Empire (Van Warmelo 1978:21-75 ) which was to provide the main source of law in much of modern Europe and its spheres of interest and influence in the rest of the world (Encarta 1997).

#### 2.3.2.4 *Professional education in medieval society*

According to Painter (1905:102-115) the first period of Christian professional education extends to the 16th century, with religion dominating all intellectual interests. The Seven Liberal Arts of the Greeks were still the basis of education for all leaders, both within the Church and for those of the state. The needs of candidates for the priesthood were the main aims of medieval education. A notable development in secular education was that of the Knighthood during the period of the Crusades. This stood in sharp contrast to that of the Church, with the emerging refined Knighthood influencing the social relations of Europe through a broadening of the knowledge base and extending the power of the cities. As the cleric was the ideal of medieval religious education, so the knightly discipline of chivalry was the medieval secular ideal for the ruling class (Brubacher 1966:7 &31). In the sphere of the knightly order, women were held in high honour, with great attention paid to female culture. Not only were young women instructed in the normal feminine domestic arts, but also in intellectual training as to be suitable wives for the knightly secular leaders. The crusades, the growth of cities and the spread of Mohammedanism contributed to the elevation of learning in the Middle Eastern cities of Bagdad and Damascus and Toledo in the West, where the sciences, including mathematics and medicine were “pursued with great ardour and success” (Painter 1905:114-132).

The richest fruit of the newly-awakened fruit of the scientific spirit in Europe was the founding of the universities arising independently of both Church and State. The University of Bologna was founded in the 12th century for the study of law and by the end of the 12th century numbered twelve thousand students, most of whom came from distant countries. The University of Salerno was founded shortly afterwards for the study of medicine and the cathedral school of Paris was enlarged into a university in which the study of theology was predominant. This became the most

distinguished seat of learning in Europe, at one time attended by more than twenty thousand students. The idea of the principal degrees was apparently borrowed during the 13th century from the trade guilds of the middle ages. The bachelor's degree began with the faculty of philosophy or arts, but was afterwards extended to law, medicine and theology. A licentiate, mastership and doctorate prepared the candidate for filling a professor's chair (Painter 1905:133-137). This gave rise to more attention being paid to the professional education of those who were to teach the other professions, with the most coveted aspect of the medieval university degree being the right to teach. The title of "doctor" was originally conferred by the faculties of law, theology and medicine, with the original meaning being that of "teacher", derived from the Latin verb *docere*, to teach. The title of "master", originally awarded by the arts faculty, set an early precedent for making the master of arts a distinctly teaching degree, hence the term "schoolmaster" and later "schoolmistress". The medieval period also afforded the first instance of the professional organisation of teachers, universities originally being the grouping together of students and teachers for mutual protection (Brubacher 1966:469, emphasis added).

### **2.3.2.5      *Professional education during and after the renaissance***

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 drove many Greek scholars to Rome, preparing the way for new interest in scholarship. The invention and discoveries of the 14th and 15th centuries, including gunpowder and the printing press, as well as the discovery of the trade routes around the world enlarged the circle of knowledge, expanding the commercial activities and lifting the level of intellectual activities. Erasmus of Rotterdam held the view, c 1500 AD, that girls should have intellectual as well as moral and domestic education, as well as mingling in society, although he was aware that most persons thought these ideas foolish. Growing intelligence and national self-consciousness brought about a revolt against the prevailing religious order of the churches and religious schools, changing the subsequent course of history and all education, with Luther calling for education for all children, including girls, thus opening the way for children of all social classes to enter into the three learned professions. However, the opening of a private London school in 1643 by Milton was only for the sons of gentlemen (Painter 1905:140-165).

The educator Comenius pleaded the cause of women's education c 1630 in Poland, stating that women are endowed with equal sharpness of mind and capacity for absorbing knowledge,

believing that women were able to give legal advice, study medicine and observe the activities of the clergy. Nevertheless, the prevailing belief concerning the education of women was expressed by Rollin in France in c 1726: he stated that the education of girls does not need to go beyond reading, writing and arithmetic, plus some history, with the emphasis being on the knowledge of domestic affairs and mainly on how to run the finances of the home (Painter 1905:223-255). During the Renaissance, with its focus on the value of man's mental powers rather than on his physical powers, work acquired the meaning of being *intrinsically meaningful* in itself, as a means of mastering nature and of man's becoming his own master — that is, a creator in his own right (Tilgher 1962 in Schreuder & Theron 1997:3).

### 2.3.2.7 *Professional careers in pre-industrial society*

This period encompasses the late Middle Ages to the mid-eighteenth century and was the period of the family economy (Lemmer 1989:19). While the new middle class or *bourgeoisie* was rising from their feudal lower-class background and struggling for recognition, a new professional class of business administrators was on the rise as there was a need for a high degree of skill needed in the trade of the times. New vocations concerned with the age of exploration, such as those of navigation and surveying were in demand. Vocations were interpreted in the literal etymological sense of the word as a “calling” and it was seen by many philosophers as fitting that persons should be content with the class and vocation into which they were born (cf Pathmakers 2.5.5). Advancement to high scholastic standards were restricted to the strata of societies which befitted the education concerned with the professions, such as the priesthood, medicine or law. Even some of the more liberal-minded intellectuals such as Diderot, editor of the great French *Encyclopaedia*, pronounced in c 1750 that it was alarming that attempts were made by parents to advance their children a rung up the social ladder by using education to escape from the social stratum into which they were born. Nothing was more fatal to society, Diderot stated, than this disdain of parents for their own calling and the senseless migrations from one state of life to another. The class below the middle class was constrained by the rationalisation of the middle and upper classes, who believed that an uneducated working class was needed for the requirements of labour and that they needed to be ignorant as well as poor (Brubacher 1966:84-87).

Many members of the upper classes preferred to alleviate the lot of the poor through charity, rather than to cure it through education. The French Revolution in 1789 changed the mind set of people towards an educational idealism, but the realities of educational opportunities were slow to change, as equalitarianism was apparently a better weapon to attack old abuses than a tool to construct a new social order (Brubacher 1966:34-36). The idealistic educational philosophies of the time were expressed in Germany by Richter at the turn of the century, c 1800, echoing the ideas of Rousseau in France, that the hopes of the future rest anew in each generation of children and that the state of childhood should be respected. Richter's view of the education of girls marks a distinct advantage over the generally held opinions of his day and he goes beyond Rousseau in believing that a woman, besides being a wife and mother, is also primarily a human being (Painter 1905:265-289).

Training at the institutions for higher learning was at a high level of competence, but at secondary and elementary levels conditions were most often distressing due to social conditions with teachers not being trained well. "Many abused the power which was vested in them as teachers, but to which they were unaccustomed by birth or breeding" (Brubacher 1966:470). Notably higher standards were reached in the schools organised by the Catholic Church under the orders of the Jesuits and Christian Brothers, as well as in Prussia under the influence of Pestalozzi. This influence spread as far as the United States of America.

Three of the meanings associated with work in pre-industrial times are work as *drudgery*, as *instrumental* to spiritual or religious ends and as *intrinsically meaningful* for its own sake (Schreuder & Theron 1997:2, original emphasis).

### 2.3.2.7 *Professional careers in industrial society*

At the beginning of the 19th century some of the effects of the Industrial Revolution were positive in that knowledge of the sciences was now being taken most seriously, being a revolution from *manu*-facture to that of *machino*-facture. Science was catapulted into curriculum prominence not only by the needs of industry, but also of the agrarian economy, where machinery was introduced into many phases of farming, creating a need for well-educated engineers (Brubacher 1966:87-97). Working class men and women were in demand in industries, suddenly changing the social

structure of work. Middle and upper class women became tied to their homes, with the public sphere defined as the man's arena and the private sphere that of the woman (Lemmer 1989:19-23, emphasis added). The meaning of work had, however, become a problem area in that meaning was not self-evident, as industrialisation meant, *inter alia*, *mass-production* of objects in factories and accompanying structural changes in the work process. Labour divisions became extensive, fragmented and reduced to mechanistic, repetitive functions, adversely affecting workers' personal commitment to their jobs. Production pressure and long hours led to a decline in the will to work (Tilgher 1962 in Schreuder & Theron 1997:3, original emphasis).

In Europe, England and the USA the rising middle class was still clinging to the ideals of the traditional aristocratic leisure-class ideal of education, which were still holding key points of the educational front. Education of the intellect was for its own sake, with Latin, Greek and mathematics studied for purposes of formal mental discipline. Vocational and teacher education suffered in comparison because of being more practical in character, while vocational skills were not favoured by the *nouveau riches* of the period (Brubacher 1966:87-97).

However, the social plight of women and children in the factories was distressing and gave rise to educational and social battles on many fronts. The lower classes now began seeing themselves as middle class with a right to protest injustices. Machine production had increased the leisure time for all; instead of one class having leisure in which to do the thinking and another class to do the working, everyone was now having the time to think about recreation, about their own motivation and about the pursuit of an avocation (Brubacher 1966:87-97). Radical changes occurred at the ancient European universities, as they were so out of step with the times, that professional studies were being re-evaluated. Even in the American institutions of higher education, the studies of law and medicine were being more beneficially sought by apprenticeship with practising professionals than at universities (Brubacher 1966:457-464).

The professional training and circumstances of teachers and educators ran the gamut of the social, philosophical and educational problems of the 19th century (cf Brubacher 1966:465-503). According to Brubacher (1966:503, emphasis added) nothing bears more startling witness to the profound social transformation of the 19th century than the feminisation of teaching. Not only were schools becoming more dependent on the labour of women, as men were needed to do other

essential work, but women were seen by educational leaders as being innately better qualified to teach the young, surpassing men in patience, sympathy and moral nature. In addition, as an attractive economic fact of no little importance, women were willing to teach at salaries considerably lower than those of men (Brubacher 1966:503-504). Painter (1905:283-284) views the 19th century as being remarkable in many ways. It was, however, without parallel in its educational progress and that one of the milestones of the century was that teaching was more widely recognised as a profession that requires special training. To this end better schools were built with more efficient instruction, libraries and apparatus of various kinds. The effects were to be far-reaching.

In all previous recorded history prior to the middle of the 19th century there was little provision for the higher education of women. Two arguments not previously included in the reasons for not educating women were that education would make them less refined and 19th century statistics advanced to prove that the fertility of women declined as the amount of their formal education increased, overlooking the fact that these statistics were equally true of men. Brubacher (1966:443-445) states that a happy combination of circumstances advanced the cause of women's education to a rank on par with that of men: after the French and American Revolutions came the Industrial Revolution and the settlement of the American frontier. In all these circumstances women frequently proved themselves of equal or nearly equal worth with men.

Religious attitudes were also changing: apart from the story of the eviction from the Garden of Eden fostering the idea that women were morally inferior, the new religious dispensations saw men and women equal in God's sight. In the USA colleges for women were founded and older universities like Harvard and Columbia were persuaded to open their libraries and laboratories to women for separate classes; but as women came to prove their academic metal equal to that of men, they came to share the same classrooms and facilities as their brothers (Brubacher 1966:445). Not only were male students affected by changing attitudes, but by the beginning of the 20th century women were being afforded excellent facilities for education in all enlightened nations (Painter 1905:345).

### 2.3.2.8 *An overview of careers in the 20th century*

Far-reaching changes were being felt in every sphere of social life at the turn of the century following the industrial revolution with men being replaced by machines as far as possible, but with the added strain to the family of working in shifts to keep the machines going. Where the poverty-stricken working class married women were forced into the labour force by necessity, they were also faced with the double burden of incessant childbearing and heavy household work. Unprecedented demands having been made on working class women during the Industrial Revolution, a leisured wife at home had become a sign of a man's success. Motherhood was exalted as woman's prime joy and mission, with the public sphere of the middle and upper classes being defined as that of the man and the private sphere as being woman's domain. There was also a departure from the former roles of married and unmarried women, with many married women now entering the labour market to supplement household incomes. Non-working middle class women developed the domain of domesticity into a 'profession', with the requirements for good homemaking studied, rationalised and relayed through popular literature, making women more aware of their inadequacies to fulfil such lofty callings, subsequently leading to a push for better education. Professions such as teaching and nursing became increasingly popular with women as these vocations were seen as an extension of the female role of a woman's self-sacrificing and nurturing nature (Lemmer 1989:22-25, emphasis added). With wry comment on society, Burke and McKeen (1994:62) state that vocations requiring nurturing, have been both historically female and less valued.

The First and Second World Wars saw many changes as women entered many areas of work previously restricted to men. In heavy industries women worked longer hours and for the lower pay traditionally paid to women. After the wars women were forced to return to the traditionally 'female' occupations, unpaid housework or low-paid jobs, as the returning soldiers were reclaiming their jobs. With women's work experience having been broadened and their work contributions having been a help in gaining Western women suffrage in the early 20th century, their foothold in the economy was tenuous at best. World War II was a major turning point in the history of working women, with wartime mobilisation sweeping aside traditional gender divisions of labour. Basic industries were sustained in many ways by married women filling the gaps left by men in the armed forces. After the twenty-one years separating the two World Wars, the

experiences of women in the labour market after World War I were repeated: the potential of women as workers in traditionally 'male' work had been glimpsed during these years. Labour participation amongst married women continued to rise in the post-war period, particularly in part-time work. The 1950s and peace saw a return to traditional domestic patterns, with young couples returning with relief to a celebration of family life and suburban comfort. Ideologies discouraging women to work stressed the psychological damage done to the children of working mothers and reinforced the guilt and anxiety of not having adequate child-care facilities available (Lemmer 1989:25-27).

A significant increase in work participation by women has been observed since the 1960s, with the upward trend gaining momentum for the next two decades. From being considered a peripheral and temporary part of the labour force, from this period on, women were established as permanent and integral participants in the labour market, largely due to the economic activity of married women. This was due largely to the declining birth rate, increased longevity, increasing education and the rapidly changing views regarding the home and work roles for women. Another reason was the growing tendency for young women to delay marriage, giving them more time to pursue a career. Women continued to be heavily concentrated in the traditional female professions and were poorly represented in production and management, but there were significant increases in non-traditional professions. Apart from the years during family formation, mostly between the 25-34 year old category, women work for economic reasons, but also for reasons of self-esteem and personal independence, on the whole earning less than men (Lemmer 1989:28-30).

New perspectives on men, women and work became commonplace. Gerdes (1998:4, 16-17, 38, 75, emphasis original and added) observes that after the Feminist Movement impetus of the 1960s the rights of women were stressed to a greater degree. This included the right to develop *their* own potential in the occupational field, as well as at home, with a greatly increased work load often referred to as a 'double day'. The result was a change in patterns of parenting and at work, which lead to a great deal of inter-role conflict and role strain, as old traditions and new life styles are often most difficult to reconcile. The combining of several roles is a source of considerable strain to this day, with increasing expectation for fathers to be more involved in parenting. The

view has clearly evolved that what is now expected is **the development of a parental team with tough minds, tender hearts and open channels of communication.**

#### **2.4 GENERAL TRENDS IN PROFESSIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS THE END OF THE 20th CENTURY : IN THE WESTERN WORLD AND IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The second half of the 20th century is termed the “post-industrial era” and is characterised by the movement from a society based on heavy industry to the age of information and high technology (Hage & Powers 1993:2-3). The character of this period, according to Hage and Powers, is most apparent in areas bordering the cutting edge of new technologies, transforming the nature of roles and relationships, with knowledge and technology as the dominant forces shaping society. These aspects have a profound impact on the nature of face-to-face social relationships, on the character of the social self and on expectations within the family and the world of work. New occupations have been added and existing ones have been reformed; many people have been displaced from work they have expected to hold throughout their lives, with the very map of the world being changed, bringing economic opportunities to some and hardship to others (Block, preface in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:iii). Most people will face two to three career changes in a lifetime with the once-and-forever career choice becoming a myth (Lea & Leibowitz 1992:xi). Moses (1998:12-15) cites Pascale, Ide and Cordell, who compare earlier careers to an ocean liner, where passengers cruised through a career and disembarked at retirement, whereas future professional careers are like a jetliner with a highly skilled crew in front and a less skilled cabin crew in the back, whose job it is to care for the great unemployed masses in the middle (cf 1.1).

A most salient aspect of career development in the Western world during the closing years of the twentieth century has been that people have sought to achieve self-determination in their careers. Future trends see the world of work realising a need for becoming more “user-friendly” in order to survive and prosper, with individual, corporate and societal developments taking human needs into account. Career choices are viewed not as events, but as processes (Super 1992:416-421). Yet, Moses (1998:21-23) observes that the world of work is becoming “leaner and meaner... often just meaner” with previous employers saying that organisations are no longer responsible for

people's employability. With this even the highly skilled worker experiences great uncertainty in long-term career prospects.

The challenge is to remain employable and the individual should regard him/herself as an entrepreneur, despite being permanently employed. Hall and Mirvis (1995:330) conclude that 'the new career is about experience, skill, flexibility and personal development. It does not involve predefined career paths, routine ticket punching, stability or security'. Old methods of career planning and the emerging 21st century model is developmental in nature, emphasising the need to experience personal meaning in work and the fact that the individual should strive for this throughout his/her career, continually honing his/her skills (Schreuder & Theron 1997:123-124).

Organisations are increasingly trying to avoid the word 'career' as this implies a permanent relationship which might become an embarrassment in future, as they are unable to predict which positions and skills might be required. According to Hall and Mirvis (1995:325) the 1980s 'yuppies' (young, upwardly mobile professionals) have been replaced by the 1990s 'dumpies' (downwardly mobile professionals). Career progress and success therefore have to be redefined, with the career of the future needing to be more cyclical, with reskilling taking place more often and with lateral rather than upward moves. Future survival will require employees basing their feelings of security on skills rather than on job titles. A need for a feeling of fulfilling a certain role needs to be developed, rather than on advancing up the career ladder. Career success will be assessed by the amount of learning that has taken place over a period and by the marketable skills of the individual (cf Stewart 1995; cf 2.13 for expected future trends)

Employees should 'take ownership' of their careers, with competence being the watchword of the future, implying that continuous learning is necessary at all levels, as new skills and facets of knowledge are required. A USA survey has revealed that even older people are recognising the importance of upgrading their skills: 4,6 million employees in the age group 55-64 are attending classes to improve their skills in order to better their chances of employment (cf Hall & Mirvis 1995). Automation often causes redistribution of employees rather than reduction in staff, with jobs becoming less manual and more conceptual (cf Schein 1993). The concepts of *core employees* (keeping organisations stable with critical skills) and *outsiders* (experts with available skills) are becoming part of a group of new relationships (Schreuder & Theron 1997:116).

By the end of the 20th century 70% of all jobs in Europe and 80% in the USA have required mental rather than manual skills, with half of these jobs requiring higher education and professional certification, including the development of competencies, cognitive and technical skills. This could be a problem in the South African context, as only about 2.1% of people have a standard 10 (grade 12) qualification and only 1.3% of the total population have a degree. About 44.9% have not progressed further than somewhere between the lower grades in primary school and grade 9 (Central Statistical Service, RSA, 1994 in Schreuder & Theron 1997:115). Analysts forecast that by the year 2000 half of the 60 million working Americans will be freelance providers of skills and services, with the same tendency expected in South Africa. Thus, future security does not lie with organisations, but with *employability* and being able to offer what is required of the marketplace — consequently, professional standards and personal ethics are the criteria which are beginning to replace loyalty to organisations. Gender role stereotypes are disappearing in work and in the family, with more equal employment opportunities becoming apparent (Schreuder & Theron 1997:116-118). The concept of 'retirement' has become inappropriate, as people often enjoy an active, healthy life at seventy. The stage between 55 and 70 is referred to as the 'third age of living', with the individual doing work of his/her own choice, allowing him/her to experience being valued (cf Handy 1995).

There is immense restructuring of the world of work worldwide, with many millions of people losing their jobs, including many professionals. In line with the reducing of staff numbers in large organisations across the globe, surveys of South African organisations have shown that the majority of respondents have begun to flatten their organisational structures, many organisations reducing staff by as much as 20%, affecting hundreds of thousands of jobs. The goals for this streamlining are better profits, cost reductions and higher production levels. Large information-based organisations will rely on more specialists being employed, including more women (Schreuder & Theron 1997:109 -111). As a result of affirmative action policies, many South Africans can expect to be plateaued at certain levels, that is, no longer having opportunity to progress in the organisational hierarchy, as there are limited opportunities for promotion (cf Schreuder & Theron 1997:154-155).

## 2.5 VIEWS OF PROFESSIONAL CAREER SUCCESS

### 2.5.1 Definitions of success

The concept of success is complex. A Thesaurus description of the word encompasses two groups of meanings:

- ◆ ascendancy, eminence, fame, favourable outcome, fortune, happiness, luck, prosperity, triumph;
- ◆ best seller, big name, celebrity, market leader, sensation, smash hit, somebody, star, V.I.P., winner (Collins Thesaurus 1991:487).

The Odhams Dictionary of the English Language (ny:1035) gives the following meaning of the concept of success:

The achievement of a desired aim, the prosperous conclusion of what is attempted.

According to Giuseppe Verdi (in Watson 1994:341):

Success is never luck, but a mysterious power of the successful.

Sheehy (1976:290, emphasis added) cites an anonymous professional middle-aged counsellor as “still struggling with the Big S and the little s”, meaning public success versus private success. The findings in a longitudinal study typify what may be seen as the successful development of a fully integrated human being as the ultimate view of success:

Human beings reach the highest expressions of their existence when their entire essence as being is blended into the synergic involvement of all their capacities at once.

Samples (in Sheehy 1976:292)

For psychologists 'career success' has been seen as belonging to the upper-, middle- and professional classes at mid-career, being high in status fields and sufficiently developed to be unambiguously recognised as successful by their peers, that is, others in that occupation (Harrington & Boardman 1997:25-26). Satisfaction with what people do in their occupation is another view of being successfully adjusted to their area of endeavour (Minor 1992:17). Simonton (1994:138) warns that motivation for success has one rudimentary reality:

Success in any walk of life demands that an individual display motivation of the highest possible magnitude. Extraordinary achievement does not arise from those with lackadaisical minds.

Simonton (1994:138)

At the same time, the warnings of Sir Joshua Reynolds to gifted but lazy students is most valid: "If you have great talents, industry will improve them; if you have but moderate abilities, industry will supply their deficiency. Nothing is denied to well directed labour: nothing is to be obtained without it" (in Simonton 1994:138). Anna Pavlova stated that success in the world of ballet cannot be achieved except by dint of extremely hard work and Edison's celebrated statement that "genius is one per cent. [sic] inspiration and ninety-nine per cent. perspiration" are summed up by Simonton (1994:139) as follows: that only clock watchers and time-card punchers put in just 40 hour weeks, adding the view of hairstylist Vidal Sassoon: "The only place where success comes before work, is (in) a dictionary".

Whether the motivation for extraordinary success arises from the achievement motive or the power motive, a voluminous amount of work and an inherent passion for their monomaniacal preoccupation with their fervent labour is the custom for true accomplishment; it could also be due to a cornucopia of unexplained needs combined, but there cannot be any one ultimate motive behind great success (Simonton 1994:139-141). Simonton argues that to attain the highest success, a certain amount of personal independence is essential, which may account for the unconventional sexual behaviours of many of the outstanding names in history, as well as at present (cf Simonton 1994:168-169).

Exceptional intellects were most often enabled to be successful adults by early omnivorous reading (Simonton 1994:177; cf 5.4.1.3.c). Success for children is not only gauged by their early

reading ability, but by a growing body of evidence that success in school is often determined by the most basic of all knowledge, that of knowing *how* to learn. These emotional characteristics are formed in the years before a child enters school as emotional and social skills (Goleman 1996:193, original emphasis). (Cf reading widely, 5.4.1.3.c).

### 2.5.2 Characteristics associated with success

The concept of *career success* has different meanings for different people and the way in which an individual defines career success strongly influences his/her career decisions. This is the view of Schreuder and Theron (1997:16-17, emphasis added). To some it means promotion and to others it means becoming an expert in their occupational field, while yet to another a successful career is one in which a person has developed many different skills and abilities and is now using those abilities to help other people grow and develop in a life of contribution. It could also mean moving frequently from one challenge to another (Brousseau 1990 in Schreuder and Theron 1997:16). Success can also mean the extent to which there is a match between an individual's career anchor and the perception of his/her job, a career anchor being self-perceived talents and abilities, motives and needs, attitudes and values (cf Schein 1993). Tosi, Rizzo and Carrol (1994 in Schreuder & Theron 1997:16) distinguish between *objective success* and *psychological success*. Objective success reflects measures such as the pay a person receives, his/her reputation or position in an organisation, while psychological success could be increased by the extent to which self-esteem has increased or goals have been met. In the light of contemporary business trends, it is essential that meanings of success be reflected more by the individual's perception of his/her own success, than by promotion, salary increases and perks.

Heath and Heath (1991:xv, emphasis added) state that, while there is an abundance of literature about success attained in specific fields, such as vocation, marriage or parenting, their conviction is that researchers had not paid enough attention to the core character strengths necessary to succeed in all the principal adult roles: there is a need for a psychology of persons who succeed in many roles. Questions need to be asked about whether successful men and women make good marital partners and parents, whether virtuous persons are likely to be healthy and happy, as well as from what kinds of homes men and women come who succeed in their familial and vocational roles. Also needed are questions about what adolescent strengths and weaknesses might determine

how successful and happy a youth will be when forty-five years old. Their conviction is that growing up to succeed and be happy is to develop the mind and character necessary to satisfy needs, achieve goals and fulfil dreams, meaning a lot more than just living out a vocational, marital or other adult role. Visible success may not reflect hopes and dreams or not even be enjoyable or fulfilling. It needs to be evaluated not just on society's, but also on individual terms. Success is not just a matter of luck, family privilege or society's programme; it has become more a matter of character and how it is used in, for example, learning how to be persons of integrity. In a study of several thousand educated thirty to fifty year-olds, the values were grouped into three groups:

- ◆ values concerning self-fulfilment and happiness, and the fulfilling of intimate and personal relationships, such as creating happy marital and parental relationships and close friendships;
- ◆ values concerning vocational success, achieving wealth, leadership, power, satisfaction and competence, and
- ◆ values about commitment to other-centered activities, like contributing to communities, holding religious and ethical beliefs, as well as the values concerned with enhancing well-being, such as being physically and mentally healthy, self-fulfilled and happy (Heath & Heath 1991:3-9, emphasis added; cf values 2.10.2 and 5.4.1.2)

Heath and Heath (1991:7) see the view of being successful as becoming more confused at present: men have invariably had a past view of being successful when they are seen to be successful in their vocations, while women had at least two until recently — those of being wives and mothers. However, the recently appearing view of the 'superwoman' model has added to women's understanding of being successful, the role of also being a successful career person (cf 2.7).

Men normally measure success by external success, something that can be observed or which can be seen, such as an impressive home and car, a beautiful wife, talented children, anything adding value to his identity. The male measure of power is generally situated in the drive to attain success and with being competitive and aggressive. These attributes are associated with perseverance, independent thinking, also with being completely in control, never needing any help and with

being firm and resolute, as well as with being able to think abstractly (Grové 1996:19-20, emphasis added).

### 2.5.3 Outstanding success/eminence/greatness

The phenomenon of truly exceptional success may also be termed greatness or genius and this is the subject of a longitudinal study of people associated with exceptional achievements in the field of psychology of history (Simonton 1994). Simonton examined the personal attributes of persons influencing the course of history, many of whom are still exerting an influence on daily life. The example cited uses as illustration the reading of a book by electric light thanks to Edison, involving the contributions and inventions of Cai Lun, who had invented paper in China two millennia ago, Gutenberg and the printing press, and a myriad of others (Simonton 1994:3-4). A broad study of eminence was done by Goertzel and Goertzel (1965), who chose four hundred outstandingly successful people for scrutiny over a wide range of personal characteristics and backgrounds. According to them, they used the term eminence in the sense of “standing high in comparison with others” (Goertzel & Goertzel 1965:vii).

Simonton probed the phenomenon of greatness from many angles and states that if the question is asked whether geniuses are born or made, a definite answer eludes psychologists (Simonton 1994:177-179). He argues that not until behaviour genetics has finally exhausted itself in the pursuit of inherited traits can science finally gauge the extent to which endowment takes precedence over environment; moreover, it is likely that nature and nurture interact in complex ways during human development: people born with higher natural ability may possess a tenacious intellectual curiosity that drives them to read and explore, thereby expanding their nurtured ability. Behaviour geneticists have identified a whole inventory of personality traits that may be passed down from generation to generation. In addition, the cultural enrichment available in the homes of future notables are replete with culturally and aesthetically stimulating parents, reflecting the impressive intellectual caliber of the parents. Brighter parents, argues Simonton, construct more stimulating homes for themselves and pass their superior genes to their children. Omnivorous reading enables children and adolescents to get the proficiency necessary for adult achievement, but it is the intellect that determines opportunities for later triumphs (cf reading 5.4.1.3.c).

Therefore, the nature-nurture issue may be a controversy that will never be completely untangled. The results of research may, at the minimum, provide the means of identifying individuals with the most promise of success, and at maximum, may provide guidelines about coaching promising children toward greatness. In any circumstance, the child is the prophet of the adult, according to Simonton (1994:179). However, Goertzel and Goertzel (1965:241-270) found in their study of four hundred eminent people that 60% had serious school problems as children, for many divergent reasons, yet 80% of them showed evidence of early exceptional intelligence or talent. Einstein was, as an exception, thought to be dull as a child, rather playing on his violin for hours than doing school work; but his home did not lack a love for learning, books and music. Although he was reading advanced literature at eleven years of age, his speech was hesitant, learning languages was difficult for him and he found the strain of preparation for an examination terrifying. When asked about the speed of sound, he did not know the answer, but said he knew exactly where to find the fact in a reference book if and when he needed it. The important thing was, according to him, to react delicately and to have a perpetual sense of wonder. According to Simonton (1994:177) Einstein felt that a magnet he had received as a child helped propel him toward an interest in science.

Simonton (1994:178) sees the influence of the parents as of extreme importance, but that the parents of famous personalities are often older than average when their gifted children are born, usually in their 30s when settling down to raise a family. Of great importance is the fact that these parents have probably planned their parenthoods wisely, associated with a willingness to put off a family until having established a career, found the best mate and built up adequate resources for bringing up children. Putting off parenthood to older age unfortunately means that the offspring may suffer parental loss at an early age.

Of the 400 people in the study by Goertzel and Goertzel (1965:268 & 3), 358 came from business or professional homes, nearly all of these homes having a love for learning and achievement. The parents of the celebrities studied were curious, experimental, restless, seeking, physically striving, intellectually striving, respecting learning, loving truth and sometimes beauty. Goertzel and Goertzel (1965:268, emphasis added) cite Horace Mann Bond, Dean of the School of Education at Atlanta University, as saying that, if every child in the land could have the same opportunities for intellectual stimulation enjoyed by the children of the professional, technical and kindred

workers, the talent pool could be increased five-fold (cf life chances 1.1 and 3.4.10). However, their study also reveals that eminent persons came from less positive home backgrounds where parents were opinionative, or with failure-prone fathers, dominating or ‘smothering’ mothers, troubled homes or had personal handicaps. The biographies or autobiographies of some of these famous persons also reveal that they had come from traumatised backgrounds, had experienced deprivations, conflicts and frustrations of the kind commonly thought to predispose to mental illness or delinquency (Goertzel & Goertzel 1965:xii), (cf resilience 2.10.9 and 5.4.2.4). True genius, according to Silverman (1996:42-43) is intellectually and emotionally intensely complex, likely to be driven, compulsive and never fully contented.

It is, however, important for the purposes of this research to emphasise that the group represented in the qualitative study for this dissertation represents normal, balanced people and does not represent any of the famous contemporary personalities of the world, as these people are the rare exceptions rather than the rule.

#### **2.5.4 Dangers associated with exceptional success and ‘the tragic flaw’**

The success of world-class achievers is seen as extremely risky in many ways (cf risks 5.4.2.3.b). Citing the research of Ericsson *et al.* into the careers of illustrious scientists, pianists, musical composers and chess players, Brim (1992:158-159) states that often it is not inborn genius that produces exceptional success; rather, it is sustained, intense training over many years, from more-or-less the age of six to nine. Often a great price must be paid for this intensity, often costing a heavy toll in the line of health, family ties and social relationships. This is different to most less successful professionals who “walk a middle path between being spread too thin and having a single-minded commitment to one goal over a long period of time” (Brim 1985:158). Research into the lives of low-status-occupations such as garbage collectors indicate that they have focused mainly on their families as their area of achievement.

Over commitment and overinvestment is seen by Brim as having become unbalanced, the amount of time and effort required to achieve a given goal being so great that it causes failure in other important areas of life, with nothing left to use outside of the activity consuming these top achievers — the painful price of blissful absorption in one domain for neglect, loneliness and poor

performance in another domain having to be paid. Brim calls this “end(ing) up poisoning with one hand while creating with the other” (Brim 1992:159-160). The quest for pursuing the person’s passion, unencumbered by a wife and children, is also a possible reason why so many gifted men stay single (Silverman 1996:37-38).

Part of the danger associated with success is the lack of ability to stop reaching for ever greater levels of success. The endless cycle of being relentlessly driven can result in estrangement from the immediate family due to lack of time spent together and the obsession with always being the best in the field. Other results of this overcommitment may be not taking note of physical symptoms of stress and depression, which may result from not knowing when to stop to enjoy the ‘crest of the wave’. These are often people who were given the message as children that they were ‘never good enough’ and therefore keep striving to overcome this feeling of inadequacy (Grové 1996:111- 112).

According to Simonton (1994:284-295), citing the psychometric literature, there is a very real connection between genius and psychopathology, this concept in fact being ‘useful’ and ‘contributing’ to the creative personality. Although not being true psychotics, they seem to possess just the right amount of weirdness, seemingly hovering on the brink of madness. He discusses some reasons for this phenomenon:

- ◆ Many of the traits associated with the Psychoticism Scale should be conducive to the pursuit of a creative career, as many innovators must throw tradition overboard to strike out on their own. They cannot be so occupied by pleasing people that they lose sight of their life’s perceived true mission; they have to be persistent and self-centered to overcome the many obstacles placed in the path of greatness.
- ◆ Those scoring high on Psychoticism think in unusual ways and are offbeat, almost bizarre at times (Mozart being fond of writing gibberish in letters).
- ◆ Manic states and an elevated state of rapture give the true genius supreme energy, focused attention and self-confidence (times of prolific output of Beethoven and Schumann being conspicuously linked with manic episodes).

- ◆ The 'unbalanced' geniuses are able to take extreme risks, having the ego strength for venturing out into unknown territory. (Simonton 1994:292-295)

Persons with the superlative talents of, for example Beethoven and Einstein, were noted by Harrington and Boardman (1997:26) as being simply too unusual to have been included in their type of research. The reader is referred to Simonton (1994), Goertzel and Goertzel (1962) and Sulloway (1997) for research regarding the lives of the exceptionally gifted.

### **2.5.5 Success in spite of adversity**

Among the one hundred eminent people studied by Harrington and Boardman (1997) they found reason to agree with an observation of Booker T. Washington:

Success is to be measured, not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles overcome while trying to succeed (in Harrington & Boardman 1997:184).

For some, the fact of simply surviving seemingly insurmountable odds, is indeed remarkable (cf Arnold, Noble & Subotnik 1996:preface). The conclusions reached by Goertzel and Goertzel (1962:271-293), in their studies of 400 eminent people, found that 75% of notable people had had troubled childhoods. The many difficulties cited included severe problems which had to be overcome. They conclude that, although the vast majority of eminent persons studied came from upper middle class families, one quarter of these people had had to deal with serious handicaps and that "in many of these individuals, the need to compensate for such handicaps is seen by them as a determining factor in their drive for achievement" and "that creative people claim more than others do that their childhoods were not entirely happy" (Goertzel & Goertzel 1962:273 & 274; cf resilience 2.10.9 and 5.4.2.4)

### **2.5.6 The concept of 'Pathmakers'**

In a twenty-year longitudinal study of highly successful persons who have overcome severe background handicaps, yet have been most successful in their respective careers, Harrington and Boardman of the University of Columbia, New York (1997:1, 3-4 & 24-27) researched the career

development of eminent persons who had not grown up in a family where career success was the norm. The families of this research group, which they termed 'Pathmakers', were characterised by backgrounds of low income and societal status, while the control group were subjects who were successful, but did not grow up in families of low status and income, and whose middle-class parents had not followed academic education routes.

Their definitions of their term 'Pathmakers' is as follows: Pathmakers are those with successful careers in high status occupations whose families of origin were poor by local standards, low in occupational status, and whose parents were not high school graduates (Harrington & Boardman 1997:26). The research group, or Pathmakers, would generally be seen as belonging to the upper-middle and professional classes at the time of the research. The requirements for being chosen were, *inter alia*, high in status fields and sufficiently developed to be unambiguously recognised as successful by others in that occupation. For this choice, panels of experts were used: academics who evaluated academic careers (i.e. university professors, basic and applied researchers, senior administrators); business people who evaluated business careers (i.e. managers and entrepreneurs in commerce and industry) and government people who evaluated careers in government (i.e. high-level local and national political figures). Apart from some of the careers traditionally seen as professional careers, such as physicians, lawyers and dentists, Harrington and Boardman chose their research subjects from peer-defined, relatively broad criteria for career success. They emphasised that a crucial key to assessing respondents' styles of adaptation during various times in their lives, was knowing what s/he had done during various times in his/her life in response to important events, threats, obstacles and seemingly insurmountable hurdles (Harrington, personal interview, July 1997; cf resilience and its meaning for professional success, cf 2.10.9 and 5.4.2.4)

### **2.5.7 Success and upward mobility**

The link between occupational success and upward movement in socio-economic strata is seen as highly significant, with much recent research having been devoted to this phenomenon (cf Harrington & Boardman 1997:7-9, 13 & 21-24). It has been studied from various perspectives: for sociologists, the central issue has been 'inter-generational social mobility'; for psychologists, it has been 'success' or 'career success', while for anthropologists it has been mostly on 'historical (sub-) cultural differences in routes to success' (cf Kastberg & Miller 1996). Burke and McKeen

(1994:22, citing research done by Schneer & Reitman 1990) state that a career gap for study or for travel is even more damaging to a man than what maternity leave is for a woman, even though a woman interrupting her career for family formation does not really ever have the ability to catch up and is moved to the periphery — a man taking six months to recuperate from a heart attack is not punished to the same extent as a woman taking maternity leave (cf obstacles 5.4.2.3.a).

Upward mobility is seen as an escape from or compensation for early childhood deprivation, especially emotional deprivation. Birth order and family size are strong influences in this regard, with the father's influence seen by some researchers to correlate to a son's success, with others seeing the mother's influence to be greater. With 'upwardly mobile' women both the mother's and the father's occupations have been found to have significant influence, with families and extended families or kin networks being seen as providing 'screens of opportunity', especially among families of high achieving black USA families. The concept of spiralism refers to how a person gains a foothold on an ascending path, which begins to acquire its own momentum and is often a reflection of the specific person's emotional maturity, with improved coping strategies seen as leading to higher self-esteem (cf 2.10.4 and 5.4.2.1). Upwardly mobile individuals have also been found to be healthier and more stable than the downwardly mobile individual. This transition is, according to Kastberg and Miller (1996:49-65), no easy task, as there are many obstacles to be overcome — professionally as well as socially. Less than 10% of the population of the USA, for example, moves upward from a blue-collar to a professional position.

### **2.5.8 Success and education**

By education is implied, according to Downie (1990:154):

- ◆ that the educated person has a wide cognitive perspective and can see the place of his/her skills within that wide perspective;
- ◆ that the educated person continues to develop relevant skills, and
- ◆ that the knowledge and skills are developed within a framework of values (cf characteristics 2.5.2, values 2.10.2 and 5.4.1.2; education 2.10.3 and 5.4.1.3.b).

### 2.5.9 Costs of success

Professional success is observed to be had at a price. While it may seem to some that success is its own reward, the literature suggests that there are dues to be paid. Upward mobility has been linked in some studies with divorce, neurotic and psychosomatic disorders or even suicide. Intimate relationships, family, leisure time and health have often been sacrificed in the reach for success. Many people have also had to pay the price of leaving family and friends behind, having to deal with jealousy and criticism, as well as these people finding their devotion to work neurotic. Some of the successful research subjects even found that they felt like imposters in attaining a social status which they were not born to (Harrington & Boardman 1997:17-18, 136-141 and 169-178), living in two culturally distinct and often contradictory worlds (Kastberg & Miller 1996:50; cf 2.5.3 and risks 5.4.2.3.b). Moses (1998:18 and 72, original emphasis) states that there are “relentless demands” on dual-career families raising children due to the super-metabolic pace which leaves them little time or energy for children and often resulting in them being the “abandoned children of career-obsessed parents”.

For women the price of great success is often extremely high. Highly successful women often found that success came at the expense of their personal lives, many having to relinquish the roles of wife and mother. Successful women who somehow fit marriage into their lives are three times more likely to be childless than equally successful married men. Therefore, a woman with a husband and children suffers a handicap not experienced by an equally capable man with a wife and children; this effect is often called ‘a double bind’ (cf Herriot, Gibson, Pemberton and Pinder 1993; cf risks 5.4.2.3.b)

Women often experience that finding interesting men who are equally successful and secure, and who do not feel threatened by the women’s success, are not frequently to be found. A woman can normally only combine a career and family if she has a supportive husband and financial means. Active gender discrimination often obstructs a woman’s path to success. This may take the form of subtle but prejudiced judgments, such as the assets of women being undervalued in comparison to equally capable men, often called the ‘glass ceiling’ effect (cf Wunsch 1993). At other times the discrimination is far more blatant: men who control the gateways to success often deny women access quite deliberately, such as was the case with Marie Curie. Male dominance of

resources alone may explain why women have the best prospects of success in literature, as 'simply owning a writing desk and a brain will do'. Many women do, nevertheless, make use of male *noms de plume* (Simonton 1994:36).

Women have also experienced that they have to work much harder than men to gain recognition, often alienating themselves from their peers (cf 2.7.3 and 5.4.2.3.b). A fairly general shared experience was that "women must be superior to men (in terms of the social class hierarchy) just to gain entrance to professional ranks, ... just to make it " (Silverman 1996:40, Kastberg & Miller 1996:56-63; cf obstacles 5.4.2.3.a). In addition, women have found that being successful is a path which would, inevitably, make them extremely lonely and not understood by family and friends, often having to say 'no' to various expectations making demands on time and energy. Social acceptance was also not a 'given' connected with academic achievement and 'giftedness was to be hidden', as giftedness has been experienced as socially 'disadvantageous'; being engaged in competition or speaking out may lead to tensions, which are thus avoided in order to preserve relationships. Many gifted females recalled painful experiences of being isolated or punished for 'not being like everyone else', females of colour having to face hostile environments at home and at work on a daily basis (Arnold, Noble & Subotnik 1996:3; Kastberg & Miller 1996:53, 61-63; Spielhagen 1996:193; Subotnik & Arnold 1996:264; Noble 1996:418-419; Callahan & Reis 1996:178-180; Evans 1996:368-373).

Most successful women have had to wrestle with the concept of 'superwoman' ideas of 'doing it all at the same time', many actively resisting this stereotype by arriving at a combination of goals and needs that is workable for themselves and their partners, if so involved (Spielhagen 1996:206-207). Yet many were still highly aware of the 'double burden for women', being mothers as well as involved in work, the path being made more difficult by the competing demands of research and family life (Arnold, Noble & Subotnik 1996:13, Lynch 1996:94; cf 2.9 and 5.5 concerning the dual career household and family).

## 2.6 MEN AND THE WORLD OF WORK

### 2.6.1 Careers and masculine identity

Much of a man's perception of his masculine identity is governed by the development of his career. Men are, moreover, socialised to work by families, peers and schools and to be competitive, achievement orientated and competent as a mirror of their ability. Being masculine and competitive are measures of being successfully in control of self and environment, with work as the primary way of defining personal success and self-worth (cf 2.6.3). Career success, achievement and ascendancy up the career ladder are calculated by these facets (cf O'Neil & Fishman 1992:169-170). Feeling that their jobs or institutions are valuable is what motivates a number of men (Sheehy 1976:278).

### 2.6.2 Motivation theories for men

In a study regarding the factors concerned with the motivation of a group of highly successful men in Britain, all entrepreneurs, Cox and Jennings (1995:4-9) found that childhood events had been clearly influential and significant in relation to their later success. These ranged from parental separation, parental bankruptcy and feelings of detachment and loneliness through being an only child or having elderly parents (cf resilience 2.10.10). The group in the study by Cox and Jennings of highly successful British people, who were born into wealth and prosperity, those not having experienced any trauma were the rare exceptions. The pattern of successfully overcoming any adversity was seen to continue among the majority of the people interviewed in the research period. Many spoke of being given challenging assignments that required them to cope without outside support, often having to cope alone with help seeming to be a long way away.

Personal characteristics found by Cox and Jennings (1995:4-9) included the following:

- ◆ The lives of these successful individuals seemed to be characterised by the ability to accept and overcome challenges which are inherently part of the world of business. Risks taken were, on the whole, calculated risks within the reasonable limits of the individual skills and abilities. Entrepreneurs seemed almost to enjoy risk for its own sake, as something to

stimulate the flow of adrenaline and make them feel alive. A few were in the group characterised as low risk seekers, while most saw themselves as risk-seeking. There was a strong impression that risk was an aspect of their lives in which they found considerable enjoyment, some actually referring to themselves as 'gamblers'.

- ◆ Among the managers referred to were the 'adapters', those capable of initiating change that improved the current system. They are more often found in the more bureaucratic areas of management. The group who were seen as 'men of ideas', were called the 'innovators', who tended to be found in areas such as research and development. These innovators were high on originality, but low on conformity and efficiency and were less constrained by traditional approaches to problems, as well as more likely to challenge the existing system.

Cox and Jennings (1995:4-9) identified various 'political styles' among their research group, including individuals who were 'inner directed', tending to develop perceptions with little reference to the outside world; those who were 'outer-directed' tended to need to comply with the perceived attitudes and norms of others in the same situation (cf motivation 2.10.5). The interaction of these two dimensions gives rise to four possible styles:

- ◆ *The company barons* have an ability to see the organisation as a whole, as well as a strong drive to enhance their own personal positions.
- ◆ *The traditionalists* who accept dependence on objectives set by others and like to continue doing things the way they are being done.
- ◆ *The visionaries* who have a strong ability to develop their own beliefs and future objectives, being able to question the way things are done and to explore suitable alternatives.
- ◆ *The team coaches* show independence of thought, but need to work with a team with which they feel comfortable.

### **2.6.3 Gender roles for men and factors affecting career behaviour**

A man's view of his career and gender roles is central to his personal identity, his self-esteem and his developmental change (cf 2.6.1). Career choice, development and transitions prompt redefinition of these roles at different life stages; masculine values and gender roles are under constant scrutiny. Gender roles are closely associated with developmental theories, which are linked with career and personal transitions including changes in values, world views and physical appearance. It is believed that inflexible gender role norms set standards that do not allow people to express themselves comfortably.

On the whole, the masculine mystique (or machismo) and value systems imply that men and masculinity are superior to women and femininity, that power, aggression, control and dominance are essential to prove masculinity, that emotions, feelings, vulnerability and intimacy are to be avoided because they are feminine and that career and economic success are measures of masculinity. These masculine values are part of men's socialisation and have negative consequences for men, women and children, as they devalue feminine attitudes, values and behaviours. Moreover, these values may contribute to men's self-destruction at midlife. Fearing emasculation, some men work so hard to demonstrate success that they neglect important relationships with spouses, friends and children, culminating in overwork, fatigue and marital discord, posing serious threats to men's physical and psychological health. Working with women as equals, as well as co-operating and competing with them have brought strain due to lack of understanding of each other's points of view (cf 5.4.2.1 & 2). The showing of emotions and feelings, and of being vulnerable, gentle and intimate are associated with femininity. Research has found that men not only neglect or repress the feminine aspects of themselves, but actually fear that others will see them as feminine, that is, weak, dependent and submissive, resulting in disrespect and failure in a hyper masculine society. What is needed is training in being effectively humane, compassionate and sympathetic, as well as robust (O'Neil & Fishman 1992:161-187).

## 2.7 WOMEN AND THE WORLD OF WORK

### 2.7.1 Careers and feminine identity

The past several decades have witnessed unprecedented transformations and opportunities in the lives of women and girls. Women are working outside the home, moving into domains traditionally reserved for men and vigorously pursuing careers and interests. There has been a noticeable change in the literature of the latter part of the 20th century to include the interests of women. Before this period and the awareness of the movements in favour of women's concerns, the literature was focused mainly on male studies, experiences and interests, with women and the family being part of the 'background scene'. The deduction is that society has not reaped the advantages that could accrue from the full utilisation of all its human resources, and neither have women been able to experience the joys and rewards associated with expressing their talents at the highest levels. The term *glass ceiling* has entered the language to express the obstacles keeping women from reaching their full potential (Arnold, Noble & Subotnik 1996:1-3). Kanter (1977 in Dopp & Sloan 1986:121) found that, when appointing staff, committees and managers consciously chose men over women, because women seemed to them to be an unpredictable and unproven commodity.

For most of recorded history, stretching over the last 5 000 years, women have been considered inferior to men, destined as the weaker gender and therefore to be assigned subordinate social status. Compared with men, women have smaller brains, a finding that was long considered conclusive proof of female inferiority. When scientists finally realised that brain size is correlated with body size, they also realised that, *pro rata*, male and female brains have the same volume (Gould 1981 in Sulloway 1997:148). The question has been raised as to how it has been possible for *any* woman to attain eminence, when they have actually never had time or easy access to successful careers, the perpetual delicate, passive and submissive children. The denial of education was perhaps the most daunting, with Biblical admonitions for a woman to be at home and be the support system for everyone else. Being intellectually gifted was, in fact, not really 'allowed' before late in the 20th century (Silverman 1996:23-42). Teaching and nursing were seen as traditional female occupations and wanting to follow another path, such as a career in mathematics, was not socially acceptable (Kastberg & Miller 1996:53-57). Lemmer (1989:25)

concludes that professions such as teaching and nursing as caring professions had become increasingly popular as these occupations were considered an extension of the female role for which a woman's innate propensity for self-sacrifice and nurture were most suitable. Women's representation in teaching in the USA was at time of publication again where it was in 1870, that is 66% of the teaching force (Dopp & Sloan 1986:120). Esping-Andersen (1991:11) still sees that the class membership of women, whether employed or not, is still largely defined as an adjunct to the male.

Despite immense strides, there are still unsettling facts coming to light: Callahan and Reis (1996:176-178) found that, on average, females consistently had higher achievements at school and in tertiary education than males. Yet, in the USA, women were "still only 17% of the nation's architects, 9% of the clergy, 8% of the engineers, 3% of the technicians and 10% of the dentists". They also pointed out that women comprise 83% of librarians, 86% of elementary school teachers, 88% of speech therapists and 95% of kindergarten and preschool teachers. Callahan and Reis (1996:177) cite a United Nations economic report for Europe, saying that women were emerging as a "special underclass" in poorly paid, part-time and temporary positions, clearly indicating great disappointment for many talented young women and the accelerating of poverty among women, also called the feminisation of poverty.

### **2.7.2 Motivation theories for women**

At present there have been immense strides forward in Western countries in accepting that half the population, that is, women, have as much potential, gifts and talents as men have. It has also been recognised by many that women have as much of a contribution to make as men have, as much as what they have the will to reach for their own dreams (Silverman 1996; Arnold, Noble & Subotnik 1996). Ortiz (1982 in Dopp & Sloane 1986:122-123) advises women with high ideals wishing to make a success of professional careers, that they should learn to change the cultural expectations for women by viewing themselves as professionals and by learning how to work with men in professional settings. These behavioural styles include sensitivity, good interpersonal relationships, visibility, optimism, good conflict resolution skills, communication skills, listening skills, hard work, high energy levels, honesty and the use of families and strong marriages as a support base.

### 2.7.3 Gender roles for women and factors affecting career behaviour

With the advent of more reliable psychological tests, it has been possible to distinguish many of the imagined gender differences between men and women from reality. Even so, the available literature on gender differences continues to display seemingly contradictory findings; for example, some studies report that women conform more than men, with other studies reporting the opposite. The results are, according to Sulloway (1997:148-149 & 492-498), not conclusive, with many variables being possible and recent meta-analytical reviews of gender research encompassing more than a thousand publications at the time.

The largest gender difference is in physical strength. Substantial gender differences exist only in one cognitive domain, namely the ability to perform mental rotations. Among personality traits there are substantial differences (cf Sulloway 1997:492); some psychological differences between genders have survived repeated scrutiny, the most important of these including aggression, assertiveness, conformity and tender-mindedness. Where males typically outperform females on test items involving knowledge of the physical sciences, women outperform men concerning health practices (Sulloway 1997:148-149). Yet, gifted women are less likely to have a professional career than men, selecting occupations that have lower status, require less education and are more compatible with family time schedules. They are over represented in the fields of education and nursing, and under represented in the fields of advanced educational programmes and professional fields such as science, mathematics and engineering (Reis, Callahan & Goldsmith 1996:210). One of the reasons for this possibly being what Bell and Chase (1996:127) report, that many of their research candidates note that “women need to be more competent than men in order to be accorded the same level of success” (cf 5.4.2.3.b). Yet, according to Burke and McKeen (1994:62) women receive less training, while at the same time having additional family responsibilities; this proves overwhelming for some talented and promising women. Lemmer cites Statham et al. (1989:307) who point to the fact of the “seamless quality of women’s lives” with roles continually impinging upon one another.

Personal strengths which are advantageous to competence are often developed by having seemingly negative backgrounds: Lynch (1996:93-114) reports that, in her research on Polish women representing Eastern European life during the second part of last century, it was found

that any woman emerging from these harsh living conditions as active, successful, independent and extremely motivated, seemed truly remarkable. It was evident that their mothers and fathers, from the intelligentsia, competent and influential, had been warm, humorous and committed to the family. They had encouraged them very much to pursue a career. Also evident was that they had been seen as tomboys as children, and that this could be associated with the psychosocial androgyny often found in gifted individuals. They had also learnt to handle aggression through normal fights between siblings. In their homes there had been no clear subordination on either side between their parents, but that they functioned as a team (cf 5.5). One research subject's mother had consistently said that "... I should do the best possible work or not do it at all". This is an "all or nothing" approach according to Lynch (1996:107-113).

Preparing women for career leadership has become a concern for both business and academic settings, although there has not been enough research in this field, running contrary to the expected 'megatrend' suggesting that the 1990s would be the decade of women in global leadership. In a USA study concerning twenty-four major public corporations it was found that the crucial role of women was very much in evidence, as there was a need for women to make the workplace more hospitable. Work situations seen as more work-and-family friendly are becoming more prevalent (Ruhe & Allen 1997:278; cf skills 3.4.4 and teamwork 5.4.3.1.b and 5.5)

Reis (1996:150) found that women may, later in life and past midlife, make use of their security and seniority to take risks, "make a noise", be courageous and have the courage to become unpopular. This is because women grow older in a far more positive way than has been suggested in the popular press, and the later years may indeed be the most productive for women's development (cf 5.4.4.2). Women are currently seen as reaching their peak creative accomplishment later than men. The eminent women studied by Reis (1996:165) stated that if the acquired wisdom of their 80s and 90s could be coupled with the energy they had had at 70, they could do anything.

In the 1980s, Moses (1998:24-25) recalls, the term 'adrogeny' was very popular, where managers, male and female, were encouraged to express not only 'male' qualities, such as being tough, dispassionate and competitive, but also the so-called 'feminine' qualities of showing nurturance, empathy and concern for people's well-being. This noble ideal, Moses feels, got lost

along the way and being cold, ruthless and uncaring have become more the style with the resulting lack of sentiment and attachments (cf 2.8).

#### 2.7.4 The specific views of women

The life experiences of women are vastly different to those of men, compared by Aptheker (in Grant & Fine 1992:437) to bits of fabrics composing tapestries (cf 5.4.1.2). Even when talking of goals and motives women's style is different to that of men, who usually have the power to exert more control over the course of their lives. Women's accounts leap back and forth between the private and the public activity domains, being experienced as less separable than those of men. According to Harrington and Boardman (1997:28, emphasis added) it is important to build a comparison between men and women, because the traditional subordinate status of women in society introduces additional obstacles to be overcome for levels of career success to be reached. It is also most important to gain insight into why women's lives follow clearly distinguishable patterns as they are a socially less powerful group than men (Lemmer 1989:147, emphasis added), often torn between loyalties to both their careers and to their homes and family. Qualitative research is valuable in attending to their concerns, supported by their own views.

Wellington (1998:100) states that until recently, women were all but excluded from the upper reaches of the corporate business world in the USA. The entrance of women into the business world is having a significant effect on the lives of Americans as 49% of the professional, managerial and administrative work force consists of women and women constitute half the nation's talent pool. According to Fritchen (personal discussion, Dec 2000), women are making significant inroads into the corporate management world in South Africa.

Roman (1992:556-587) states that feminist researchers working across a variety of theoretical and political traditions have repeatedly been challenging exclusively masculine ways of knowing and describing the world. In the process attempts have been made to revise traditional research epistemologies and modes of representation, especially regarding the women's gender-specific experience of subordination and discrimination. Attempts have also been made by feminists of various orientations who worked to revise gender-blind epistemology and represent women's 'historically silenced' experiences of motherhood and childbirth as more natural and democratic

in social transformation. Jansen and Peshkin (1992:692-695) state that feminism overtly challenges the credibility of patriarchal views where there is a total lack of attention to women as agents of knowledge. They stress that androcentrism is a bias like any other bias, which can be eliminated. These 'emancipated' views have had special significance for this research, without dismissing the value of the sympathetic views of many male researchers and participants.

It has been observed in the literature study preparing for this research, that women authors and researchers have more often been recognised and included since the second part of the twentieth century, whereas before that feminine scientific work and writing were relatively scarce, inferring, as it were, that feminine observations of the world were, what Roman (1992:573, original emphasis) views of a scientific existence where women's experiences were seen as part of "a social world that is meant to be *gazed upon but not challenged or transformed*". According to Jansen and Peshkin (1992:693), citing Harding 1987, the voice of science is a masculine one and history is written always from the point of view of men of the dominant class and race.

## **2.8 PROFESSIONAL CAREERS ACROSS A LIFE-SPAN — A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **2.8.1 Introduction**

Choosing a career is usually associated with late adolescence and early adulthood. Lucas (1997:123) cites Levinson (1968) in regard to career development in late adolescence representing one of the central challenges to the identity formation process. Additionally, the selection and preparation of an appropriate and satisfying career assumes a pivotal role for adolescents in contemporary society (Brown 1997:295). It is also a question of long-term planning for a life of quality as "(b)etter knowledge of healthful living and medical advances have increased the life span and thereby raised new questions for many about the meaning of work and income in the second half of life" (Block, preface in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:iii). Not only is it essential to have the right school preparation for feasible choices to be made — the long-term outlook will be determined by early provision of correct skills enabling responsible choices to be made. Moreover, people should be made aware of the fact that the contemporary world of work has the potential for changes of career direction, given the fact that most people will face two to

three career changes over a lifetime and that the pace and quality of change is expected to continue (Block, preface in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:iii & Lea & Leibowitz 1992:ix & xi). In addition, individuals regard their careers differently and emit different career-related behaviours at different times in their lives, as related to new realities of the work place and of individual personal life stages coinciding with career development (Minor 1992:17, 19, 21 & 37; also cf Herr 1997).

The work of Parsons in 1909 (in Minor 1992:17) was a watershed in career guidance and underlies the practice to this day. The basis of his work was a prescriptive model, the matching of individuals with jobs. Contemporary career development is organised, *inter alia*, around the following assumptions:

- ◆ development is a continuous process over the life span,
- ◆ choices and adjustments are involved which concern the content and processes contained in career paths (Minor 1992:17).

The 1909 vocational guidance model of Parsons (in Minor 1992:17) had a basis which has remained important. Cognisance had to be taken by a person choosing a career, of three factors regarding career choice; a clear understanding had to be had of:

- ◆ the person's own aptitudes, abilities, interests, resources and limitations;
- ◆ the requirements of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities and prospects in different vocations;
- ◆ the relationship between these two groups of facts.

### **2.8.2 An overview of general life-span theories**

Cultural norms celebrate rites of passage for birth, puberty, marriage, death and other major life events. These also constitute a "social clock" for getting jobs, getting married, having children and

lessening. Because people are living longer, the postparental period has lengthened considerably. Patterns for economic maturity and for women have changed radically, as more young women are employed full-time and middle-aged women are returning to the labour force after their children leave home. In addition, child rearing practices are changing as fathers begin to share with their working wives the responsibility for parenting. Couples are marrying later and more are deciding not to have children. Work flowing from Jung's theories, which was done in the 1980 by Fiske and Gutman (in Schlossberg in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:4), indicated dissimilarities between men and women: as men aged they began to place more value on expressive and interpersonal goals, whereas women began to direct their interests outward and to become more concerned with contribution to society. Stated differently, men began to turn inward or more introspective with time and women began to turn outward or become more involved with the external world. The effect is that of "crisscrossing trajectories" where successive stages reflect different developmental changes and scheduling (cf 5.4.4).

The concepts of pre-retirement couples and of transitional periods began to enter the literature in the past decades, with transitions themselves being more important than the age of the individual. Life events are, in short, more important than chronological age in understanding and evaluating behaviour, handled differently by men and by women. Each theorist has provided valuable insights, but it is now accepted that there are highly personal variables concerning how people react to their own situations, with many variations in coping responses towards the many possibilities. People are involved in many life stage transitions over the life span and many of these are related to work (Schlossberg in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:6-12). According to Pearlin's 1982 research (in Schlossberg 1992:13-14), men and women cope with transitions by either changing the situation, modifying its meaning or relaxing in the face of stress. Here three major coping strategies are indicated: mediation, stress management or relaxation, which can be taught at multi-strategy workshops. People able to cope effectively use a wide variety of eclectic strategies depending on the transitions faced.

Applications of most theories have been considered as useful for both men and women (Schlossberg 1992:4). The most widely accepted group of theorists explain adult behaviour in

terms of age and sequential stages of development. Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson and McKee (in Schlossberg 1992:3) divided adult behaviour into six age-related sequential periods:

- ◆ leaving the family —late adolescence to about age 22;
- ◆ getting into the adult world — early to late 20s;
- ◆ settling down — early 30s to early 40s;
- ◆ becoming one's own person — age 35 to 39;
- ◆ making a midlife transition — early 40s, and
- ◆ restabilising and beginning middle adulthood — middle and late 40s.

In addition to these periods, as people in developed countries have seen longer life expectancy, a new set of theories has started to emerge since the middle of the 20th century. Where it was formerly assumed that little personality change took place following adolescence, many questions have arisen about changes occurring during and after midlife career transitions, as well as during pre-retirement and retirement stages (Abrego & Brammer in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:234-235). The percentage of people surviving into their sixties and beyond is increasing rapidly, with the typical retiree now spending 20% of his/her life in retirement, as compared to just 3% in 1900. Continuing part time work in their vocations has become a popular work option for retirees (Fretz & Merikangas 1992:270-273). Moses (1998:223) states that people are starting to see "retirement as a shift from one endeavour to another" with organisations needing to think more creatively about enabling older workers to pass down their wisdom and know-how.

Coinciding with contemporary often dramatic shifts in the workplace, current theories of career development theory express the belief that individuals seek satisfaction in multiple areas and must be mindful of the complex interplay of life roles over time. Where it was once enough to prepare for the choice points of entry into the world of work, it is now necessary to define how a person negotiates a constellation of roles over a lifetime (Phillips 1997:275).

The view of Levinson's adult life stages cited by Smart and Peterson (1994:244, summarised) is useful in relationship to general trends noted in the literature concerning career development in relation to life stages:

- ◆ entry life structure for early adulthood (age 23-28 years) — creating a stable life structure with options open;
- ◆ age 30 transition (age 28-33) — reappraising and modifying the initial structure;
- ◆ culminating, more stable life structure for early adulthood (age 33-40) — establishing a niche through ambitious goal achievement;
- ◆ midlife transition (40-45) reappraisal and reformulation of goals to allow neglected parts of personality to express themselves;
- ◆ entering more stable life structure for middle adulthood (45-50) — creating a productive self-expressive life structure;
- ◆ age 50 transition (50-55) — assessing, modifying and improving the middle adulthood structure;
- ◆ culminating, more stable life structure for middle adulthood (55-60) — achieving the goals formulated during the fifties transition.

In 1972 Beynon and Blackburn (in Wheelock 1990:74) made use of the concept of the life cycle concerning women's lives and work. Numerous studies have followed that all made use of this concept, which distinguished five typical stages in a woman's life: that before marriage, the period of marriage before any children are born, the period when children are young, when children are older and making considerable demands on parental income, and finally when the mother is free of children and so free to work. An asymmetry concerning the attitude towards work is obvious here: it is assumed that men's work-role characteristics affect their family lives, while women's family lives affect their work (Voydanoff 1987 in Wheelock 1990:74, emphasis added). (Cf 5.5 and 5.6.) Wheelock refers to her observations, that where the life cycle does impinge on men it is primarily a financial strain and that the question is mediated by the family. A woman's work includes child care and housework, with the answer then often for the woman to do only part-time work (Wheelock 1990:77).

The 1978 studies of Levinson (Abrego & Brammer in Lea and Leibowitz 1992:235-236) evolved two metaphorical images of adulthood which offer insights into the changing roles in adult life stages:

- ◆ Each person's life may be compared to a huge tapestry threaded by interrelated roles: career changes involve changes of thoughts, feelings and behaviour in relation to the individual's work role; these are interwoven with roles around occupation, friendships, career networks, family relationships and leisure activities (cf 5.4.1.2).
- ◆ Additionally, overlapping life stages may be compared to a long-distance traveller who changes vehicles, passengers and baggage, but whose past does not disappear.

Other theorists, such as Erikson (1950 in Schlossberg 1992:3; Sheehy 1976 and Abrego & Brammer 1992:236) postulate that adults pass through developmentally sequenced stages which are not based on chronological age. Some move through these stages swiftly, while others become arrested at one stage and never move forward. These stages include issues of identity (who am I?), intimacy (can I be committed and close to others?), generativity (can I nurture others?) and ego integrity (am I satisfied with my life?). Erikson's stages of development are hierarchical so that each stage builds upon preceding stages. Nevertheless, an individual who had difficulty mastering the tasks of one stage may find solutions to them at a later stage.

In 1977 Vaillant, in a longitudinal analysis of advantaged men, as well as of inner city men (in Schlossberg 1992:4), identified career consolidation as an additional developmental stage in Erikson's progression. Achieving intimacy enabled men to deal effectively with their careers and then nurture younger men in their career quests. Gilligan (in Schlossberg 1992:4-5) found different issues as being central to the development of women. These are issues of attachment, caring and interdependence, formed after interviewing women at decision points in their lives. She concluded that maturity is different for women and for men. The "heroic individual" is no longer seen as marching predictably through sequential stages of development, but as that of renegotiating interdependence and caring. The metaphor is seen as changed from that of stairs to that of widening circles of attachment (cf 2.13, 3.5, 5.5 and 5.6).

Although certain behaviours and changes are more typical of certain life stages than of others, each stage of life has its own challenges and problems, lending specific characteristics to each period of development. There is much overlapping of behaviours and expectations in each stage. Transition has become a dominant theme in life-span psychology and in adult development literature. In primitive cultures there is a rapid change from childhood to adulthood, while in more highly developed societies puberty and adolescence span a longer period of time, approximately from 13 to 18 years of age. This is followed by a brief period between adolescence and early adulthood, from about 18 to 22. There are also differences in socio-economic levels, where young adults from higher socio-economic strata are dependent on their parents for a longer period of time, possibly as they need a longer period of education for their vocations and professions. During this period young people develop a feeling for their own identity, ideals and values, as well as having to deal with the choice of a career. In the case of a man the choice of career has an extremely strong connection with his feeling of masculine identity and his self-concept. Young women have as many problems in their choices: the socialisation of girls to be wives and mothers is often in conflict with contemporary developments in views concerning career choice for women. It is often the highly educated young woman who has to cope with conflict between being a competent career woman and her own and the social expectations that she should be a wife and mother (Gerdes & Van Ede 1981:277-283; O'Neill & Fishman 1992:161 -162).

Early adulthood is called the 'Career preparation stage', followed by the 'Career establishment stage', the 'Career maintenance stage' at midlife and 'Retirement stage' in late adulthood (O'Neill & Fishman 1992:177-184). Early adulthood is the period between youth and being middle-aged, more or less from the early twenties until the early forties, encompassing the first one third of adulthood. It is generally understood that this period starts when a person has become emotionally independent of his/her parents and when s/he is able to function separately financially, and has accepted the responsibilities of a career, marriage and parenthood. Erikson saw this period as that of either intimacy or isolation, as well as the stabilisation of identity. Ironically, while this is the period of the prime of life, in the later years of this period there are already signs of regression. People in this period question themselves, their values and life itself. They start realising that they do not have infinite time left to reach certain ideals or to make changes. If unsatisfactory choices were made in this phase of life, it can be a most complex period; if satisfactory choices were

made, these can be seen as the foundation for further fulfilment and growth in the years to come (Gerdes & Van Ede 1981:283-293).

Chronologically speaking, middle adulthood lies between 40 and 60 years of age. O'Neill and Fishman's (1992:179) 'Career maintenance stage' is called the 'Independence/specialisation stage' by Hazard and Koslow (1992:221). Various authors believe the middle years to be from 35 to 55 (Abrego & Brammer in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:235), or even to 65, as people are living longer, are in better health than before and are actively employed in the second half of life, which has not been thought possible before (Block, preface in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:iii). Sheehy (1976:350-351) sees the halfway mark to be the middle thirties with a "full-out authenticity crisis" between 35 and 45. Men and women find themselves intensely preoccupied with seeking their own truths within their own life pattern (cf 2.8.5 & 6). People who allow themselves to be stopped and seized by the real issues, are shaken into re-examination and these are the people who find their validity and thrive. There are also many other positive views of this period, with this group generally seen as the 'crest of the success wave'. Frenkel-Brunswik (in Gerdes 1981:297) sees the years between 30 and 48 years of age as the apex of professional and creative work.

The middle years are seen to be influenced by the individual's health, social class, coping styles and general attitude towards life. While working class people see themselves as middle-aged at 40, executive managers and professionals generally only see themselves as middle-aged at 50. Premature ageing is closely related to bad health, a negative outlook on life and unresolved crises. Persons who have the ability to adapt are able to view the middle years as a challenge, while those who are less flexible in their attitudes and training are less able to accommodate innovative patterns of behaviour (Gerdes 1981:298). Sheehy (1976:395-403) points out that turning 40 is a marker age for men: with work pyramids being what they are in the professional world, most men will have to adjust their dream downward to some degree, as they are confronted with the "hurry-up feeling". No matter how close a person gets to achieving his dream, it will not fulfil all the wishes he has set for himself.

The late thirties are a different experience for most women: experiencing their sexual peak at more or less 38, this coincides with when the average American woman re-enters the working world, as most children are in school by this time. According to USA census figures, women can then

expect to be part of the work force for the next twenty-four years, their position being determined by the marketable skills they were able to acquire before they got married. Many women then work to make ends meet, but many married women also want to work at a career which they like doing and 'being someone in their own right'. Realities determine that, having been out of the labour force for a period as homemaker, women actually move backwards in occupational status from jobs they held before they married (Sheehy 1976:378-390). (For a comprehensive discussion of this topic, the reader is referred to Lemmer 1989.)

With retirement entering the picture between the ages of 55 and 65, the individual's goal is to maximise personal options in leaving full-time employment to assume a retired or semi-retired role, assessing interpersonal relationships and developing a retirement plan. While this period overlaps with the maintenance stage, it may, for some, coincide with a period of innovation; for some fortunate persons, innovative maintenance may be involved until the last years of life without any retirement (Super 1992:417; cf retirement 5.4.4.2)

The adjustments to be made in these changing circumstances can be difficult for both men and women (cf the dual career family 2.9 and 5.5 and factors for success 2.10). This involves many adjustments to be made regarding masculine and feminine roles and is called 'gender role strain' by O'Neill & Fishman (1992:167). The greatest changes in gender roles are to be expected at around the age barrier of 50. It is in this stage of life that changes in both men and women develop more in the direction of the other gender: women may develop keenness of mind not apparent before and men may become more gentle and less afraid of showing this than earlier in their lives (Gerdes 1981:309). Sheehy (1976:415) calls this period the "second season", when the sexually opposite side of one's nature is confronted, which many find strange and frightening. Important differences exist between men and women growing older: men seem to become more receptive to affiliative and nurturant promptings and women more responsive toward and less guilty about aggressive and egocentric impulses (Neugarten in Sheehy 1976:415). Fortunately this also brings about a deepening closeness in marriages where couples have given each other support, as a greater balance has been reached (Sheehy 1976:416; cf O'Neill & Fishman 1992; cf androgeny in 2.7.3)

### 2.8.3 Patterns of personality types among men within various life stages

Sheehy's research into life patterns (cf Sheehy 1976:253-292) showed vast differences in the career experiences of men and of women. Among adult men there were three patterns most prevalent, which she calls the following:

- ◆ The Transients, who were unable to make any firm commitments in their twenties, prolonging the experiments of youth;
- ◆ The Locked In type, who make solid commitments in their twenties, but without crisis or much self-examination; and
- ◆ The Wunderkind type, which create risks and play to win, often believing that once they reach the top, their personal insecurities will vanish.

Sheehy found three other patterns much less common:

- ◆ Never-Married men, with no definite pattern.
- ◆ Paranurturers, who, by occupational commitment to care for the family of man (clergymen, medical missionaries) or devote the kind of nurturing to a mate customarily provided by wives.
- ◆ Latency boys, who avoid the process of adolescence altogether, remaining bound to their mothers throughout their adult years (Sheehy 1976:253).

The remaining important and exemplary group of men, Sheehy found, were not numerous, but deserves attention, as they had found a pattern which has released them from "their competitive straitjackets", relaxing gender role stereotypes and softening of their egos (Sheehy 1977:253-292). She calls these **role model men**:

The “**Integrators**”, who try to balance their ambitions with a genuine commitment to their families, including child care, and conscientiously work toward combining economic comfort with being ethical and beneficial to society.

The data concerning ‘integrators’ have direct meaning for this study (cf 5.4.3.1 and 5.5): Schlossberg (1992:14, emphasis added) states her view concerning a balanced life-style unambiguously: “Life span perspective shows the benefits of discovering life skills and developing programs to train people in these skills”. When all the data were in, it became clear that people’s futures are shaped by the quality of their sustained relationships with others, not by childhood traumas, and that the course of life has surprising outcomes (Schlossberg 1992:7).

#### **2.8.4 Patterns of personality types among women within various life stages**

As stated in 2.9.3, vastly different life patterns have been observed for men and for women. Sheehy’s research into life patterns for women has revealed that the drive for equality which has unfolded in the 20th century has not run an easy course; also that women have been more communicative about their experiences than men (Sheehy 1976:293-347 and 296). Apart from opposition from men and from older generations, there has been resistance from among women as well, wanting to be found ‘acceptable’ by not wanting to be thought of as ‘feminist antagonists’. As Goleman (1995:5) states succinctly, humans and human behaviour have evolved over the last 50 000 generations and not the last 500. This exceedingly difficult female ‘drive for equality’, breaking out from a preliberated era, has cut across all age, class and colour lines. From this flux in all the old life patterns, there is “emerging a new breed of women. Their guiding commitment is to autonomy. The chief thing is not to *lean*, not to let themselves become dependent. This heartfelt commitment informs all their choices” (Sheehy 1976:294, original emphasis).

When at a seminar there was a debate about who could represent a role model for the ‘emancipated’, but balanced woman of the 20th century, Sheehy (1976:293-294) relates that it was most difficult to choose such a woman. Every woman who had reached distinguished heights during this century has had to pay a costly price for her achievements:

None of these women had pursued their dreams or satisfied their heartsongs without giving something else up or without having something cherished taken away.

Sheehy (1976:294)

Women choosing a career at the beginning of the 21st century have the dilemma of a bewildering array of choices with no one being able to tell them what the one right choice is. There is no one right choice, which, in effect, becomes a burden of choice (cf risks 5.4.2.3.b). While the confinements of patriarchy had kept many women second-class citizens, it had also provided airtight excuses for not having to choose or practice a career. Nevertheless, in 1974 a USA survey found that 60% of women under 30 had spoken up in favour of combining marriage, children and careers. The same majority of women preferred divorce to staying with a rocky marriage, no longer expecting to have freedom and be 'protected' as well (Slims in Sheehy 1976:294-295). Another survey regarding 'working class' women, which had been going on since the 1940s found that, after having two children, the ambition of most women was to return to work when their children were in school, which would enable them to travel later in life, as well as pursue favourite interests and hobbies. This constituted one of the most significant changes in attitude that had been witnessed in the third quarter of this century, as the blue-collar wife had been 'captive to the triangle of husband, children and home' (Gardner in Sheehy 1976:295 and 534). Indeed, changes in women's roles and perceptions regarding work and careers has constituted one of the truly great watersheds in twentieth century history (Lemmer 1989:17).

An indisputably watershed, highly lifestyle-changing event occurred in c 1949 in Mexico: the discovery of the Contraceptive Pill. This, according to Roberts (1989:128-130) was a serendipitous, even accidental event in medical history that was to change the lives of women in every developed country in the world, as women using the pill correctly were freed from the confines of unwanted pregnancies without major health risks.

Sheehy (1976:295-347, emphasis added) views it as a comforting thought that minds and patterns can be changed, as "women have long lives with many seasons". Traditional patterns of personality types evolve from most traditional to more experimental. Sheehy groups women's life patterns under the following groups: the Caregiver, Either-Or, Integrators, Never-Married Women and Transients.

❖ The Caregiver

This type of life pattern concerns a woman who marries in her early twenties or before and who, at that time, is of no mind to go beyond the domestic role. This includes most married women. Theirs is the life of cherishing, succouring, listening to and believing in other people. They live for human relations and work out any personal ambitions through others. The central characteristic of this group is to carry the dream of the most promising husband they can find, always being the compliant ones. Many thousands of caregivers work part-time to supplement the joint income or to buy luxury items and this does not imply realising their full potential in work. Such a woman lives for her attachments and is dependent on their need for her. At midlife many of these women are shocked into a situation where they find that they need to become the breadwinners and discover that they should have acquired professional credentials and skills in their youth, or at least, to have kept in touch with their possible careers. Sheehy (1976:311, emphasis added) states that every caregiver should learn to care a little more for herself, instead of having to sacrifice everything for her family.

❖ The Either-Or group of women

Studies conducted on early choice patterns reveal that more or less 50% of respondents choose this pattern. They believe that they can implement only one aspect of their self-concept at a time, putting off strenuous career efforts to marry and start a family, in exchange for the dependable affection of a mate. Thus, most women feel required to choose either love and children *or* work and accomplishment. Here there are two main groups:

❖ The Nurturer who defers achievement

This group defers or suppresses the part of herself which would want to seek a professional place in the world, having a great deal of inner preparation to do before being able to fulfil her outer goals. The problem with this situation is that, by the time a woman has become ready to re-enter her vocational field, having been out of circulation for about ten years, the expertise has moved on to such an extent that she has to re-enter at a low level with long hours and a demeaning status and remuneration, not earning much more than her housekeeper. The real problem was that 'the

role of a supporting wife' has been missing in her life. Margaret Mead, as world renowned anthropologist, was convinced that for women marrying prominent career professionals, they should accept the fact that these high-profile men need a full-time wife to make their careers possible (Sheehy 1976:331).

Among other problems, research has shown that housewives suffered more from psychological distress than did working women, with the central question of all nurturing women being the postponement of their own expansion. Sheehy (1976:321) emphasises her observation that having an established career, getting married at around 28 years of age and having a child later have proven a recipe for success.

◇ The Achiever who defers nurturing

Randomly selected female achievers among 1 500 achievers in the USA obtained bachelor's degrees and spent seven years undivided attention to their careers before settling down. Many of these achievers were encouraged by their fathers, who seemed to enjoy the comradeship of their daughters not found with their educationally limited wives. What was revealing about the observations of these achievers was that it was clear to them that "a woman could advance only by proving herself more skilled than any man available for the job above hers" (Sheehy 1976:324, emphasis added). A deep and vital attachment was formed by achieving women with a senior person in their professional field fulfilling the role of mentor who supported their progress (cf 2.10.6 and 5.4.1.1.b).

It was also at the age of 35 that many of these achievers realised that they had little time left to have children, often finding themselves left with no social life. A more promising variation of this pattern is being chosen by many achievers, who make every effort to gain a confident professional footing first, although they may not be exclusively career orientated, later balancing a career with marriage, the fortunate ones being married to partners who have learnt something about balancing mutuality with individuality. These women, among whom can be found the late-baby super-achievers, find themselves being more able to empathise with their husbands' career pressures, as well as not feeling that they never had a chance to succeed because of having been a mother (Sheehy 1976).

### ✧ The Integrators

During the 1950s and 1960s a minor revolution started taking place with women in their twenties working towards accomplishment, in spite of marriage and babies. These were the women who wanted to do it all and do it all at once: learn, love, explore, excel and escape from retrograde ideas of femininity by proving that doing it all was possible. A problem began surfacing, which was the problem of feeling guilty either towards their babies or to their marriages or to their careers. Some of those that attempted all at once were overwhelmed by their tasks and found that they could complete none of them, so that one of the facets of their lives was eliminated, sometimes to the detriment of their sanity. They had run out of psychic energy to cope with it all. Men expected their wives to give up their careers. Sheehy (1976:340), working with Mead and Levinson, found that it was rarely psychologically possible for someone in her twenties to do all the roles at once, but that it was possible at a later age, probably at her mid-thirties. It could be added, providing that they had a sympathetic spouse, a good cook, nanny and/or housekeeper, as was the case with Margaret Mead (Sheehy 1976:328-342). As this was rarely possible, a new life structure began emerging as part of the predicatable couple crisis — the single mother and every second weekend father. Some single fathers began showing that they were, in fact, able to survive, even as single fathers, by hiring good help, doing more for their children and by demanding more flexible hours from their employers. As Margaret Mead had said, after wide anthropological research, that the nuclear family was an “experiment in disaster”, it being sociologically profoundly more important to survive as a group, where multi generational communities gave children and the aged access to each other in mutual support. This was the preferred way in which to include family members and make everyone feel needed and supported (Sheehy 1976:331; Mead, lecture c 1977).

### ✧ Never-married women

This pattern has been evident for a long time, but Western society has not easily acknowledged it. Roughly 10% of women never marry and Sheehy (1976:343-344 & 534) refers to studies in the USA where findings were that the average single woman surpassed the average single male on most counts at that stage, including having stronger psychological reserves than unmarried men. They often find companionship and understanding from both men and women, often forming

a counterculture to lend emotional support. Many become paranurturers as social workers, teaching nuns and custodians for the orphaned and retarded, spending their energies caring for the children of the world. The 'office wife' example, devoting their lives to caring for public men and politicians, often do so to the exclusion of any other deep personal tie.

❖ The Transients

This life pattern is of women choosing to keep their options open, choosing to wander without commitments, not exchanging freedom and self-determination for the security of marriage.

### **2.8.5 Emerging life patterns in society**

In post-industrial Western society, towards the late 20th century, many variable patterns have emerged as adaptations to the realities of the restructuring of the world of work. Mead (in Sheehy 1976:346-347) states that these patterns are to be accepted as part of the work patterns evolving for practical reasons. As some men are more interested in human relations than in public achievement, it is to be accepted that some men would rather manage a house and children than go to the office every day. It is also to be accepted that some women are not eager to do housework and look after children. Wheelock (1990) discovered in a study in England, despite the expectations of sociologists, that most unemployed men were willing to share domestic duties with their still working female partners (cf 2.8.3). These observations are born out by the patterns evolving in European countries, where men are being granted paternity leave when there is a new baby. In addition, work weeks are often being changed to four days or less, to give men more access to their children, as well as providing more work opportunities where there is a high percentage of people without jobs (Van der Horst, the Netherlands 1998, personal communication).

Among the social realities faced by present day married couples is that the dual career couple is the rule rather than the exception (cf 2.9). This is necessitated by economic pressure and by the aspirations of contemporary women to 'be someone in their own right' and not to waste their professional training. With an escalating rate of divorce, it has been observed that part of the pressures put on married couples is the changing role of husbands and wives within the situation

of a dual career couple. This study aims to investigate this phenomenon as a fundamental reality of career success for both husbands and wives and, *inter alia*, to endeavour to provide suggestions for a new approach to a more amicable situation at home, which would include the shared responsibilities and privileges of child-care. Statistics may provide answers to how many men and women are employed and functioning in the work force, but there are gaps in understanding the lives behind the statistics. This study has endeavoured to have the function of complementing these statistics (Lemmer 1989:147).

### **2.8.6 Life stages and career development**

The world of work of men and of women should be seen in historical and socio-cultural context. Modern psychology emphasises the similarities between men and women and diminishes the differences. Citing De Toqueville's writing in 1835 and 1840, Gerdes (1981:107) states that during the preceding seven centuries there were many occurrences that strengthened the disintegration of the class system, which permeated ideologies concerning the different roles undertaken in society by men and by women. The twentieth century has been a period of hitherto unprecedented change in the socialisation and learned behaviour of the two genders. After having compared masculinity and femininity according to certain characteristics, such as being active and passive, Freud came to the conclusion in 1905 that women's acceptance of pain and suffering were a masochistic result of their displaced aggression and that women felt naturally inferior to men; men were the achievers and the role of women was that of wife and mother, with her status being reflected in the social and economic success of her husband and children.

Subsequent studies by psychologists and of feminist thinking have replaced this approach. By the middle of the century Jung and his wife, Emma, had replaced thinking about the differences between the roles of men and women with two concepts: the LOGOS was the dominating element which gave men the ability to formulate ideas, to think analytically, to create order and to generate plans of action; the attainment of power and of the power motive. These are seen as typically male characteristics. Women, they argued, are dominated by the EROS, which is described by Jung as a psychological bond with other people, with women being more inclined to see human relationships as of primary importance for emotional fulfilment (cf 5.4.3.1).

Before the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a strong distinction between what constituted success for men and for women in their respective worlds of work and duty, with little overlap in their respective spheres of activity. Where there has been drastic change in the roles of both genders, the tendency during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been towards a greater share of responsibilities in the roles of men and women concerning the fields of work, family and society (cf. Gerdes 1981:107-121; Wheelock 1990; Gerdes 1998:4).

## 2.9 THE DUAL CAREER HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY

### 2.9.1 Introduction

The pattern of the dual career household, which has emerged as the most prevalent in Western societies for the last quarter of this century, emerging primarily during the 1970s, has been more than a transition — it has been a **quantum leap** for many of the people involved. It is expected to be more prevalent in the future as women have rising aspirations coupled with greater educational and career opportunities, becoming tomorrow's customary marriage. Since the mid-seventies the spotlight has fallen on the father's role and increasing expectation that he should be a more involved parent. The view has emerged that he should be an integral part of the parental team (Hazard & Koslow 1992:218; Gerdes 1998:4-5; cf the dual career marriage 2.9 and 5.5) The percentage of women entering the labour force is increasing. In 1990, 75% of all USA women aged 25-54 worked, opposed to 55% in 1975.

The average working wife with full-time employment contributes approximately 40% of the family's annual income in the USA (Gilbert 1994), the majority of these women having dependent children (Hazard & Koslow 1992:218). By the year 2000, the age group between 25 and 54 years of age will constitute 73% of the work force in the USA (Chiappone in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:368). Since the 1994 elections the workforce in South Africa has absorbed more women and the number of working couples is increasing (Schreuder & Theron 1997:110). According to a household survey in October 1999, South Africa has 13,5 million economically active people, of whom 44,6% are women. Of the 553 000 professional people active in the RSA, 45,7% are women (Central Bureau for Statistics).

The advantages of more role sharing and greater interdependency involve a balance of roles and demands, the juggling of responsibilities and tasks and the careful planning of career transitions and changes. This interdependent balance in the lives of dual career couples is compared in a fitting analogy drawn between this life-style and a hanging mobile: if one part of a mobile in space is removed, the other parts become unbalanced and tangled. Removing or adjusting one piece of the mobile requires that every other piece be adjusted accordingly, as is the case in a dual-career family. Consequently, this 'balancing track' life-style has been identified as a stressful one (Hazard & Koslow 1992:219 and Subotnik & Arnold 1996:272-273). McCracken and Weitzman (1997:149-159, original emphasis) refer to this life-style as multiple role realism, needing careful planning and consideration of the interface between work and family roles, as well as realism concerning attitudes in seeking help from family and friends.

### 2.9.2 Basic concepts

The term working couple needs to be clarified. The terms 'dual career couple' and 'dual-earner couple' have been used frequently in the literature, but not always explained. Dual career couple refers to the situation where husband and wife are career-orientated and committed to a career, while at the same time maintaining a family life as a unit. The dual-earner couple differs from the *dual-career couple* in the sense that both are involved in the paid labour force, where one may be pursuing a career, while the other views his/her occupational involvement as simply a job or where both spouses see themselves as holding a job. The *dual-earner couple* may be seen where both work outside the home, with no psychological attachment to their work or to upward mobility. This is fast becoming the most common pattern. Guterman (1991:169) prefers to refer to the working couple, which he defines as follows: "A working couple consists of any two people in an ongoing, committed relationship, where both partners work, where there may or may not be children, and where decisions (family and work) are influenced by the working situation of each partner". This definition makes provision for all the different types of working couples found in contemporary society.

The traditional South African household, where the husband was the sole earner and the wife took care of the children, is being replaced by working couple families. The dominant new worker of the future will be female, married and of child-bearing age. This presents many challenges to work

places and to society as a whole (Schreuder & Theron 1997:145-146). Gerdes (1998:5) regards the changes as especially challenging to South Africans. In many ways the present position is less comfortable than in the past, where conformity clearly spelt out standards and expectations, but it also presents more opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's development as a team.

### 2.9.3 Changing family patterns

Csikszentmihalyi (1990:178, emphasis added) states that until a few decades ago, families stayed together because they were forced to continue the relationship for extrinsic reasons, but that these reasons have gradually become eroded. Csikszentmihalyi continues by saying that if divorces were rare in the past, it wasn't because husbands and wives loved each other more in the old times, but because husband needed someone to cook and keep house, while wives needed someone to bring home the bacon and children needed both parents in order to eat, sleep and get a start in the world. Family values were a reflection of this simple necessity and became important through religious and moral considerations, helping keep families from disintegrating. Marriages may have remained intact physically, but were often riven with conflicts and hatred. **The current 'disintegration' of the family is the result of the slow disappearance of external reasons for staying married. The increasing divorce rate is probably more affected by changes in the labour market that have increased women's employment opportunities and by the diffusion of labour-saving home appliances, than by a lessening of love or of moral fibre.**

Gilbert (1994) identifies the following general marital patterns of dual-career families, where both spouses are committed to their careers, while attempting to maintain their family life:

- ◆ The *conventional* pattern means that both partners are career-orientated, but that the woman bears most of the responsibility for the children and the household.
- ◆ The *modern* pattern means that the parenting role is equally shared by the spouses, but that the woman takes responsibility for the household. In this case, the men value a close relationship with their children, but still regard housework as a woman's responsibility.

- ◆ The *role sharing* pattern, where one or both spouses are actively involved in the household, in their roles as parents and in their occupational pursuits (cf 2.9 and 5.5).

Gilbert (1994:102) tabulates the following factors influencing how partners combine occupational and family roles:

- ◆ Personal factors

Personality (the need to dominate, be emotionally close, be top of the field)

Attitudes and values (views on childbearing and successful women)

Interests and abilities (commitment to work and family, career plans)

Stages in careers (one partner peaking, the other phasing out)

- ◆ Relationship factors

Equity and power (fair decisions, household work, money, parenting)

Partner support (ability to rely on support in most areas)

Shared values and expectations (shared views about roles and goals)

- ◆ Environmental and societal factors

Work situation (flexible hours, gender bias and policies)

Employer's views (family policies, attitude to family involvement)

Availability and quality of child care (availability and criteria)

Support systems (nearby family and friends, community responsiveness).

#### 2.9.4 Types of work and family conflict

- ◆ Time-based conflict with roles competing for time and the concept of *role-overload*, with pressures in one role making it impossible to satisfy the expectations of the other role. This is a potentially hazardous area for families.

- ◆ Strain-based conflict may cause many symptoms, such as tension, fatigue and depression: looking after aged parents, role ambiguity or lack of encouragement at work. Important research reveals that husband support reduces work-family conflict; that husbands with housewives experience more job satisfaction, but also that these men are from the higher-earning groups; also that women with flexible work schedules report less strain than those with fixed work schedules.
- ◆ Behaviour-based conflict may be experienced by, for example, male managers expected to be self-reliant, emotionally stable, somewhat aggressive, but objective; however, the manager's family would want him to be warm, caring and emotionally supportive (cf Schreuder & Theron 1997:149-151).

Fisher and Adams (1994:351-353) state that difficulties encountered where individuals have not been able to accept each other's careers include jealousy of each other's progress and time constraints. Couples need to learn at an early stage in their relationship that one person cannot strengthen a relationship; it requires two people working together in concert.

## **2.9.5 Requirements for working couples to balance careers and family**

### **2.9.5.1 *Adjustments in the family***

According to Guterman (1991) family adjustments will need to include the following:

- ◆ more frequent open and honest discussions;
- ◆ setting priorities;
- ◆ examining and discussing the different roles;
- ◆ communicating values most important to each partner;
- ◆ managing daily life in such a way that different roles are redefined, enabling partners to do what needs to be done; and
- ◆ taking responsibility for managing one's own stress.

Harrington and Boardman (1997:210) state that one man of their control group of highly successful professionals sees house work as a catharsis, often doing more than his share. He finds cooking a relaxing and creative activity.

### 2.9.5.2 *Adjustments in gender roles*

Among the incisive changes in the post-modern era, the position of the family has been a mirror to what has been happening. With changing roles for men and women, the family is at the heart of personal experiences, often regarded as a 'black box' by economists (Wheelock 1990:14-15, emphasis added).

The roles of women in the second half of the 20th century indicated stages of difficult transitions: "Ambiguity and confusion are the hallmarks of the demands made on women" (Evans in Wheelock 1990:77). The 'superwoman phase' of the 1960s and 1970s was not a success. While women earnestly tried to 'do it all, being all things to all people all the time' to avoid criticism for giving less attention to their socialised roles, they experienced extreme difficulties. Few women aspire to this superwoman role today, because it is simply untenable, leading to physical and psychological exhaustion, an unbalanced life style and a possible retreat to the home front. The egalitarian dual-career marriage, with two heads of a household may not be a reality for the majority at present, but it seems to be on the horizon (Hazard & Koslow 1992:220). Much work will still have to be done to stabilise this new approach to sustain long-term, intimate relationships between partners that are equal and who have learnt problem solving techniques (Tessina & Smith 1993).

While this change in domestic patterns has been exceedingly difficult for women, it has been just as difficult for men, who have not accepted the changing status of women with ease or comfort. According to a sociological research programme in Britain, Wheelock (1990:151-152) found one of the results of economic restructuring has been a change in the balance of gender power and authority within the household, bringing about a shift in work strategies within households in a gender congruent direction. This has been experienced as especially painful in Wheelock's research field in the UK, where many men were laid off and women were the ones working full-time. Wives were deriving self-respect from participation in paid work, while men were able to

gain a lesser degree of self-respect from unpaid domestic work. As opportunities have altered, men have become economically less powerful and their wives more so, changing the balance of the domestic bargain in favour of women. An advantage Wheelock derives from this change is in many ways compatible with socialist viewpoints, but with the benefit that “material wealth becomes *real* wealth through the all-sided and full development of each individual. ... The full development of each individual is only possible when work no longer appears as work, but as the full development of human activity itself”, with household work strategies as survival mechanisms, simply divided as functions of labour demand. As economic units, families may make their decisions about work strategies on the basis of self-respect, not on traditional views (Wheelock 1990:153-154 and 161-163, original emphasis).

This paradigm shift in changing views concerning domestic duties is most obvious when considering a 1938 viewpoint on male retrenchment; domestic responsibilities were placed on the wife: “It is ... plain that the good housekeeper has an enormous advantage over the bad, and that the answer to whether a family actually lives in poverty or not depends largely on the competence of the housewife” (Pilgrim Trust 1938 in Wheelock 1990:166).

Wheelock (1990:104) states that, according to her research, there are three types of domestic labour, traditional rigid, traditional flexible and renegotiated. This renegotiation of home duties has made important differences in the areas they researched. For mundane household tasks her team’s research produced what they call the “quantitative benchmark” of household tasks — everyday tasks which make a difference in the quality of life for a family (Wheelock 1990:105-107).

Regular tasks are divided into skilled tasks, semi-skilled and unskilled tasks, major tasks and minor tasks, for example:

- ◆ Major tasks traditionally and predominantly done by women included cooking the main meal, washing and ironing, making lunches, dusting, polishing and sweeping, washing floors, mending clothes and window cleaning. Planning meals, shopping and, for some, handling money, were also seen as the women’s responsibility.

- ◆ Tasks which men were traditionally willing to help do were washing dishes and vacuum cleaning, as well as gardening, mowing, household repairs, paying accounts, taking out rubbish, cleaning and fixing cars and helping children with their homework.
- ◆ Shared and gender neutral tasks were making breakfast, preparing vegetables, making beds, tidying up and dealing with pets, as well as budgeting. Child care was a shared task (Wheelock 1990:107; Reis, Callahan & Goldsmith 1996:214).

Women were seen as doing more major tasks than men, with daughters usually expected to do more than sons. A disturbing observation was that there was little evidence of parents attempting to teach their children to do things around the house. Women were also more likely to perceive the household as the basic economic unit (Wheelock 1990:107-135). In research regarding career expectations of gifted girls and boys, similar career goals were generally chosen. However, there were enlightening differences of how boys and girls perceived future intersection of family life and work life: while girls clearly expected to combine work and family, boys expected women to give up working when they had children. All the boys in the research group expected to help with household tasks when they were married, with 75% saying that they expected to share this work equally. The researchers came to the conclusions that, unless attitudes are modified and more active roles in parenting and household responsibilities are taken by their male counterparts, the ambitions of many gifted females may still be thwarted (Reis, Callahan & Goldsmith 1996:214-223).

Highly positive outcomes of families where men were more successfully involved in housekeeping work, was the sharing of tasks, a strong feeling of teamwork and a more “caring and sharing” attitude. A number of men also appreciated how much their wives loved their jobs. The sharing household was experienced as “more loving”, with husband and wife expressing gratitude towards each other. Some couples expressed the view that their Christian beliefs in sharing were always put into practice in the household, with love for each other inspiring them to help each other, the sharing household often having an ideology of mutual support and company. The statement of one woman concerning her husband’s help was: “As far as I am concerned it made him more of a man. A man isn’t a macho man with a hairy chest and a gold medallion. It’s how he lives his life.” While

men were observed to develop a sense of pride for household tasks they had done well, although the potential for conflict was high (Wheelock 1990:93-148).

Average family routines were observed as follows: apart from work, people spend 45 hours a week sleeping, 31 hours on personal care and eating meals, with more or less 63 hours of "discretionary time" for household tasks and leisure (Rose in Wheelock 1990:132). Men staying at home, doing housework while their wives were working, found themselves surprised by often feeling lonely, bored and needing the company of friends at a club; a positive point was that they were also finding time for hobbies they were not able to practice before. This economic and social restructuring was also responsible for conflicting emotions, where traditional roles were shuffled (Wheelock 1990:134, 139 & 142).

The family is at the heart of personal experiences (Wheelock 1990:14). As these changing roles have the most direct impact on the quality of family life, changing roles for men and women are of the utmost importance if the traditional structure of the family is to survive. With the rising incidence of marriages falling apart under the pressures of present economic constraints, radical rethinking of hours of work and responsibilities are not only of economic importance, but are sociological necessities. If the average couple is to find refreshment/renewal in mid-life, the earlier division of roles between breadwinning husband and caregiving wife needs renegotiating. This is much easier said than done and depends on the life patterns, self perceptions and professional and life skills training they both have had (Sheehy 1976:365-412 and following; Wheelock 1990:127-155).

In South Africa it is estimated that almost half of marriages are dissolved. South African households have been fortunate in often having domestic help available, but this is set to change with new labour laws concerning remuneration for domestic help which few households will be able to afford.

For a more comprehensive discussion of family stages, case studies and issues of change for dual-career couples, the reader is referred to Hazard and Koslow (1992:221-232). For discussion and problem solving techniques see Tessina and Smith (1993), which will be referred to in chapter 3.

### **2.9.5.3      *Adjustments in the world of work***

Changing the place of employment to meet family requirements, as was easily done in the past, does not always benefit all parties concerned. Finding suitable employment is not easy and often much investment has been done in skills training for specific vocations. Various discrepancies between the salaries of working men and women with children and single persons need to be sorted out, if skilled ability is to be used to the best advantage. Peak (1994) states that this emphasises once more the need for organisations to provide more family-friendly benefits, such as the number of hours worked, decisions about overtime, inflexible work schedules, irregular starting time and psychologically demanding work. Referring to research guidelines set out by various teams, Schreuder and Theron (1997:152-153) direct the attention to organisational issues such as greater sensitivity to home life, including spouses and families in workshop-training, flexibility in the case of sick children and parents, better child-care facilities, flexibility to work-at-home programmes and part-time work. In addition, they point to the many benefits of developing female skills through training and lateral moves when upward mobility is not possible because of home commitments. As Fisher and Adams (1994:398) have predicted, according to USA census figures, by the year 2000, over 50% of the workforce will be composed of women (cf 2.9.1 for RSA percentages).

### **2.9.6      Advantages for the dual career couple**

Despite disadvantages and problems of adjustment, there are many advantages for dual-career families. Combining family and work roles can mean gains in the following areas:

- ◆ Both partners can use their talents and develop professionally, promoting self-esteem and higher general health.
- ◆ Both partners feel that they become better parents.
- ◆ Female partners feel a better sense of self, of being a person in their own right, economic independence, greater intellectual companionship and communication and commitment.

- ◆ Male partners feel an advantage of greater autonomy in not being solely responsible for supporting the family, giving him more freedom to take chances, such as an own business.
- ◆ The wife's income may serve as protection against stress concerning income.
- ◆ It presents the opportunity to develop beyond the confines of gender-role prescriptions.
- ◆ It gives both partners the opportunity to be part of the intimate relationship on an equal basis
- ◆ Children of such a dual-career relationship generally rate their families high in family strength, especially in the categories of concern and supportiveness, although time restraints are a problem.
- ◆ Among the outstanding benefits mentioned for children are having positive role models, financial security and the opportunity to develop independence (cf Schreuder & Theron 1997:154; Hazard & Koslow 1992:219).

According to Schreuder and Theron (1997:153, original and added emphasis) the bottom line of truth is that the world of work and family cannot be separated in the world of work, where there is a growing number of men and women simultaneously committed to their careers and to their families. Couples who have been able to communicate openly and who have worked through the sacrifices each would need to make for the other partner to succeed, have found this a profoundly rewarding experience. For women whose husbands have accommodating and appreciative attitudes towards their wives' careers, being willing to help with household and childbearing tasks, has enriched their relationships deeply and can be most positive (Subotnik & Arnold 1996:272-273).

## **2.10 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CAREER SUCCESS**

Professional career success relies on the successful combination of a number of factors. The following main factors have been seen in various studies as being at the heart of the careers investigated and have also had direction-giving influence in this research:

### **2.10.1 Background, resources, social support and natural ability**

Economically and demographically advantaged individuals normally have a wide range of persons and institutions providing the appropriate amount of encouragement and help if this does not come from parents: other kin, families of peers, teachers, employers or counselling services. These people are seen as providing psychological resources. Responding to emotional warmth, which was provided in abundance, rather than to material goods, which were scarce, one research subject's statement was seen to be illuminating: "I never knew we were poor until I grew up — then it didn't matter" (Harrington & Boardman 1997:173). Successful people not only surmounted their obstacles, but were able to increase their own personal resources, strategies and social choices. Among the successful black research subjects, Harrington and Boardman (1997:12-14, 123, 171-177) found a more closely knit, warmer family of origin as a form of social support that deserved to be highlighted: they had more extended family members in their homes, had more loving, less tense homes, often expressed more pleasure upon returning home, had a more religious upbringing and had a greater number of siblings. Having a series of mentors was seen as highly supportive. Parenting styles were found to lend good social support, included family warmth (leading to basic trust), combined with good supervision and balanced discipline (the presence of structure and rules). These factors could protect a child with a high-risk background, even preventing delinquency under conditions of chronic poverty, as close social ties have a protective, stress-buffering effect.

People who feel cared about are able to deal more effectively with crises and adaptation to change. In medical studies concerning stress, astronauts and top air force pilots showed that they had come from highly supportive environments (Sarason, Sarason & Johnson 1985:251). Covey (1992:315) emphasises the strength of the family as follows:

There is transcendent power in a strong intergenerational family. An effective interdependent family of children, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins can be a powerful force in helping people have a sense of who they are and where they came from and what they stand for.

Personality traits emerging from research into eminence included above-average ability, special aptitudes, determination, motivation, creativity, patience and the ability to take — and in some cases thrive on — risks. There are also a supportive array of nonintellective traits, a challenging and facilitative environment, and the smile of good fortune at critical periods of life. These factors meld into a belief in self and a desire to develop one's talent into a product, experience or pursuit of an arena deemed personally important (Reis 1996:155-165). Good fortune (or luck) is, according to Winfrey (television interview, 3 Apr 2000) "the meeting of preparation and opportunity".

### **2.10.2 Ethics and values**

Ethics can be defined broadly as that field of enquiry concerned with value judgements concerning the rightness or goodness of decisions (cf 5.4.1.2). According to Van Rensburg (1992:334) the root of the word ethic is love in temporal matters, while Strydom (1998:24) suggests the following more complete definition:

Ethics is a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students.

Since Aristotle, the challenge has been to delineate right and good actions from those that are not right and good, nowadays often called 'unethical' (Lowy & Doyle 1998:193). Covey (1992:24, original emphasis) sees values as part of a 'mental map', of which there are many kinds. These maps may be divided into two categories: maps of the way things are or realities and maps of the way things should be or values (cf 2.10.2 and 5.4.1.2).

Professional occupations are normally bound to commitments relating to matters concerned with ethical matters and with values. Certain rules of conduct govern what may be done and what may

not be done in professional relationships. In a doctor/patient or teacher/pupil professional relationship there is normally a special bond which links people in a specific relationship, with the professional person in a position to be governed by a desire to be of assistance, often called 'beneficence'. The core of this relationship should ideally be that of justice, honesty and integrity. However, where a doctor or a teacher is at times tactfully obliged to withhold the full truth if it would be in the patient or pupil's interest, the accountant, in contrast, would be professionally obliged to disclose the truth in the interests of integrity, as this would be the only way to help the client. This professional bond has the character of significant interventions in the lives of their patients, pupils or clients, whether the interventions are medical, educational or legal often taking the course of criticism or pointing out unpleasant truths. In this regard the social role of the professional persons is guided by a set of rights and duties analysed in terms of institutional concepts, which are, in fact, *authorised* by their professional associations as the correct professional course. This may be seen in the light of Adam Smith's 1776 statement that "man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren" (in Downie 1990:151, original emphasis). The judge or the medical professional furthermore has a moral obligation, obtained from his/her accredited expertise, to speak out at times in the interest of general justice or health, in the unique social function with which they are entrusted. In this regard professionals should ideally be independent of the influence of the state or of commerce (Downie 1990:147-159).

### **2.10.3 Schooling, education and the role of teachers**

The role of schooling and education for career success is crucial. In the literature studied, this was indicated as one of the most significant foundational matters determining what factors enabled most successful people to flourish. Hollingworth (in Silverman 1996:38, emphasis added) said in 1926 that what a person is capable of doing might depend on heredity, but what s/he actually does accomplish most likely depends on the environment. According to Spielhagen (1996:207) and Kastberg and Miller (1996:59) teachers were still cited as the most important influence in activating potential.

Harrington and Boardman (1997:10 -11, original emphasis; 71-82) stress the definition of education by Cremin (1970:xiii) where education is seen as "the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, or sensibilities",

which would include any learning that results from the effort directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. Harrington and Boardman state that it is important to know what skills people say were needed to build their careers, and how they feel they acquired them (emphasis added). In their research they carefully examined the role of education in the career achievement of their subjects, this concept being more inclusive than schooling. Included were family educational backgrounds, types and location of schools, relationships with teachers and peers and their attitudes towards school performance, including what encouragement was given, as well as the role of extra-curricular and social relationships. What is important for this study concerns the potential differences between what schools teach and what people need to know in the world of work. Also examined were informal opportunities for leadership, conflict management and significant figures other than teachers.

The data revealed in Harrington and Boardman's research (1997:71-82) concerning the functions of school and teachers is of special significance: for many of their disadvantaged achievers (cf Pathmakers 2.5.6), education seemed to be the first arena in which they had been able to beat the sociological odds. For learners with thinner resources teachers as role models and encouraging figures appear to be most important and influential positive influences, the majority of research subjects revealing spontaneously that certain teachers had been highly influential in their education and choice of careers. One subject stated that at school she was "getting the emotional satisfaction and feedback that made me feel like a capable human being, because I wasn't a capable human being at home" ; for her, school had become an alternative universe separate from the problems of home — success in school had become, for the majority in the research programme, a prime route to a successful career, possibly because it had facilitated bonding with teachers whose encouragement had become so pivotally important to them: "Teachers, like parents, can combine caring with a structured environment in which the work of learning can go forward" (Harrington & Boardman 1997:77-78 & 181, emphasis added).

In their research report, Harrington and Boardman (1997:149) cite a member of their control team from privileged homes, as saying that she attributes her success to "absolutely first-rate education all the way through", enabling her to make use of the women's movement in the USA to use "breaks in our careers that we would not have gotten in another generation". The deduction is that "... if teachers are not there, or do not make themselves available, or do not allow themselves

to become resources for the child, educational attainment becomes even more problematic for (disadvantaged) children". In USA and UK longitudinal studies regarding resilient high-risk children, it was found that resilient children had had at least one teacher who had been a source of support (in Harrington & Boardman 1997:175 and 184, emphasis added). Noble (1996:413) recalls the words of the nun who was the principal of the high school on her first day there: "All of you have the potential to make a significant contribution to the world, and we expect you to do just that". Spielhagen (1996:207) cites one research subject who stated: "I didn't believe I was smart until my fourth-grade teacher convinced me" (cf role models 5.4.1.1.b and education 5.4.1.3.b).

#### **2.10.4 Coping strategies**

Coping may be signified as having the skills necessary to manage situations as they arise (cf resilience 5.4.2.4). These may be due to people having been born to families where they were able to acquire and practise different interpersonal skills and opportunities. Personal resources that are relevant to people's ability to cope successfully with adverse life circumstances, are motivation and personal orientation and various strategies for coping with, and defending against stress and adversity. These are also often strategies with which to forge successful careers amid harsh competition, and may have profound consequences for learning, performance and long-term outcomes.

Those with an internal locus of control ought to be particularly resistant to the kinds of sociological expectations people from less privileged backgrounds have to confront in their quest for career success (cf motivation 2.10.5). These characteristics include being motivated to achieve success through striving for excellence (achievement motivation) and who also tend to be persistent in the face of difficulties they may encounter. This would also involve a strong sense of persistence and productivity (Harrington & Boardman 1997:15-20). According to these researchers the psychological literature is large and particularly diverse, with many coping styles and defence mechanisms being adopted to deal with outside pressures and obstacles. Having a good sense of humour is referred to in numerous sources consulted. (For further reading in this regard, the reader is referred to various studies of Vaillant and associates, for example, Vaillant 1993; Arnold, Noble & Subotnik 1996.)

According to Abrego & Brammer (in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:241-242, emphasis added) strategies for coping may be seen as developmental tasks for becoming more of a 'whole person'. These are facilitated by broad, flexible coping skills for managing life transitions and career transitions in particular. They compare coping strategies metaphorically with 'tools in a tool box' or 'arrows in a quiver' — fixing something or hitting a bull's eye will have more possibilities of success than with only one tool or arrow. Successful coping includes effective time management (cf 5.4.2.1.c). Productivity has become the rallying cry of the 1990s and learning strategies to deal with multiple tasks to be done has become a necessity for survival (Mayer 1990:11-16). One of the longitudinal research subjects in Reis (1996:164) used larger scale "wait time" while her children were growing up to observe what successful male politicians used as survival strategies before entering public office herself — she observed that the men who were the most successful in politics were not those who "know a lot about something. They are the guys who have kept track of the world around them and know what's happening and who's who and how it all fits".

An antidote to the excess of perfectionism is the conscientious and continuous reassessment of own values and the understanding of success, with respect for both the constancy of learning and the wisdom of failure, with appreciation for both the process and products of achievement (Noble 1996:413-419; cf perfectionism 2.10.4).

#### **2.10.4.1      *Coping strategies for men***

The 20th century, and especially so since the 1950s, has been a time of difficult adjustment for women, but perhaps more so for men, although this is a most complicated subject for men to discuss. The transitions in roles at home and in the career world where women have had to be accepted as peers and partners have been intensely trying for men who have not had role models for these re-orientations. Many cultures have not yet made changes in their views concerning the subjugated status of women and the only roles many men know are the roles of being autocratic, domineering and aggressive, both at home and in their careers. Seldom in history have people had to live through such dramatic change with so little appreciation of the stress which that change has put individuals through (Hage & Powers 1993:120). The research literature concerning these adjustments is expansive and the reader is referred to the bibliography in O'Neil and Fishman (1992) as an example.

People are searching for new ways of making sense of their circumstances and are willing to try even radical solutions in an effort to deal with newly emerging social problems (Hage & Powers 1993:41). O'Neil and Fishman (1992:161-187) state that these adjustments are difficult and that men need to recognise that their career transitions and gender role conflicts are not only personal matters, but are the result of biological, societal and socialisation influences. Men need to be exposed to more flexible ways of solving the problems of everyday living and to be socialised to be effectively human as well as appropriately masculine. Functional criteria transcending gender issues need to be evolved to validate humankind if men and women are to survive and negotiate gender and career transitions effectively.

#### **2.10.4.2      *Coping strategies for women***

The study of the vocational psychology of women, dating only from the mid-1960s, has, according to Fitzgerald and Weitzman (1992:124), become the fastest growing area of the discipline. The last few decades have produced a vast body of literature attempting to understand and explain it. The important interface between women's career development and the roles of wife and mother have been termed the 'multiple role conflict' and Fitzgerald and Weitzman in Lea and Leibowitz (1992:127-132, original emphasis) focus repeatedly on the critical need for structural change, as the *double track* career pattern is the norm rather than the exception. The so-called "Mommy Track" has become only a segment of the average woman's life-span pattern (cf Lemmer 1989). Learning to cope with multiple roles has become a most pressing concern. Fisher and Adams (1994:351-352) state that the pressures of society on dual career couples place additional strain on a marriage and may lead to relational breakdown due to complicated interactions of various factors. Understanding the various factors involved in contemporary dual career lives needs additional abilities to adapt and cope (cf Tessina & Smith 1993 and Norwood 1985).

#### **2.10.5 Locus of control and achievement motivation**

Locus of control is defined by Rotter (1966 in Schumacher & McMillan 1993:46-47) as a generalised expectancy of the extent to which a person perceives that events in one's life are consequences of one's behaviour. People, described as 'internal' believe that they exercise more

control over events and outcomes affecting them. In contrast, 'externals' tend to believe that they have little control over what happens to them. These expectancies are perceived to be the result of many past experiences. Research into this field has revealed that there is a significant relationship between academic achievement, with internals having higher achievement than externals, as well as significant differences between male and female locus of control. Gender studies in this regard seem to contradict each other, with inconclusive deductions being reached.

Harrington and Boardman (1997:145-146) saw the key psychological difference between their successful research and control groups involving locus of control, with the successful group from disadvantaged backgrounds demonstrating a predominantly internal locus of control. Having a strong internal locus of control played an important role in subsequent achievement of successful research subjects: a strong internal locus of control and achievement motivation are a formidable mix, producing standards of excellence and confidence that a person holds the power to achieve much through own effort and ability. Those with a firm belief in personal control, or a 'sense of coherence' met with events in life as experiences to be dealt with and challenges to be met through hard work. There were a number of subjects who credited their success to external factors and blessings, or 'being in the right place at the right time', but the majority with an internal motivation were found to be more resistant to outside influences or by other people, as well as having higher school achievement scores and being more resilient. 'Inner-directed' people may be presumed to be less encumbered by an orientation to pleasing others, but are lead by their own standards for what they do and what happens to them (Harrington & Boardman 1997:14-19; 147-148 & 172-173; Sarason, Sarason & Johnson 1985:250). For the purposes of this study locus of control will be seen as closely linked with motivation (cf 5.4.2).

#### **2.10.6 Mentors and role models**

Empirical research done over the last two to three decades has shown consistent advantages for persons who have had the benefit of mentors in the early years of their careers. The concept can be traced to ancient Greek mythology, with Mentor being a tutor to the son of the main character in Homer's *The Odyssey*. The concept was often referred to in Renaissance teaching records, with mentoring being the commonly accepted method of educating young people. Mentorship is defined as being an intense work relationship between senior (mentor) and junior (protégé) in an

organisational situation. The mentor, having more experience and power, advises, counsels and coaches the protégé, and promotes his/her career development by helping him/her to “learn the ropes faster and more effectively” (Scandura 1997:59). Harrington and Boardman (1997:111) define a mentor as being a non-kin adult influential to the subject’s career (both emphases added). This practice is also being implemented in high schools and colleges to aid learners and students in their academic progress (Chao 1997; Russell & Adams 1997). It must also be accepted that mentors do seek protégés who are extremely able (Subotnik & Arnold 1996:265).

According to Dreher and Dougherty (1997:111-113), mentorship may also be an instrument to overcome career barriers, although there is a risk (mostly unfounded rumours) of sexual involvement between cross-gender relationships. Bell and Chase (1996:120-124) state that many women have male mentors pushing them to pursue success and recognise that having the support of male colleagues and connections to powerful men is necessary to the development of their careers, men being the ones in the positions of influence. Recognition, especially in the scientific enterprise through a male mentor, is seen as the predictor that most strongly correlates with competing in the ‘fast lane’ (Subotnik & Arnold 1996:265). Erinosh (1997) is of the opinion that more women would venture into the scientific field if they had scientific female role models to encourage them.

The mentors and/or role models were often key figures in the development of talent, even when the role models themselves were unaware of their impact, such as the female executive who was unaware that a female delicatessen worker was intently watching her moves daily (Spielhagen 1996:207). There have been, however, too few women mentors, role models and female support groups, as women feel a need for a support system like men have with ‘old boys clubs’ — women interviewed expressed the need for moral support from their professional community through which to learn the necessary leadership and coping skills (Bell & Chase 1996:117-130). The insight older women achievers can contribute could be seen as providing the indispensable role models to enable younger women to realise their talent, work out relationships and have children. Reis (1996:166, emphasis added) urges younger women to realise that time is on their side, citing Schopenhauer: “The first forty years of life furnish the text, while the remaining thirty supply the commentary”. This commentary is seen as needed to understand the moral of the text and all the subtle applications it contains. Subotnik and Arnold (1996:165) and Reis, Callahan and Goldsmith

(1996:209) comment that available female role models are often in scarce supply or even absent, as there are few mentors with satisfying family lives and rewarding careers.

Mentors may also be referred to as “guardian angels” (Cox & Jennings 1995:5). There may be a perception of nonprotégés being excluded and not favoured. Protégés perceive higher levels of procedural justice and socio-psychological support and that mentors are also role models, which in turn is significantly related to job satisfaction, commitment and positive work attitudes (Scandura 1997:58-67). The focus is normally on developing skills that are relevant to the situation, with lateral or peer mentoring being another possibility in contemporary work environments or marketplaces, including making contacts within and outside the professional field (Eby 1997:127). In nominating his mentor for a prestigious award, a male student said of his mentor: “She is a wonderful mentor with a ‘bipolar quality’ — both demanding and nurturing” (Chung in Fouad 1997:97).

According to Wunsch (1993:349-360) mentoring programmes have the highest chance of acceptance and effectiveness when they are created in response to the needs of the participants. A comparative study regarding female academics, which was done by the Universities of Hawaii, Wisconsin and various universities in the UK, revealed that female academics (called mentees), assisted by mentors felt more confident in long-range career development strategies, as well as in survival needs in a particular institution, including the skills needed to cope with less than congenial relationships. Especially advantageous may be to be mentored in what is called *colleague pairing*, where women with similar backgrounds and family situations are matched. This would have the advantages of being advised concerning dual careers in a family or the care of children. Pairing outside the home department has been seen to provide a more neutral adviser, as far as gaining insight into the politics and practices of the department. The universities concerned even had *mentor and mentee training programmes* and a *mentoring agreement*. The weekly work log devised for a two year period included four areas of emphasis: conceptualising and developing an academic career, setting priorities and using time productively, developing and using colleague networks and interacting effectively with senior colleagues (Wunsch 1993:358-359). In addition, Russell and Adams (1997:6-7) found that help with career adjustments in the contemporary world of work benefits by the help of mentors (cf 5.4.1.1.b).

### **2.10.7 Aspects of the work ethic**

In a British study concerning the personal characteristics of highly successful business professionals, Cox and Jennings (1995:8) gathered that the people in the research group had much in common, including the fact that they all work very hard and for very long hours. They are intrinsically motivated by interest in, and enjoyment of their work and the sense of achievement it provides. Although many of them are very wealthy, they claim that money is not their main motivator. Scandura (1997:64-67) and Burke (1995:25-32) report that commitment to work and constructive work attitudes correlate positively with a feeling of being part of a team in the work place, with higher levels of morale being a result of being given adequate developmental opportunities

The research of Sulloway (1997:21-69) finds that birth order defines personal characteristics in many ways, finding *inter alia* that firstborns tend to be more responsible, ambitious, conscientious and achievement orientated than later-borns, often trying to be the 'responsible' child of the family, which all tend to be echoed in the tendency to work extremely hard. Harrington and Boardman (1997:116-117) found that a tolerance for hard work was important to a successful career, but that this is not always required to get ahead — there are people for whom a long day's work is the norm, but who set limits on their work time and are devoted to family, recreation and sport. These were more often those persons born to a middle class life style, being less driven to success and to upward social mobility.

According to Moses (1998:52) the present work ethic is more in line with being able to take the frenetic pace, being highly flexible and to handle the unrelenting changes imposed by new technologies, as well as being able to get rid of old expectations (cf 5.4.2.1.b).

### **2.10.9 Marriage partners**

The relationship between partners is often crucial in being able to have a sound base from which to build a career (cf 5.4.3.1). A kind and caring husband-wife relationship is an important moderator between experiencing stressful life-events and psychological well-being. A helping spouse seems to be particularly valuable in contributing to self-confidence and a sense of security

in dealing with the demands of daily living. Training in the social skills needed to build strong social bonds might prevent a significant number of people from experiencing personal difficulties (Sarason, Sarason & Johnson 1985:252-253).

Subotnik and Arnold (1996:276-278) found, in the group of female scientists they had studied, that these women were all seeking life satisfaction from relationships with partners and children, not being willing to sacrifice relationships in the name of intellectual engagement, professional recognition, or service to society. They were all convinced that scientific careers offer satisfaction derived from discovery, problem solving and improving the human condition. A career in science is, however, seen to require single-minded, full-time devotion over an adult lifetime, with dropping out for a few years being extremely risky due to rapid changes, with partners needed who were able to understand the devotion required.

Erinosho (1997:74-79) comments that the early support successful female scientists had from their parents, was later on complimented by their spouses, leading to the majority feeling highly satisfied with careers such as ophthalmology, engineering, mathematics and architecture. In the research of Westbrook and Nordholm (1983:117) it was found that the underutilisation of skills and role conflict were related to dissatisfaction with work, with the unfavourable attitude of a woman's husband identified as a strong contributor to the role conflict she was experiencing (cf dual career couples 2.9 and 5.5).

#### **2.10.9 Resilience and learning from pain**

Sulloway (1997:145) states that pain and suffering are two notable consequences of an imperfect world. Garmezy (in Harrington & Boardman 1997:14), states that

Life is not a matter of holding good cards, but of playing a poor hand well.

The term 'resilience' implies this ability to overcome negative circumstances. In the psychology literature it has taken on a general meaning of growing up 'competently' or 'coping effectively', despite risks for pathological outcomes. It is also associated with 'invulnerability'; however, it is more functional to see the term invulnerability as meaning the avoidance of dysfunction, while

'resilience' should rather be seen as the recovery from dysfunction and rising above disadvantage (Harrington & Boardman 1997:2-3, emphasis added; cf 5.4.2.4)

Successfully coping with extreme difficulties while very young seems to set a pattern of resilience and the ability not only to cope with, but to learn from adversity — it is this ability to learn from their experience which seems to be the key attribute of many highly successful individuals. How individuals respond to traumatic events in childhood may set up a pattern of coping successfully with adversity which continues throughout life: “wounding” may produce psychological scar tissue which is stronger than normal tissue to protect the psyche as defence mechanisms, recognised by researchers as strength through adversity and being able to bounce back from catastrophic situations, treating these events as learning experiences (Cox & Jennings 1995:4-9, original emphasis). Citing various research programmes, Harrington and Boardman (1997:172, emphasis added) point out that more resilient children showed a stronger capacity for comforting themselves during times of emotional stress rather than depending on others for solace.

The subject of resilience has been researched from various viewpoints, one being that of the troubled home. Goertzel and Goertzel (1965) reported that in a study of four hundred eminent people, many of whom have shaped history, most of these highly creative people claimed that their childhoods were not entirely happy (cf 2.5.3 & 4). This deprivation ranged from poverty, broken homes, death of parents and siblings, over possessiveness, dominating parents, physical and emotional abuse, physical handicaps, rejection by parents and playmates and parental dissatisfaction concerning their abilities. In fact, many of these eminent persons experienced trauma and conflicts of the kind commonly thought to predispose people to mental illness and delinquency. In many of these individuals, the need to compensate for handicaps was seen by them as a determining factor in their drive for achievement (Goertzel & Goertzel 1965:x-xii & 272-274).

According to Sulloway (1997), in a study concerning the lives of 6000 highly influential people over five centuries, most of the differences in personality, including the propensity to rebel, arise *within* the family. This was researched in a longitudinal study of the psychology of history, finding *inter alia* that any recurring cause of conflict tends to promote adaptations that increase the odds of coming out on top, in some case causing the development of a “revolutionary personality”

(Sulloway 1997:xiii-xiv, original emphasis). (For an in-depth discussion of the effects of the order of birth, the reader is referred to Sulloway 1997).

Harrington and Boardman (1997:174, emphasis added) found in a longitudinal study that resilient children and adolescents make considerable use of an extended network of support: teachers, ministers, peers, friends' parents, extended family members. They cite Rutter (1979) who found that when children had at least one warm, supportive relationship in their lives, the percentage showing conduct disorder dropped from 75% to 25%, in spite of extreme stress. It is stressed that resilient individuals were not solitary or isolated as children. Often the motivation for upward mobility is a desire to escape from early childhood deprivation, especially emotional deprivation (cf the role of teachers 5.4.1.1.b and 5.4.1.3.b).

The potential importance of religion to develop resilience is emphasised by many researchers (Harrington & Boardman 1997:7-9 & 56; also cf 2.10.2 & 5.4.1.2). In addition, Harrington and Boardman (1997:118) found their research group highly aware of the strengths they had gained from adversity and failure. They tended to make more positive outcomes than the control group. As adults they were better prepared for failure and could make something positive out of it. One member of the research group stated that she did not wish the traumas she had had on anyone, but that they had in fact made her much more sensitive to people, to the human dilemma and to people with trauma in their lives. Consensus was almost unanimous that the achiever who had never encountered early failure was to be pitied. Personal achievement may actually be enhanced by personal resilience, teaching people how to cope and to persist, preparing them for what they would face later in life (Lynch 1996:109-110).

Kobasa (1979 in Sarason et al,1985:253, original emphasis) uses the term *hardiness*, of which the defining properties are:

- ◆ a strong commitment to self;
- ◆ an attitude of vigorousness toward the environment;
- ◆ a sense of the meaningfulness of life; and
- ◆ an internal locus of control.

The same source cites Antonovsky's (1979) concept of *resistance resources*, according to which stress-resistant people manage their tensions well and have a feeling of social belongingness. According to Antonovsky, stress-resistant people have a *sense of coherence*, a general orientation that sees life as meaningful and manageable. The sources of this sense of coherence are to be found in people's upbringing, social relationships and cultural background. He believes people who have resistance resources are high in flexibility, which include the capacities to:

- ◆ tolerate differences in values and
- ◆ adapt quickly to misfortune (in Sarason et al. 1985:253, emphasis added).

Friedman (1996:359, emphasis added) reports that subjects in her research had suffered intense pain, but that the spiritual wisdom they had gained has given them insight into there being two options in how to deal with it: either it overwhelms and destroys, or it enlightens and strengthens. Those who confront, accept and learn from conflict, crisis and tragedy can become intellectually productive and fulfilled, embracing the pain and using it to change their lives. Friedman (1996:363, emphasis added) cites Maslow as being an important force in people changing their philosophies regarding pain:

Hardship and struggle can be understood as challenges to the soul to grow in a new way.

The findings of Frankl (1964:65) as a psychiatrist, after extreme trauma in concentration camps during the second World War, were of cardinal importance to a whole new 20th century approach in the field of psychology:

(T)he last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

(The reader is referred to Frankl 1964, Vaillant 1977 and Covey 1992 more in depth discussions regarding this concept).

Noble (1996:414) refers to Garmezy's research on resilient children: they had been found to have better communication skills, less impulsivity, more ability to reflect on their life experiences, and

a belief in their capacity to exercise a degree of control over their environments, thereby giving them a sense of personal power. Grové (1996:24) stresses the roles of music, physical activity and sport for the release of endorphins, which are nature's own anti-depressants.

Studies of South African black township youth growing up in the turbulent times after the 1970s showed remarkable ability for recuperation among many of the youths from unsettled and deprived homes. Many were able to use the care of grandmothers, older siblings and peers to recover and lead normal lives in adulthood. It is also noted that many people of exceptional ability and creative genius had traumatic times in their lives, like Mozart, Van Gogh and Einstein (Gerdes 1998:7; cf teachers and resilience 2.10.3 and 5.4.1.3.b).

#### **2.10.10 Flexibility, adaptability and transferable skills**

The literature regarding skills for survival has a recurring theme of flexibility. The characteristic of adaptability or malleability is seen as a primary quality protecting against childhood psychiatric disorder. This ability to adapt to change seemed to make change less of a threat. Most research subjects who had had to adapt to changing circumstances in childhood, such as the death of a parent, were later more able to overcome more obstacles at work, to make positive outcomes of failures and to have plans for new careers and further education (Harrington & Boardman 1997:177-178; cf expectations for future careers 2.13 and life skills 5.6).

#### **2.10.11 Healthy life styles**

Healthy physical and psychological life styles are of the utmost importance when considering whether people have attained success in their professional and personal lives. Harrington and Boardman (1997:137-141) report that their research group indicated more awareness of healthy life styles than the control group. This included effective coping skills concerning the control of anger by regular exercise and confiding in good friends, taking advantage of available therapy, being more aware of healthy diets, as well as being able to give up or avoid smoking and excessive drinking. Males were more likely to have stable marriages and to have more children than the women in the group, as well as exercising more regularly. The research group, who had made immense strides in upward social mobility, experienced intensely depressing feelings about

comparing the health of the people they had “left behind who had not taken care of themselves health-wise” (Harrington & Boardman 1997:62).

After a longitudinal study of gifted women, Hollingworth and Fleming (in Silverman 1996:43-44) found that women speak of the psychologically healthy feelings of achievement regarding their children, as well as of experiencing peace, happiness and creativity with relation to both the arts and to family life. Lynch (1996:102) describes one of her research subjects as stating that her Christian outlook has helped her in having healthy relationships. Various sources accentuate the importance of having a sense of humour and of being able to devote time to recreation and leisure. The accent here is on re-creation through time for relaxation (cf 2.10.3 and 5.4.1.2.b).

#### **2.10.12 Long term planning: career management, future vision and life-long learning**

Simply maintaining a career is not sufficient under present day circumstances or for positive future expectations. The concepts of ‘innovative maintenance’ and realignment of careers have become the operative terms in the field of career development strategies, especially with the present increase in life expectancy. Careers may be planned well in advance, but with changes in technology and management styles, careers now often changing in lateral directions. With these developments in mind, various career outlets and alternatives should be considered, cultivated and utilised, for which there are a wide variety of career development strategies such as planning for other possibilities concerning career change and lateral movement (cf Super 1992 and Brown, Bhaerman & Campbell 1992). Moses (1998:11) speaks of ‘re-engineering’ one’s skills, abilities and life chances.

Because of many factors, including an ageing population, the work force in the present era needs to be continuously retrained to keep in touch with technological innovation. Many countries are at present striving towards the establishment of lifelong education. The aim is the creation of a community in which anyone can choose to take part in study opportunities at any stage of life. Structures and mechanisms are being created to make continuous learning accessible to everyone in a community. This implies that educators should be at the forefront of keeping up to date with current developments in their own fields of expertise (Pretorius 1998:496-504). Changing forms of employment and of careers and professions, as well as the problems of managing a vocational

career within an overall life career, present both opportunities and challenges. The increased recognition for, and reality of, lifelong learning at individual and organisational level suggests powerfully that the time is right for being more aware of learning as a lifelong compulsory enterprise (Tight 1997:24; cf 2.13 & 5.4.4).

### **2.10.13 Knowledge of key skills**

In the past, the basic abilities of practising a profession were the knowledge needed to survive and thrive. Contemporary needs are far more encompassing. Besides increased proficiency in the essentials of the domain of choice, increased outcomes such as adaptability, creativity, the ability to solve problems, interpersonal and communication skills, competence in teamwork, the ability to function independently and having a healthy work ethic have become imperative (Pretorius 1998:495). At present it is an advantage to be acquainted with other languages than the mother tongue only. Having the skills of managing a private practice as a business and being able to access the most up-to-date knowledge are among the skills needed to survive in the competitive world of work. Even knowing how to dress and behave correctly socially is part of what is required for entry into the field of professional success (Kastberg & Miller 1996).

## **2.11 FACTORS DETRIMENTAL TO SUCCESS**

### **2.11.1 Adverse circumstances, lack of resources and support and obstacles**

Stress in reaction to life-events is a part of life. Whether a person has an ability to handle negative circumstances may depend on various factors, such as personality, experience and social support. Potential stressors for adults are getting divorced, losing jobs, financial hardships, death and illness in the family. Experiencing stress in the world of work is inevitable, but it is believed that persons with a lack of social and community ties are especially vulnerable. These persons normally lacked intimacy, social integration through shared concerns, reassurance of personal worth, the opportunity to be nurtured by others, a sense of reliable alliance and guidance. These factors were often the result of not having learnt the necessary social skills needed to sustain healthy relations with family and friends (Sarason et al.1985:251-253). The question of discrimination against different groups, notably women and ethnic groups, is a recurring theme in the literature.

Parents can at times create the opposite of a success-scenario for their own children by 'micro-managing' their educational curriculum and expecting star-status from them at all times. This leaves them "*overprogrammed and exhausted, pessimistic and chronically anxious about the future*", *even apathetic*. Parents are often caught in a constant struggle for balance, with wise parents aware of "not stealing their childhood". **The struggle is between being underequipped and being deprived of what it means to be a child** (Moses 1998:238-241 emphasis added).

### **2.11.2 Lack of key skills**

Counterproductive education, with a confined knowledge base and lack of essential skills, including those of managing healthy relationships and interpersonal skills, is seen as severely inhibiting for all levels of career development. The career path will need the response of every person as an active participant in determining the quality of vocational fulfilment. Unwillingness to learn new means of doing well-worn practices and techniques inevitably spell exclusion from those included in the people in demand.

As important as work skills, is the ability to have good relationships with family and colleagues, to be able to communicate well, to have empathy and to be able to understand the point of view of other people (Goleman 1995:286). A lack of social skills and inability to act correctly in certain social settings may be a major factor in a person's incapability in dealing with career-related situations and with cultural differences. These may be obstacles preventing a person's chances of being appointed and promoted, in short, being "upwardly mobile". In extreme situations, lacking the required social skills and attributes may actually cause a person to be demoted because of incorrect and tactless ways of dealing with clients or colleagues (Van Huyssteen 1998, personal interview; cf 5.4.2.1.d and 5.4.2.3.c).

### **2.11.3 Unhealthy life styles, substance abuse and poor coping skills**

Downward mobility is known to be less healthy and stable than upwardly mobile situations, being associated with a higher incidence of neurotic disorders, schizophrenia and suicide (Harrington & Boardman 1997:23). While it is widely accepted that everyone has a breaking point, it is not immediately obvious how various people reach this point. Quantitative research on stress and its

sequelae has burgeoned in recent years, being mainly concerned with 'stressful life events' or 'life stress'. Personal losses such as the loss of a loved one or a job often precede illness and psychological maladjustment, as do sudden environmental changes and natural catastrophes, war, threats to and loss of control over one's life, being burglarised, personal failures and even personal successes. Research shows that people are more adversely affected by life stress if they perceive themselves as having little control over their environment (Sarason, Sarason & Johnson 1985:241-250).

#### **2.11.4 Perfectionism**

Perfectionism is a characteristic that plagues many gifted people and prevents them from realising their intellect and creativity. Everyone needs high standards in order to accomplish goals and rigorous standards require energy, optimism and high self-esteem, leading to achievement and efficacy. However, perfectionism reflects unrealistic expectations that one should never fail or make mistakes— that anything falling short of that ideal is unacceptable, taking an immense toll on peoples' lives. It saps the strength of many gifted individuals by making them reluctant to take risks or put themselves in situations that call on abilities not yet fully honed (Noble 1996:413-419). Sulloway (1997:143) cites the reverse side of the coin, that of 'workaholism' as an obsession exacting continuous emotional cost. An antidote to the excess of perfectionism is the conscientious and continuous reassessment of own values and understanding of success, with respect for both the constancy of learning and the wisdom of failure, with appreciation for both the process and products of achievement (Noble 1996:413-419).

#### **2.11.5 Inability to rise above certain socio economic strata**

A number of successful people have found it extremely difficult to climb from the levels of the so-called 'working class' to that of the middle-class identity of their new professional lives, never imagining how deep the scars would run of being caught between two classes. Kastberg and Miller (1996:50-51) found that being working class "is a way of life with distinct values and mores", with upward mobility taking the toll of not feeling that they were able to make the transitions or to fit in. They were consistently unable to attain the feeling of being comfortable in the social environments they had reached through successful careers. People low in socio-

economic status (SES) may be more likely to experience negative life changes and also to be more prone to develop health-related and adjustment problems (Sarason et al. 1985:248). Harrington and Boardman (1997:121) state that it was observed in their study that disadvantaged parents were often inadvertently obstacles to their children's success, most probably out of fear of losing their children (cf 2.5.6 & 7).

#### **2.11.6 Inability/unwillingness to learn new skills and adapt to change**

According to Smith (personal communication 1999), a reluctance to learn new skills and techniques has hampered the progress of many otherwise promising career professionals. These persons claim that they are unable to learn, as they had not had the opportunities given to others, or that they did not have the energy, courage or money to learn computer techniques or to further their studies in their fields of expertise, or that family commitments prevented them from doing so. Smith states that the problem with these persons is often that they are afraid of not 'making the grade', which would result in their losing even the confidence that they have at present.

Garavan and Coolahan (1996:34) believe that barriers to career mobility of many people lie within the following issues: social class determinants, incongruent career choice, which does not correspond to their career anchors/self-concepts, lack of education, the existence of job ladders not within their reach, family commitments, life style considerations and dual career families (cf 2.9 and 5.5). Many people do not see themselves as able to be successful in their vocations and see themselves as failures in relations to their 'internal perspectives' if they do not experience objective or hierarchical success.

### **2.12 CRITIQUE OF EXISTING THEORIES**

The findings of influential researchers reflected and considered in this chapter have, of necessity, influenced contemporary personal career assessments and will have to be considered in school and adult education, human resources development, career development programmes and career counselling (cf Super 1992:416-424). If human resources are not to stagnate, if people are to attain life goals and feel self-fulfilled, all types of career outlets must be considered, cultivated and utilised. The truly professional careerist works not only in a vocation, but also at home, in the

community and in a variety of 'non-work' places in which the expenditure of effort is intellectually, emotionally, socially or physically rewarding and in which these non-monetary rewards are sufficient.

### 2.13 EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The pace and quality of external change experienced during the past few decades is expected to continue. More healthful living and medical advances have increased the life span and thereby raised new questions for many about the meaning of work, not only in early adulthood, but also in the middle years and later. Career development professionals can not predict how these changes in the world of work will affect each person's life career, but do believe that a wide knowledge base will be helpful to all who are involved in the world of work (Block, preface in Lea & Leibowitz 1992:iii). It is evident that persons hoping to build career paths will need to learn how to teach themselves, not only teamwork and new skills, but how to be the manager of a palette of skills that each has learnt to adjust to a wide variety of possibilities (Rumney 1989:1-14, emphasis added). The pressures to study and to retrain are only likely to increase — having a well-filled portfolio or repertoire of skills, knowledge and experience are seen as empowerment towards gaining more personal control, taking ownership over the direction of a career. Additionally, increased support for mothers with children is mandatory if equal opportunities are to become realities (Blaxter 1997:14-16, emphasis added). The market place is still predominantly male dominated at present, with 'old boy networks' yielding reluctantly to 'new girl networks', but it is hoped that these will eventually become competency-based networks (Dopp & Sloan 1986:122).

Changes in the 'natural' career progression expected in the near future are due to a few distinctive developments:

- ◆ rising levels of education, with more highly educated staff being recruited to work within lower levels, but with more powers and responsibilities, (as in the quality circles of Japan);
- ◆ market forces influencing the work surroundings (e.g. financial and consumer markets) requiring a leaner, more knowledge-driven work force with shared power;

- ◆ technological needs (e.g. in the fields of pharmaceuticals, aerospace and telecommunication) “competing for competences” (cf 3.4 for ‘supra-competences’); and
- ◆ individual internal careers/career anchors (individual perceptions of working life) being continually modified, with fewer top positions and more professionals seeking to build career opportunities with challenging aspects, while enhancing their own reputations (Van Wees & Jansen 1994:11-19).

In addition, according to Garavan and Coolahan (1996:34-38), the present ‘pyramid squeeze’ in large organisations, limiting career opportunity for all employees, including professionals, is expected to increase in ‘flatter’ organisations. There is a bottleneck at ages 35-44 regarding advancement. Critical issues in career mobility and the removal of barriers are the functions of human resource development centres with large organisations, with a view to the alignment of abilities, ambitions and motivations of employees and the requirements of organisations. These matters are all directed by the prevailing market forces. With the nature of work changing, employees are expected to be more flexible and adaptable, which entails acquiring different skills from what has been required in the past. This would also enable employees to grow in expertise, receiving greater challenges and responsibilities.

The reverse side of the coin is that employers need to be aware of the knowledge, skills and strengths of their employees. In doing so the ‘dead ending’ or plateauing of careers may be alleviated, as the fact that, no matter how hard people work, their promotional probability is finite, leading to immense frustration. This, according to Moses (1998:202-213, original emphasis), needs to be remedied by more *life-friendly* and *family-friendly organisations* than what are seen at present: where anxiety is not the norm, where people have time to reflect on the quality of their work, where ‘busyness’ and fatigue no longer rule the day, as well as a place where one would be happy to see one’s own child working.

As social and economic transitions are expected to increase in the 21st century, it would be a wise intervention to help young people to develop a sound foundation of basic skills towards meeting the challenges lying ahead for them (Blustein 1997:386-387). It is, in fact, becoming more common for people to think in terms of career portfolios as interrelated sets of work experiences

that may be combined to provide career evidence for a range of occupations spanning the course of a person's life. There will be an increasing responsibility placed upon the individual for maintaining and developing skills for employability in a trajectory seen against a broader canvas of life as a whole (Tight 1997:22, original emphasis):

Organisations are no longer pyramids, they are scattered encampments on a wide terrain of hills and valleys, and careers are not ladders, but stories about journeys and routes through and between these encampments ... Careers, as stories of these journeys, often get better with the telling ... They provide cognitive structures on to which our social identities can be anchored.

Nicholson and West (in Tight 1997:23)

Individuals need to give up the myth that the sign of success is to move up the ladder but rather, to keep in mind a network or trellis of personal successes by diversifying, broadening their range of skills and being prepared to zig-zag laterally (Appelbaum & Santiago 1997:13). Moses (1998:193, original emphasis) states that a present day career is more like a lattice — one should “think lattice, not ladders”: one may have to move *sideways* before one can move up. In a lattice *everything is connected* and every step will lead somewhere, sometimes in unpredictable directions. Job satisfaction can be redefined as *job enrichment and career progress may be by the rewards of the work and not the level*.

The position is succinctly summarised by Findlay (1999:radio interview), who states that, in order to survive and thrive, individuals and organisations will continually need to ‘re-invent themselves’. This would include the ability to freelance and work from home in their own business.

## 2.14 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In a ‘rear-mirror’ view of career development over the last few thousand years, humankind has come a long way. The most incisive changes observed in the literature include the following modifications:

- ◆ in what constitutes ‘work’ and why it is important to the quality of life;

- ◆ how the gender roles have started to adjust to contemporary social circumstances in more developed countries;
- ◆ how technological and scientific progress has affected the world of work; and
- ◆ what the needs are regarding the skills needed to work effectively, both for a living and to enhance the individual's quality of life, as well as for fulfilling the requirements of the family of humankind.

Incisive impacts of changing global economic conditions have indicated radical rethinking of contemporary personal and social roles with which to bring individual morality and market forces into line with each other. Human requirements need to be taken into account which are often overlooked by material theories and economic strategies. What is required is a far more realistic awareness of the social needs of human beings to work and to make economic contributions, not only as individuals, but as members of a family. Not only are these skills required to be employable and changing, but skills need to be fine-tuned to live in a family in harmonious co-existence. This does not only include the immediate or extended family, but also the family of humankind with organisations that use a **life-friendly approach**.

Future preparedness for careers may be compared to the moves made by the powerful pieces in the game of Chess — they are able to move more freely than the pawns, whose power is limited. The analogy may be a guide for developing career skills to have the latitude and personal power to move in less restricted ways than has been customary in the past.

The ensuing chapter will examine various avenues possible in approaching the expansive range of possibilities in the field of life skills education.

## CHAPTER 3

### SUCCESS AND LIFE SKILLS

*In all things success depends on previous preparation, and without such preparation there is sure to be failure.*

Confucius

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

An extensive literature study has been carried out and a representative background built up regarding the most fundamental aspects indicated in the title of this thesis as seen in chapters 1 and 2. This chapter discusses the concepts of success and of life skills, as well as reviewing the place of life skills in the curriculum. Schumacher and McMillan (1993:142, original emphasis) state that in qualitative research the researcher is required to read broadly in the literature while collecting data. This literature study does not provide the researcher with preconceived ideas, but it is an enabling activity for understanding the context of the site and of social scenes observed.

It may be seen as given that people live in a “world that is complex, multifaceted, and messy” (Anderson 1995 in Pushkar & Stack 1998:1, emphasis added). Attaining life skills is part of the process of becoming competent and/or successful, with the concept of competence emphasising the adaptive functioning of the individual in adjusting to the environment and coping with life tasks effectively, without unnecessary psychological costs (Pushkar & Stack 1998:1)

Improving competence across the lifespan has been an objective of humankind since the beginnings of recorded history. It could be said that the entire process of creating civilisations is the product of humanity’s collective success in improving competence (Lowy & Doyle 1998:193-194, emphasis added). Those who assist others in improving their competence and **life chances** are also rewarded, including those who provide professional services, those who teach and those who create knowledge that will lead to greater human competence. Lowy and Doyle (1998:193) find it significant that more progress has occurred in the past half century than in all the eons of sentient human existence. In short, humankind has, at present, unprecedented capacity to alter

bio-psycho-social competence for the betterment of the human condition. If having certain rights, such as expecting a safe physical environment, are the norm at present, then the psycho-social-educational milieu that favours optimal human intellectual and affective development are also to be seen as rights. Implicit then are the assumptions that knowledge becoming available regarding the determinants of human potential should, ideally, be made available to applied programmes to enhance competence for as many people as possible. This may be seen as an expansion of the late 18th century notion of collective entitlement as seen in the French and American revolutions (Lowy & Doyle 1998:193-194, emphasis added). Stated simply, children and adults have the right to lifelong education towards being the best they could possibly be.

While parents are feeling increasingly at a loss to help their children prepare for an uncertain work world, it is also realised that **never before has it been more crucial to provide such guidance.**

(Moses 1998:235, emphasis added)

### 3.2 THE CONCEPT OF SUCCESS

The literature dealing with success in life is vast. The skills which are seen to be needed to enable people to experience success in the many possible fields is most expansive, with success being seen from many different angles and viewpoints. Covey (1992, preface) used a review of the previous 200 years of success literature as part of a doctoral programme during the late 1960s. Having since worked with promoting success in the community and especially in the world of big business in the USA, he postulates that the concept of success signifies private and public victory (cf 3.4.2.2).

For the purposes of this study the concept of success has been dealt with as including the domains of private and public life. According to Darvas (1967:26) personal success may be defined as follows:

The achievement of inner satisfaction in one's life not dependent upon recognition by society.

Darvas (1967:26) views public success as follows:

The attainment of wealth, favour, or eminence as generally recognized by society.

This study takes as a point of departure that **a possible ideal would be the balancing of personal and public success**, which is seen by Darvas (1967:26-27) as follows:

The achievement of an inner contentment coupled with recognition by society.

Darvas (1993:26) does mention having observed that only a small percentage of people ever attain this highest degree of fulfilment. Ultimately, according to Petrick (1996:7), success is a personal matter — what is seen by one person as success, is not necessarily the conviction of someone else. However, authors do share a central thought, which is concerned with **balance** between the various areas with which human endeavours are concerned: success in the world of work alone can not be seen as having a balanced and /or successful personal and family life. The premise of this thesis is that the concept of balance between personal and public success is the ideal to be sought after.

Petrick (1996:6-7) compresses the skills needed for success in both personal and public fields into the following formula:

$$[(EA + TA + SO) \times GS] L$$

Before discussing the meaning of this concise approach to success in life, Petrick considers what the meaning of the concept of winning success is: *win*, according to *Webster's Dictionary*, means “to get possessions of, especially by effort”. Using the same source, Petrick found the meaning of *success* to be the attainment of wealth, favour, or eminence (eminence being high rank, prominence, or superiority). The conclusion, according to Petrick, is that wealth, favour, high rank, prominence and superiority may be attained by using effort in the correct way, which implies the skilful use of the following factors, which are abbreviated in the formula mentioned:

**EA:** EDUCATION AND ATTITUDE, with education being formal and informal education fused with lifelong self-improvement efforts, and attitude meaning the willpower and determination needed to make the most of opportunities experienced.

- TA: THINKING ABILITY includes decisions about what one's aims are, as well as being in a position to meet the right people and have the right opportunities for advancement.
- SO: SERVING OTHERS implies not being self-centred in one's approach to success, but being willing to help others grow.
- GS: GOAL SETTING means working towards specific goals needed for arriving at predetermined points on the road to success.
- L: LUCK may be seen as an *exponential multiplier* of everything that has gone before. Petrick (1996:6, following emphasis added) defines luck as the intersection of two roads, the road of preparation and the road of opportunity, with the possibilities of opportunity increasing in relation to the quantity and volume of preparations made (cf 3.4.1). Luck may also be seen as a question of social opportunity.

A useful definition of success, especially in relation to life skills, appears to be that of Dolores Pushkar at a 1996 USA Conference on Competence Through the Lifespan (in Baumeister et al. 1998:117-118):

Success in life (may be seen) as a matter of being able to live with oneself and to live with others. If self-regulation is indeed a key to success in life, then it should improve people's ability to live with themselves and with others.

(Cf self-regulation 3.4.3.4).

### **3.3 THE CONCEPT OF LIFE SKILLS**

#### **3.3.1 What are skills?**

The meanings of the word *skill* include proficiency, competence and expertise in some activity (Nelson-Jones 1991:11). According to Odhams (ny:977) familiar knowledge of any art, united

with dexterity in the proficiency thereof, expertness of execution, proficiency; the word is of Old Icelandic origin, with *skil* meaning 'reason'.

The essential element of any skill is the ability to make and implement a sequence of choices to achieve a desired objective. This concept is best viewed not as either possessing or not possessing a skill, but rather as possessing *skills strengths* or *skills weaknesses* or a mixture of the two. Good choices in an area are regarded as skills strengths and poor choices as skills weaknesses, with most people possessing both in varying degrees. The object of life skills training is to help learners of all ages to shift the balance of their strengths and weaknesses more in the direction of strengths (Nelson-Jones 1991:11-12 emphasis added).

### 3.3.2 Defining life skills

A constructive definition of life skills may be approached from the following viewpoints (Nelson-Jones 1991:12-13):

- \* Personally responsible choices
- \* Self-help skills
- \* Mental wellness
- \* Psychological components
- \* Processes as a sequence of choices
- \* A repertoire of life skills

Some of the essential meanings of these viewpoints are drawn together in the following functional definition (Nelson-Jones 1991:12-13):

Life skills are personally responsible sequences of choices in specific psychological skills areas conducive to mental wellness. People require a repertoire of life skills according to their developmental tasks and specific problems of living.

Nelson-Jones (1991:13) sees it as helpful to view specific life skills as comprising the following three dimensions:

- ◆ **Attitude** entails assuming personal responsibility for acquiring and maintaining any life skill.
- ◆ **Knowledge** is concerned with making informed choices, such as those of people who have been exposed to correct examples, for instance by their parents' behaviour, thus having the required knowledge implicitly rather than explicitly.
- ◆ **Skill** involves acquiring competence, either by the 'inner game' of focusing on feeling and thinking, or by the 'outer game' of focusing on observable actions.

Wellington (1987:26, original emphasis) cites Perry and Barnett as viewing skills being separated into the same three points as facets of all human activity: "... *knowledge* to understand the context of the activity and predict outcomes; *skills* with which to act; and the *attitude* or motivation to act".

### 3.4 DIMENSIONS OF LIFE SKILLS

This study examines the concept of life skills from the point of view that these various skills are empowering and extend the abilities of people towards greater chances for success in the various endeavours of their lives.

#### 3.4.1 Life skills education as preparation for life

Since the inception of organised education, the objective has been that balanced education should prepare people for having a rewarding vocation and a life of quality (Van Rensburg 1992:329, emphasis added). A generally wide education aims at raising the tone of society and for a person to fill an occupation with credit. This was the opinion of Newman (a British Christian philosopher) in 1852 and has not changed in essence (Chickering 1986:154-177). Thus preparation for life would include skills in communication and computation, critical thinking, preparation for work, learning how to learn, cultural sophistication and cross cultural understanding, empathy, understanding and respect for others, loyalty, intimacy, enjoyment of leisure and a sense of social-historical content. These proficiencies are still the roots of education,

aiming at delivering people who are informed, thinking and sensitive human beings (Burstyn 1986:178-195). Work has come to be seen, not as a curse, but as a blessing, with useful occupations being seen as an antidote to stagnation. In a post-industrial society, achievement, contribution and productivity are still the cornerstones of self-respect. The centre of the work force is the group of people delivering services and providing knowledge. This has led to a greater demand for professionals at all levels, in all fields, with an advanced economy depending on quality as the key to effective service. Therefore, when discussing the goals of effective education, “we are tackling the bedrock task of human development” (Chickering 1986:167, emphasis added).

In addition to the aims of general, liberal education in the past, where learners were in effect taught about the reasons for and the results of action, contemporary education would rather aim at knowing about how to act (Burstyn 1986:182). Hamilton (in Van Rensburg 1992:4) believes that “Educational efficiency could be increased through a detailed analysis of the skills a child must acquire to become a socially mature adult”.

The contemporary problem is that the pace of technical change is so fast, that people must be prepared to change not only their jobs, but their entire skills three or four times in a lifetime (Bagrit in Moses 1998:120). One should not only prepare for one career: **“Don’t prepare for jobs, prepare for areas of competence”** (Moses 1998:183, emphasis added).

### 3.4.2 An analysis of life skills

#### 3.4.2.1 *The perspectives of Nelson-Jones*

Among the many different life skills identified, Nelson-Jones (1991:13-14) observed that it is not possible to provide a comprehensive list of life skills for all settings and stages of the human lifespan; rather, a list of some central life skills for most people is given as a concise summary of the most influential research in the field, including the following categories:

- ◆ physical and intellectual development, self-management, value-clarification and interpersonal involvement;

- ◆ education, work, home, leisure and the community and
- ◆ feeling, thinking and relationships, study, work, leisure and health.

Nelson-Jones (1991:13-16, emphasis added) views the feeling and thinking categories as containing the fundamental psychological skills, as they are highly relevant to the other categories, which represent areas of human functioning. In an exercise for assessing life skills, Nelson-Jones' categories include:

- ◆ acknowledgement and awareness of feeling mental and physical sensations, as well as of the parameters of existence, such as death, suffering and providence;
- ◆ thinking about and possessing a realistic conceptual framework, assuming personal responsibility for choices made, coping, setting personal goals and problem-management skills; and
- ◆ having and managing personal relationship-skills, as well as being able to work and enjoy leisure time (cf 3.4.4).

#### 3.4.2.2 *The perspectives of Covey*

Studying the success literature of more than 200 years, combined with many years of practical experience in teaching competence was the background to the approach of Covey (1992); this concerns making a paradigm shift — the management of oneself is no longer a mystery, but a method or approach which can be learnt. Set out as a set of seven groups of skills (or habits) for managing one's own self-improvement, this set of principles is seen as a long-term route of access to highly effective relationships and behaviour: Covey (1992:47) describes a 'habit' for being effective as the intersection of knowledge (the *what to do and the why*), skill (the *how to do*) and desire or motivation (the *want to do*). A habit leading to success would have to be all three of these aspects and they are categorised as follows:

◆ Private victory (principles of personal vision)

Habit 1: Being proactive

This means that human beings are responsible for their own lives — behaviour is a function of decisions, not conditions. 'Response-ability' is the ability to choose a response which does not blame circumstances, conditions or conditioning for behaviour. Career success and ending up with good positions is often a question of people being proactively involved in being part of the solutions, not problems themselves — looking at alternative approaches, choosing effective and appropriate alternatives, working on things one can do something about, having self-control (Covey 1992:63-94).

Habit 2: Beginning with the end in mind (principles of personal leadership)

The essence of this is to start with a clear understanding of one's destination, to set distinct goals, to think things through and set out a distinct personal mission and creed; to analyse one's core values and sense of importance, also what one would like to be said at one's own funeral, as well as sincere commitment (Covey 1992:95-144).

Habit 3: Putting first things first (principles of personal management)

This may be seen as the common denominator of success: organising and executing around priorities, setting a time management matrix with activities such as prevention, creative activities, relationship building, seeing new opportunities, planning, recreation. These activities may be seen as the heart of effective personal management, also realising that people are more important than things, as well as motivating people (Covey 1992:146-182).

◆ Public victory (paradigms of interdependence)

Habit 4 : Think win/win (principles of interpersonal leadership)

The emotional bank account requires constant deposits for constant relationships, such as understanding others, attending to little things, keeping commitments, clarifying expectations, showing personal integrity, apologising for being wrong, being kind, constantly seeking mutual benefit in all interactions (Covey 1992:185-234).

Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood (principles of empathic communication)

Communication may be seen as the most important skill in life and involves empathic listening as a more effective solution than correcting misunderstandings — understanding unspoken meanings conveyed (Covey 1992:236-260).

Habit 6: Synergise (principles of creative co-operation)

A simple explanation here is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts — this opens up new possibilities, alternatives and options for empowering people through team effort, whole brain activity and the value of differences. The concept of ecology describes synergism in nature, where everything is related to everything else (Covey 1992:262-284).

◆ Renewal (principles of balanced self-renewal)

Habit 7: Sharpening the saw

The single most powerful investment one can make is preserving and enhancing one's own four natural dimensions: physical (exercise, nutrition, stress management); mental (reading, visualising, planning, writing), social/emotional (service, empathy, synergy, intrinsic security) and spiritual (value clarification and commitment, study and meditation) (Covey 1992:287-319).

### 3.4.3 Personal skills

#### 3.4.3.1 *Lifespan competence*

Competence has been defined as the possession and development of sufficient skills, knowledge, appropriate attitudes and experience for successful performance in life roles (Jonathan 1987:160).

Well-rounded and balanced education is termed 'life-orientation' by Van Rensburg (1992:320-327, original emphasis), meaning life in the deeper sense of a more complete and meaningful human existence (cf 3.6.1 & 2); Van Rensburg is of the opinion that the ideal is that all learners, irrespective of ethnic grouping, should have the luxury of the Christian view of reality.

Pushkar, Bukowski, Schwarzman, Stack and White (1998:1, emphasis added) state that the definition of competence underlying their work emphasises the adaptive functioning of the individual in adjusting to the environment and coping with life tasks effectively and without unnecessary psychological costs. This would include the emotional, cognitive and social skills necessary to function constructively and in reasonable harmony with the self and others and to be able to achieve a particular goal, thus a form of social action.

Interpersonal communication is conscious communication between two connected persons, while Intrapersonal communication is the communication a person has with the own self (De Vito 1993:32-57, original emphasis; cf self-talk 3.4.3.3 and 5.4.2.2). *Intrapersonal* capability is seen as the key to self-knowledge, with access to a person's own feelings and the ability to discriminate among them and draw upon them to guide behaviour (Gardner in Goleman 1995:39). Goleman sees this ability and those of inter-personal abilities (cf 3.4.4.1) as even more important than the abilities reflected in intelligence tests. (The belief is held by the researcher that this would include the relationship with the Creator and a knowledge of the life of humankind in balance with the rest of creation).

There are always individual differences as each person has a different life history across the lifespan. Yet, it is clear that the developmental tasks are not static and there are possibilities for development and adaptation from infancy to late maturity, with the term successful aging being used for later maintenance. Enhanced emotional well-being is a byproduct of being competent

across the lifespan (cf 3.4.13-19). This means not only success in the work place, but especially in long-term meaningful, intimate social integration that is central to the well-being of most people, as contact with others being seen as the 'ground' of existence. Aspects of being competent also serve as important protective factors that reduce the risk for psychopathology and illness. This process sees coping as enacted competence, with acceptance of life's circumstances, humour and optimism being seen as contributing not only to success in various facets of life, but also to positive handling of adversity, seen as resilience (cf 2.10.9, 3.4.6.1 and 5.4.2.4). There seems little doubt among researchers that prevention of problems is the best intervention possible, as well as learning to cope with stress, economic matters and responsibility concerning work (Van Rensburg 1992:265-283).

The concept of competence involves at least four points of reference (Schwarzman 1998:133):

- ◆ standards of attainment or efficacy;
- ◆ the idea of mastery, expertise, success, or stamina;
- ◆ areas or contexts of challenge (physical, cognitive, social emotional); and
- ◆ sources of influence (maturation, experience, internal state, external conditions).

An educational programme preparing young people for the world of work and making the learning process come alive for all learners, would include the following competencies (Steinberg 1998:vii & 78):

- ◆ Communicating and understanding ideas and information
- ◆ Collecting, analysing and organising information
- ◆ Identifying and solving problems
- ◆ Understanding and working within complex systems
- ◆ Using mathematical ideas and techniques
- ◆ Using technology
- ◆ Initiating and completing entire activities
- ◆ Acting professionally
- ◆ Interacting with others
- ◆ Learning and teaching on an ongoing basis

- ◆ Taking responsibility for career and life choices.

#### 3.4.3.2 *Selected factors in acquiring and maintaining life skills*

The research of Nelson-Jones (1991:25-42, emphases added) sheds light on some important and somewhat overlapping factors that influence whether people acquire good or poor life skills:

- ◆ Supportive relationships and role models

There is accumulating evidence that humans of all ages are happiest and able to function most effectively when they feel that there is a trusted person to support them. This is most clear where there is empathy and understanding. This is especially clear in the process of growing up, where supportive relationships go far beyond the acquisition of specific life skills in letting children feel of value and having the confidence to interact with the world. This is a pervasive learning process, either as strengths or weaknesses, often acquired from observing others expressing or withholding affection or positive criticism.

- ◆ Rewarding consequences and instruction in behaviours

Virtually from the moment of birth, humans are given messages about how 'good' or 'bad' their actions are towards those close to them. Basic life skills, such as good manners, relationships, how to study, react towards others and look after health, are taught by parents by example and are often absorbed subconsciously. Attempts at schools to teach many such life skills as 'handles' with which to work in many important areas in their lives are not always welcomed by parents, as they may not be in line with values and attitudes taught at home. An example may be that argumentative parents may not agree with co-operative attitudes taught at schools in dealing with conflict.

- ◆ Self-instruction and information

Many people acquire or consolidate life skills through reading books to gain information on the topics they need. These books may provide a richer conceptual framework for understanding

skills needed, but may also fall short of sufficient motivation and opportunities for practising. Adults may sometimes protect themselves from discomfort and lack of understanding concerning death, sexuality and anxiety by lies, omissions and half-truths, in fact blocking the child's self-understanding and harming the child's self-esteem.

#### ◆ Opportunity

All people need adequate opportunities in line with their maturation to test and develop their life skills, although many have only restricted chances of extending their competencies. A boy with no sisters, for instance, may have trouble understanding girls. Other people may not have the opportunities for playing specific sports, acquiring public speaking skills or learning to cook and would need to have access to opportunities to learn more skills in dealing with these factors.

#### ◆ Challenge, confrontation and peer group interaction

People are challenged by life to develop skills, often in new situations, such as the birth of a first child or moving to a new area. Adversity and pain can also help people to acquire and develop life skills, although adversity may erode some people's confidence (cf resilience 2.10.9 and 5.4.2.4). Frankl (1964) describes how even the suffering in Nazi concentration camps provided some people with an opportunity for personal growth. Parents assuming that all is well with their children may suddenly be confronted by acute distress, such as a suicide gesture of one of their children; this may then lead to opportunities for exploring their own behaviour towards the child. Negative or positive feedback can be used to develop life skills, with peer group interaction often providing the main avenues for learning strengths and weaknesses. Examples are parents mixing with others parents at schools, colleagues interacting with each other or bereaved widow(er)s learning from support groups how to cope with their grief.

Where peer group interaction may provide learning of strengths, they may also contribute to the danger of negative norms being imparted. In this regard, insufficient autonomous thought is a major life skills weakness.

### ◆ Thinking skills

These are most important life skills to be acquired, both in their own right and because they contribute to learning and using other life skills. People who do not have 'handles' for developing competencies in various areas in their lives, such as relationships, have less opportunity to realise that specific skills are desirable. Most important is the realisation that skills are sequences of choices, as this enables people to identify the choices involved in the skills and then choose whether or not to make them.

Thinking skills, indicating that people are personally responsible for developing and using life skills conducive to survival, happiness and fulfilment, are overriding life skills. These skills enable people to 'talk the talk' and 'walk the walk', such as parenting skills for communicating with adolescent children or dealing with colleagues. Being realistic about mistakes and setbacks during the process of acquiring a life skill is another important life skill, as is the ability to perceive one's own behaviour accurately. Learning not to focus only on weaknesses can help the acknowledgement of successes.

### ◆ Dealing with anxiety

Thinking skills are also highly relevant to managing unhelpful as opposed to helpful anxiety. Acquiring and maintaining life skills involves dealing with thinking skills weaknesses interfering with learning and performance. Most important is the fact that learning any life skill is best achieved when the mind is alert, yet relaxed enough to devote all its energies to the task at hand. Growing up may equip children with levels of positive anxiety which acts both as protection against actual dangers and as motivator for realistic levels of achievement. Negative anxiety may include reluctance to assume responsibility for their lives, low tolerance of mistakes and setbacks, and 'freezing' mentally and emotionally.

People who learn to acquire life skills which they can use, may also learn management of anxiety such as choosing personal rules for behaviour which are realistic rather than perfectionistic, as this may impede the learning of some life skills.

◆ Gender-role considerations

At present traditional gender-roles are being challenged and there are substantial changes underway in how these roles are being defined, negotiated and put into practice. There have been increased discussions concerning psychological androgyny. The androgynous male or female acts adaptably male or female as circumstances warrant, indicating that males and females could be brought up with a range of life skills independently of whether they were traditionally regarded as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. However changing roles may be perceived, there are still numerous areas where, subtly or not, males and female learn life skills differently.

◆ Culture and social class

These aspects influence the learning of life skills heavily, as is clear when eye-contact and gestures may have completely different meanings in various cultures and subcultures. Life skills for understanding these aspects, as well as for correct behaviour in various socio-economic strata vary greatly, as may be seen in the skills required for relating to working-class colleagues or for middle-class professions. Communications tend to be blunter and more direct amongst workers.

Life skills strengths that have been acquired may be maintained and developed, or alternatively transformed into weaknesses, sometimes at great personal cost. The focus of weaknesses is on thinking skills and what people actually do to themselves. These include not blaming the negative impact of circumstances beyond one's control, or passing the blame onto others or onto one's past history. Unrealistic personal rules and faulty self-perceptions, negative self-talk and fear of change may be changed in training sessions concerning improved life chances, including surviving in inclement environments. People need to know that they have varying degrees of choice about overcoming both internal and external factors.

Consultations may be sought for overcoming many problem areas and it is even regarded as a 'consultation skill' to be able to find out what training is available or needed in different areas or institutions (cf Nelson-Jones 1991).

### 3.4.3.3 *Mental health as self-regulation*

Self-regulation may be seen as a key to success in life and is regarded as one of the most important traits in the human psyche. It may be defined, as with the similar term *self-control*, as the ability to alter one's own behaviour, including one's thoughts, feelings, actions and other responses (Baumeister et al. 1998: 117-131). Self-regulation encompasses control over one's emotional states and moods, which makes it understandable that success at controlling emotions will empower a person to feel better and suffer less on a daily basis. It contributes greatly to success in life by involving the setting and reaching of goals, as well as helping people learn to persist, often in the face of failures and setbacks, including overcoming self-defeating behaviour. Addiction and violence are two areas in which poor self-regulation contributes to misfortune and suffering.

In a longitudinal study cited in Baumeister et al. (1998:119), children's ability to delay gratification was found to indicate superior ability in school performance, social competence and personal strengths, such as being able to cope with frustration and stress effectively. These results show that self-regulation is a central aspect of personality, that it is stable across many developmental changes and consistently yields positive outcomes benefiting both the individual and the social network, thus holding the possibility of making people happy and successful, or miserable and unsuccessful in life.

Goleman (1995:226 and 240-246) indicates that one of the most essential emotional lessons, first learned in infancy from loving parents and refined throughout childhood, is how to soothe oneself when upset. This may be crucial in surviving the rising rates of depression observed at present, not only among adults, but also among children. This may be partly due to deficits in relationship skills, as well as a depression-promoting way of interpreting setbacks. Causes are seen to include the erosion of the nuclear and extended family, less parental time for children and a waning of religious beliefs. Learning emotional skills to counteract depression, especially at the cusp of adolescence, may be especially helpful in regulating negative thought.

The research of Baumeister (et al. 1998:126-131, emphasis added) indicates that the nature of self-regulation can be seen as a concept of willpower, a cognitive process or that it is a skill that

is acquired through practice. Of importance for this study is the finding that self-control or self-regulation can be improved with exercise, such as with a muscle, bringing long-term improvements; furthermore, that the optimal recommendation may be to exert self-control on a regular basis to increase one's overall capacity. This has major implications for success in life, with people who are good at self-regulation showing a multitude of advantages over other people in both task performance and interpersonal relations. These studies also showed that emotional distress undermines self-regulation and that procrastination carries significant costs in terms of task performance and health, (apparently using the same stock of energy used for self-regulation).

This research is in line with the philosophy of Frankl (1964:105-109), which states that “mental health is based on a certain degree of tension between what one has already achieved and what one still ought to accomplish, or the gap between what one is and what one should become”. The central theme of Frankl's writings may be found in a most profound form of self-regulation, which is “the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way” (Frankl 1964:65).

Goleman (1995:285) regards the word *character* as the most well-known word embodying emotional intelligence, citing Etzioni that character is “the emotional muscle that moral conduct requires”. The bedrock of character is self-discipline, with the virtuous life, as philosophers since Aristotle have observed, based on self-control. This includes doing work, finishing a job, deferring gratification, as well as controlling appetites and passions. This self-awareness has social benefits, opening the way to empathy, which leads to caring, altruism and compassion, allowing people to live together in mutual respect. Self-awareness and empathy may also be seen as the basic arts of democracy and citizenship. Cultivating these aspects of character-building to attain success is one of the central obligations of schools, even more important than being able to control the three R's (Goleman 1995:37).

#### **3.4.3.4      *Physical health***

Among the skills to be learnt for improving and maintaining physical health is the question of assuming responsibility for one's own health by being aware of factors which could improve well-being, as well as of factors which could be detrimental to good health. Among these is the

question of eating a well-balanced diet and in moderation, as well as having adequate control of alcohol consumption. With the available research results on the dangers of smoking and of using addictive drugs, it is well-nigh inexcusable to be ignorant of these facts. Keeping physically fit by regular exercise and learning how to manage stress well, are as important as observing a good balance between work, relationships, family and recreational activities. The ability to use information-gathering and decision-making skills regarding good health needs to be developed from an early age, including the ability to value leisure time highly and to be able to enjoy passive relaxation, as well as having adequate and enjoyable holidays (Nelson-Jones 1991:16)

In order to make informed choices, according to Cameron-Bandler, Gordon and Lebeau (1985), the main areas of involvement in life are directed to a large extent by having the correct information concerning eating, exercise, the use of drugs, smoking and alcohol, intimate relationships and parenting. For example, the reasons why people start smoking and misusing alcohol in the first place, include conforming to peer pressure for being acceptable, for being seen as tough, relaxed, mature, potent and audacious, only to find that they have become addicted to dangerous drugs. The same may be said of immoral and destructive lifestyles (Cameron-Bandler et al. 1985:121-167). Knowledge of the importance of a healthy diet, regular exercise and the correct use of medication is essential for a longer life expectancy and a higher quality of existence. This knowledge applies not only to individuals and families, but also to heightened awareness of sound ecological practices. It relates not only to the health of humankind, but also to plants, animals and the entire existence of the unique life on this planet.

### **3.4.4 Skills for life in society and in a family**

#### **3.4.4.1 *Social skills as emotional intelligence***

In a world of escalating emotional disruption and physical violence, Goleman (1995:xii-xiv) concludes, after intensive research, that the children of the world are becoming more troubled with every generation: more lonely and depressed, angry and unruly, nervous, impulsive and aggressive. The remedy seems clear: that, **instead of leaving the emotional education of children to chance, school education should prepare children for living — education should routinely include essential human competencies** such as self-awareness, self-control

and empathy, and the arts of listening, resolving conflicts and co-operation, being enthusiastic and persistent. These skills, he believes, can be taught, giving children a better chance to use whatever genetic potential they have to keep their lives on track. Society has so far not bothered to make sure every child is taught the essentials of emotional competence, and the time has now come. Moses (1998:264-265, emphasis added) has experienced a **dual challenge in her research regarding future educational developments: children should be prepared to be competent both in work AND as human beings, with a long term goal of helping to create a society in which all would be proud to live.**

*Interpersonal intelligence* (cf 3.4.3.1) is the core ability to understand other people and how they are motivated, as well as how to co-operate with others. Successful people, in fields where a high degree of contact with others is needed, are all likely to be individuals with a high degree of interpersonal skill and intelligence (Gardner in Goleman 1995:39). The high rates of divorce, substance abuse and depression are symptoms of deeper needs, of being understood and of personal loneliness and despair. Life skills education for personal resilience concerning crisis situations in life is urgently needed. Emotional resilience may possibly be an innate genealogical ability, but there is a developing perception of this being a set of emotional skills which may be taught at school level (Goleman 1995:72 & 246; Arnold, Noble & Subotnik 1996; cf 2.10.9 and 5.4.2.4).

Names for classes teaching emotional literacy vary: these range from classes in 'social development' to 'life skills', from 'social and emotional learning' to 'personal intelligences'. The common thread is the goal of raising the level of social and emotional competence for every child, taught as a preventive measure by ordinary teachers as highly effective buffers in time of duress, frustration and hurt (Goleman 1995:262-263). Key ingredients of effective programmes are such as those of the WT Grant Consortium, grouped as follows (in Goleman 1995:301-302):

- ◆ Emotional skills: concerning feelings, identifying and labelling, expressing, assessing the intensity and managing; delaying gratification, controlling impulses, reducing stress and knowing the difference between feelings and actions.

- ◆ Cognitive skills: self-talk as an ‘inner dialogue’ to cope with a topic or own behaviour. Reading and interpreting social cues, such as recognising social influences on behaviour and oneself in perspective of the larger community. Using steps for problem-solving and decision-making, controlling impulses, setting goals, identifying alternative actions, anticipating consequences. Understanding other’s perspectives, what is acceptable or not, having a positive attitude towards life and having realistic expectations.
- ◆ Behavioural skills: nonverbal — communicating through eye-contact, facial expressiveness, tone of voice and gestures. Verbal — making clear requests, responding effectively to criticism, resisting negative influences, listening to others and helping them, participating in positive peer groups.

Goleman (1995:43, emphasis added, 96-110) regards **empathy as the fundamental ‘people skill’**. Empathy, building on self-awareness, not only helps with all affiliations, but smooths the way for connecting more effectively in all human relationships. This is evident not only in verbal, but also in non-verbal communication, functioning best in calm circumstances, such as empathic parental discipline.

#### **3.4.4.2      *General social skills***

Virtually all waking hours are spent in some form of social interaction, either on a one-to-one basis or across a diversity of groups. The conduct of people’s lives is determined, at least partly, by the range of social skills. In bygone eras life was simpler, if not easier; systems were fewer, social mobility was less, with relationships relatively straightforward and with clearly defined roles for each person to follow. In contemporary Western society, the pace of life is faster and more complex, with rules changing according to the system within which the person is operating at the time. Often people are compelled to function in two or more systems simultaneously and this requires considerable social dexterity. The need for social skills, coping styles and the ability to acquire these is no longer a simple matter. Highly competent professionals, like physicians, teachers and top management executives who know their subject matter well, but do not interact constructively with the people they work with, are commonplace (Kelly 1982:ix).

The aim of social-skills training is to directly increase the behavioural competency of individuals so that they can achieve successful outcomes in those social situations where skills are needed to communicate smoothly. An important mechanism contributing to the refinement and sharpening of skills is feedback, which may be positive in nature, strengthening certain aspects of social skills, or negative, weakening the particular behaviour. In this regard group training through role-playing, both with children and with adults, may be of special value, being particularly time- and cost-effective. The types of training needed here would include conversational skills, social-initiation skills, being assertive and having job-interview skills, whether for a first job or for a career change (Kelly 1982:13-22 & 40).

Social skills training has its roots in assertiveness training (Salter 1949, Wolpe 1958 in Fodor 1992:6-7) referring to not only more or less aggressive behaviours, but also the expression of friendly, affectionate and non-anxious feelings, also defined as involving open, honest communication. It has been found in research that unassertive people lead a self-denying life that causes them to suffer in interpersonal relationships and sometimes leads to emotional and physical consequences, whereas the 'socially skilled' were found to be more assertive. At present assertiveness training is approached as a form of self-expressiveness and cognitive training. The later developments in this field include helping women to stand up for their rights and to overcome socialisation in passivity and compliance, as well as resisting unequal opportunities. Much social skills training is done by psychologists treating children with social deficits, such as disabled, aggressive or depressive adolescents. In addition, social skills or assertiveness training is often called for as part of wider programmes for sexuality training, pregnancy prevention, AIDS prevention, practice in saying no to free sex and drugs, help with job interviewing and help for parents and teachers (Fodor 1992:6-7). Vardi (1992:249-251) reports on work done with pregnant and parenting teenagers, providing them with a repertoire of assertiveness skills with a focus of preventing repeat pregnancies. In addition, many of the teachers working with these teenagers in poverty-stricken areas were experiencing 'burnout' and were themselves in need of counselling.

Related to social skills development is the concept of *social competency*. It was found that there is a positive correlation between a lack of social interactive skills and psychopathology in adolescence — adolescents who are rejected by peers, who are unpopular and have poor

relationships with siblings and parents are at high risk. Group training may be seen as a natural laboratory and offers the benefits of schools and classrooms, with learners sharing their problems with parents and getting along with the opposite gender. The role of friendship within the peer group may also be discussed as a healing relationship which can help overcome many uncomfortable self-attributions, especially while struggling to establish a separate and independent identity from his/her family (Fodor 1992:19, Shendell 1992:205).

#### 3.4.4.3 *Interpersonal skills*

De Vito (1993, original emphasis) views the acquisition of skills as a four step process consisting of identification of relevant skills, an explanation of the theory, the providing of meaningful examples and followed by practice. Of the relevant skills discussed, he regards critical thinking skills as the most superior ability humans have when compared to animals. The finding of and communication about relevant information is the key to the use of appropriate cures for illnesses and for communication between human beings. Therefore, sharpening these abilities is of crucial importance, already involving more than 50% of all workers in the USA.

Critical thinking comprises a wide variety of skills, including asking the correct questions and finding the answers, evaluating reports and conclusions, interacting with others logically and effectively, using evidence skilfully and impartially and distinguishing between logical and illogical inferences, as well as being able to listen carefully to the ideas of others. The attitudes included in these abilities include a willingness to analyse oneself and ideas, to delay conclusions, being ready to connect and relate and a determination to become well-informed about communication, also in a multicultural context, as competence is specific to a given culture. Intercultural communication is presently more important than at any other point in history (De Vito 1993:xxiii-13, 237). Being able to really listen involves also hearing what is said over and above the words being used, being aware of the concerns of others and knowing when just to listen. Knowing oneself is a difficult process involving skills, such as increased self-awareness, self-disclosure and learning to focus on envisioned success (De Vito 1993:32-57, original emphasis). Being aware of perceiving the attributes of other people and being willing to listen sympathetically to others will result in increased ability to understand others and life events more empathetically, as well as understanding how to be more attentive and supportive. It would also mean greater

understanding of the meaning of time in various cultures (De Vito 1993:60-249). People need to form good relationships with others, as the most general reason for establishing relationships is to maximise physical, mental and social pleasures, while minimising pain, sharing both pleasure and pain, as well as retaining the ability to be assertive (De Vito 1993:258-343, original emphases). In this regard Howlett (1988:9-11 in Van Rensburg 1992:290) sees effective communication as the key to a better society, with the ability to listen being essential to verbal communication, the good listener normally being a good communicator.

#### **3.4.4.4 *Skills for coping in marriage***

Coping refers to a person's active efforts to resolve stress and to create new ways of handling new situations at each life stage (Erikson 1959 in Newman & Newman 1981:118, emphasis added). This concept emphasises the importance of the personal resources and competencies that are used to deal with new challenges, as well as emphasising mastery of the situation. It requires an effective person who actively engages each life challenge. The three components needed require that a person be able to gain and process new information about any situation, that s/he maintains control over his/ her emotional state by correctly interpreting emotions, and expressing or limiting their expression as needed, and that the person is able to move freely to a closer or more distant position in his/her environment (Newman & Newman 1981:118, emphasis added).

According to Moses (1998:18-20) being married with children is much more complicated at present than it was a generation ago: "Economically squeezed, and beleaguered at work, individuals must maintain a super-metabolic pace that leaves them with little time or energy for parents, children, friends, or themselves". The erosion of public and private domains and keeping up with change takes a heavy toll of every individual. Skills to cope with these demands and still find pleasure in life is therefore of cardinal importance.

Having everything in terms of career, health, wealth and possessions can still be felt as having an empty life if there are no significant, meaningful, loving relationships with others. Striving for love and satisfying relationships is one of the most compelling abilities forming the lives of people. Unlike people in earlier centuries, most people in Western society regard romantic love as an essential prerequisite to marriage. However, present statistics indicate that most marriages end

in divorce. Goleman (1995:232) states that, in the USA, the going rate for the marriages of newlyweds ending in divorce is two out of three; in the RSA the indication is that the figure is in the order of 50% of marriages ending in divorce. This indicates, according to Goleman (1995:232) that the longterm global prospects for present-day children marrying and having a fruitful, stable life together are growing more dismal with each generation. Most adults know that an ongoing relationship is much more complicated and more demanding than they had thought as teenagers. The factors making it possible for a marriage to last are to be found in adapting to the changing requirements of the phases through which relationships pass (Cameron-Bandler 1985:169-260, original emphases; Van Rensburg 1992:261-265). Knowing about the possible phases could provide people planning to get married with insights and skills for coping with problems as they arise. These phases include *attraction, appreciation, security and expectation*. If the expectations are fulfilled, all may be well; if they are not met, disappointments start *stacking up*, and may reach a critical phase, called the *threshold*. The initial attraction may be enriched by the quality of the interactions occurring between people, and may last a lifetime if they appreciate each other for real characteristics and not imagined ones. Future commitments need to be based on evaluations about the future, but should be made with respect to and in the light of cause-effect relationships between the present and the future, such as the importance of making sure, ahead of time, amongst others, the importance of having children. The skills of communication within a marriage may be able to accommodate differences if there is an awareness of how to discuss responses and how to be flexible for the sake of the quality of the relationship. Attending courses for engaged couples before marriage could equip partners for criteria of communicating about matters really important to both, how to express feelings concerning valued characteristics, how to express dissatisfaction without wounding and how to be realistic about self-evaluation.

Nelson-Jones (1991:5-10) believes that the growing emphasis on life skills training groups is due to the following reasons, among others: problems of living are widespread, with the world full of people failing to maximise their human potential. The statistics on the rise of marital breakdown provides one indication of this. In the UK and in Australia the divorce rate has trebled since the 1970s, although the situation might be worse if the figures for separation and marital distress were to be added. Training groups for countering these problems have remedial, developmental and preventive objectives and can make vital contributions in preventing human anguish, both for

married couples and for the children involved. Skills training in these groups include listening, self-disclosing, asserting oneself and helping the partner to do likewise, expressing caring, co-operative decision making, managing conflict and anger, and sexual-relating skills. Some groups focus on present gender-role expectations for partner behaviour and on the problems of dual-career couples.

Marriages at the beginning of the 21st century have evolved to be a relationship between a man and a woman who each need to be regarded as a human being in their own right. According to Tessina and Smith (1993:iv-vi) the majority of relationships run into serious trouble for the simple reason that people getting married have not been equipped with the essential couple skills required to build a lasting relationship (cf 2.9 and 5.5). There is a growing focus on self-defeating relationship patterns with poor communication, competition, chronic self-denial and unequal power, leading to dissatisfaction and dissention between partners. People are bombarded by media images of what **does not work**, instead of there being a focus on **how to form a healthy working partnership between equals**. Tessina and Smith (1993:1, emphasis added) have analysed the problems causing stress among married couples; these mostly relate to money, sex, affection, infidelity, time, in-laws, raising children and housekeeping. With the correct communication skills couples are able to learn what have been their problem-creating behaviours, to break free from these and to eliminate the false limitations and expectations they have placed on themselves or on the problems. Couples are taught in therapy classes how to work together as a team, rather than struggle against each other. The essence of the matter revolves around techniques of problem solving and balance.

The dual career couple of this era needs to learn the skills of nurturing their relationship while having the freedom to be seen as two people who have a vocation or a profession of their own. These skills are preferably to be learnt before entering into marriage, by attending seminars or discussions presented by churches and/or psychologists (cf 2.9 and 5.5).

#### **3.4.4.5      *Skills for coping with parenting***

In spite of the fact that there is probably no more important task, nor greater privilege than being a parent, few people are taught how to create the kinds of nurturing and mutually enjoyable

relationships they would like to have with their children. One of the distinctive characteristics of childhood is change, which parents and children often find difficult to adjust to. Responding to changed criteria is another problem parents have to face. Skills training could “have a means for making life a little less haphazard and more enjoyable” (Cameron-Bandler et al 1985:215-260).

The impact of parenting on emotional competence starts in the cradle according to Goleman (1995:190-193). This is shaped by the available parental approval and encouragement. There is a growing body of evidence showing that success in school depends to a surprising extent on emotional characteristics formed in the years before school, being the essential foundations for learning — social measures such as being self-assured and interested, knowing what kind of behaviour is expected and when to wait or to ask for help. Family life is the first school for learning. Research cited in this regard indicates that couples who were more emotionally competent in their marriage were also the most effective in helping their children with their emotional ups and downs, which is also indicative of the importance of couples attending adjustment classes before marriage (cf dual career 5.5).

Apart from remedial and preventative programmes in schools, Barkley (1995:180-189) stresses that the home environment is the most important school for social skills. Children and adolescents very often feel they need ‘someone to be on their side’ and parents are the primary educators in this regard. As many parents were themselves not well educated in the field of social skills, this problem may become self-perpetuating. For this reason parents themselves often feel in need of training in social skills to cope with their own children. Encouraging children to bring friends home to play or visit, may present a parent with opportunities for more structured socialisation and monitoring the choice of friends and activities, always keeping in mind that the example set is the strongest teacher. Barkley emphasises that teenagers have much work to do in learning to go from dependence to equality as adults, having to learn who they are and what they stand for, how to make deep friendships and form lifelong relationships, how to tame their sometimes overwhelming sexual urges and anger and what they are to do with their lives. These abilities are supposed to be accomplished while being successful in school and getting along with their families. Learning to manage these difficult transitions is a complicated path, which might be compared to a nation establishing its independence or changing from a dictatorship to a democracy. Learning how to traverse this road needs vital social skills. In addition, Moses

(1998:247) believes that children should be taught to understand that the world is sometimes less than perfect and that they should develop an attitude of guarded optimism for coping.

Numerous types of training groups exist for parenting skills, including positive communication and active listening, fathering skills and how to be sexuality educators (Nelson-Jones 1991:10; cf domains for training 3.4.7).

### **3.4.5 Planning for management of one's own future**

#### **3.4.5.1 *Goal achievement***

One set of definitions for success in life focuses on how well people can reach their set goals (Gollwitzer & Bargh in Baumeister et al. 1998:119-123, emphasis added). Yet this is not a simple matter. Two distinct processes are involved, both involving self-regulation (cf 3.4.3.3): first, goals must be set, and then they must be pursued effectively and persistently so as to achieve success. Thus, the implications for success are important: by choosing courses level to one's own ability and by budgeting one's time and effort properly, one can gain maximum return for one's ability. Choosing important goals in everyday life is often left to people on their own, mostly without the necessary information. A balance is needed between goals that are so simple that success is almost guaranteed, and others that may be practically impossible and therefore failure is ensured — these often being the most valuable and having the least likelihood of success.

Doing one's work on time and fulfilling obligations in a timely fashion would seem to be an integral part of healthy, proper adult functioning and approach to life. However, one of the main reasons for, not only failure, but in the long run harm to one's health and harm to one's performance, is the problem of procrastination. This is seen as a self-defeating pattern of behaviour, which affects a majority of people at times and a substantial minority seriously enough to cause personal, financial or occupational problems. A key to survival is seen by Barkley (1995:141-142) as time management, which is not really time management, but part of self-management and another skill to be acquired. It takes practice and effort, but the rewards are worthwhile. A starting point is always to set specific, well-defined, reasonable goals for both long

and short terms — a day, a week, a month. Experts on time management divide time management into five categories:

- ◆ *Important and urgent* (not usually where time gets wasted)
- ◆ *Important but not urgent* (can be elevated to more urgent status)
- ◆ *Urgent but not important* (trivialities which may take more time than needed)
- ◆ *Busy work* (tasks of minimal importance, housework, errands, phone calls — a feeling of productivity, but rarely contributing to real goals)
- ◆ *Wasted time* (watching inconsequential TV and movies or less important activities)

Real time wasters are: indecision, blaming others for lack of time, pursuing perfection instead of excellence, getting off track because of distracting stimuli and letting little tidbits of time spent waiting go unfulfilled.

Learning to work effectively and to manage available time efficiently is one of the most urgent needs of our age, as well as the ability to make the most effective use of one's income, how to manage a budget, to make sound investments and to understand the domains of the financial world, taxes and insurance.

#### 3.4.5.2 *Life skills for decision-making*

Regardless of what people want for themselves, the reality of actually getting what is desired will be determined by what is *done* to achieve or obtain these objects or circumstances. Ambitions may be for material things, good relationships or experiences. Many people, however ardently they wish for certain things, will only wait to get these things, believing that with luck they will succeed in getting these objects, relationships or positions in life. Cameron-Bandler et al. (1985:51-87, original emphasis) state that between 'wishing' and 'having' there must be *doing* and a *plan* which guides activities along the required paths for actualising these objectives. These are skills for succeeding which are sequences for carrying out any plans for achievement.

The five stages in this process are as follows:

Wishing   ▶   Wanting   ▶   Planning   ▶   Doing   ▶   Having

It is important that people should bear in mind that these stages of development are all part of larger, *interdependent* processes, and that these stages do not remain separate for those who are characteristically successful at going from one stage to the other.

Aspirations need to be analysed thoroughly and determined whether they are possible, worth having or reaching, whether one is really prepared to make sacrifices to reach the goals set out for. An example used is that of a person wanting to become a scientist involved in space research. The steps needed to plan this career would involve the following aspects:

- ◆ Activities: What are the behaviours, tasks and procedures to follow?
- ◆ Information: What is the person's background and what would still be needed to learn to attain the outcome?
- ◆ People: Who is, or might be, involved in attaining the outcome, who can be counted on to help (or hinder) and how might they help (or hinder)?
- ◆ Resources: What abilities, skills and tangible assets are possessed that will help (or hinder) the person and what external sources of assistance could or must be utilised?
- ◆ Time: How long will various steps take and when should they be taken?
- ◆ Stages of progress: How and when will the person know that s/he is moving towards the desired outcome?

For any goal, these steps would be worth the time and effort taken to evaluate and assess the criteria required for achieving a set goal. These are strategic plans for going from aspiration to reality. Moses' research (1998:252-253, emphasis added) has found that **the abilities to think, to abstract and interpret information against the broader background of the social and**

**economic context are best served by the enhancement of a liberal education combined with a technical one: combining an undergraduate university degree for higher-order cognitive skills with a specialist college diploma would be the ideal.**

### 3.4.5.3 *Study skills*

Studying as part of life-long learning indicates being aware of the ever increasing social and economic pressures placed on people to equip themselves intellectually for their differing roles in life. Keeping up to date with new developments in every conceivable field is part of important skills in social and career settings. Hard work is not enough to prosper. Techniques and strategies for effective study are of fundamental importance. This includes successful organisation of time for specific tasks (including leisure), as well as being in a situation where effective study can take place. Courses in speed reading are helpful, as well as techniques for recall, for improving vocabulary, writing and listening skills and techniques for making notes, planning for exams and on how to succeed at examinations, as well as how to obtain information on essential reading in the chosen field of study (Mathews 1988:1-77).

People need to have the ability 'to take learning into their own hands', also called the hallmark of studying (McClintock in Burstyn 1986:191). Goleman (1995:193-194, emphasizes original and added) calls knowing *how* to learn the most basic of all knowledge. The seven key ingredients of this crucial capacity are the following, all related to emotional intelligence: confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, capacity to communicate and ability to co-operate.

While learning is part of human life, the ability to study effectively is a skill which has to be learnt and improved by having meaning, application and use. The Latin origin of the word study (*studium*) means to be enthusiastic about and committed to specific learning matter and indicates focused action. Young children learn through experience, but senior school learners, tertiary students or adults are able to concentrate sufficiently to be seen to be actively involved in studying. This would entail obtaining a global view of the learning matter, more detailed analysis of the subject matter, interpreting the contents and placing the work in logical order, through

summary and schematic representation, ultimately ensuring that the learning matter is understood and finally, active, repeated recall of essentials (Kokot 1994:429-450).

Far from being the prerogative of youth, recent research has shown that cognitive ability can be maintained into late maturity. This can be seen as an important aspect of successful aging with the dramatic increase of longevity being a special challenge in the domain of cognitive competence (Pushkar & Arbuckle 1998).

### 3.4.6 Skills for the workplace

#### 3.4.6.1 *Coping skills*

Most teenagers/adolescents have little or no idea of what they want to 'be' in the career world and often lack substantial knowledge of the world of adult work. Many of them hear only about work in a demeaning manner, rather than as being a satisfying or fulfilling experience. Young people are not at all prepared to make the expected five or six career changes which have become a reality of contemporary life (Steinberg 1998:67). Consequently there is a need for a more realistic approach to obtaining competence and empowering skills for the market place. This would need to include more of an attitude of being useful in the community, as well as of achieving personal goals. Steinberg (1998:41-66) views community involvement, which she terms experiencing the "utmost feelings of satisfaction", as being most important for experiencing success as a human being. This is in strict contrast to what many learners experience — that they are taught that the only sign of achievement is high marks and exceptional academic ability, whereas for many the authentic experience of success is capability in work-related practice. Examples here are the use of computer spreadsheets or laboratory skills in school projects connected to the real-life business world as career exploration, as opposed to traditional academic learning, which is often alien to the 'real world'.

Fraser (foreword, Steinberg 1998:vii-viii, emphasis added) believes that **this feeling of satisfaction will make the learning process come alive for all learners**, so that there are no longer winners and losers, college bound and 'other' learners, the upwardly mobile and the bored and desperate, but rather **a range of learners and educators "involved in a common quest to**

**use the world of work to master the skills and attributes needed to understand and improve the world around them”**. Steinberg (1998:2-3, 24-25) argues that in taking part in creating more career-related challenges and skills on the way to a career, many learners would feel more connection between school-related activities and their future, experiencing ‘life’ while reaching for adulthood. She believes that the 6 A’s of designing projects developing more applicable skills are authenticity (handling problems with real meaning to them), academic rigour (thinking like a scientist), applied learning (achieving competencies expected in high performance work organisations), active exploration (significant amounts of time in field-based work), adult relationships (observing adults with relevant expertise) and assessment practices (developing a sense of real world standards for a given type of work).

In vocational training, as in the Youth Training Scheme in the UK, four simplified outcomes are specified. Trainees should receive:

- ◆ competence in a job and/or range of transferable skills;
- ◆ competence in a range of transferable core skills;
- ◆ ability to transfer skills and knowledge to new situations, and
- ◆ personal effectiveness (Jonathan 1987:111).

Being able to accurately identify personal values and interests are among the most important skills needed for making sound career choices, as well as being able to appraise personal abilities, aptitudes and weaknesses realistically. Skills in gathering information relating to suitable career options are important for being able to make appropriate decisions, while writing self-presentation correspondence. Job interview skills may mean the difference between obtaining desired positions or not. Constructively evaluating feedback may be conducive to handling transitions well, as well as making the most of work settings and functioning well as a member of a team. Skills for specific roles, such as being able to manage money in a business, may be part of an ongoing learning programme, or for preparation for specific professional roles (cf future skills 2.13 and 3.5).

Acknowledged professions were overwhelmingly male dominated throughout history; yet contemporary education would have to include educational preparation of females for coping with

the dual contemporary role of worker and homemaker (cf 2.9 and 5.5). Far from being a concession to women, it is worthwhile to realise that women constitute half of the nation's most valuable resources in human talent. The reverse is also most urgently needed: that modern education would also have to equip males with the skills for coping with an added responsibility as co-homemaker and parent with additional responsibilities in home management and child-rearing (cf Lemmer 1989; Hage & Powers 1993; Wheelock 1990).

Computer literacy has become an essential skill for the market place; yet, it is fitting to be reminded of Sheperd's opinion (1990:2 in Van Rensburg 1992:305): "Technology does not mean 'machines' at all. It means the art of doing things well". At the same time Van Rensburg (1992:327) stresses that career education is a necessity at school level. As this technology makes it possible to do more with less, a small elite of workers can use all the electronic modern conveniences to be more efficient in a global economy, transforming the nature of work to be more in line with general information technology, creating "an anxiety class" for those not trained in these fields (Moses 1998:10-11 and 16-17).

#### **3.4.6.2      *Problem solving skills***

Many authors offer solution skills that can be learnt. Barkley (1995:174-177) lists the following concise steps to be learnt as the essence of various approaches to solving problems, such as the misbehaviour of a child. The steps are a systemising process and resource for use even when under extreme pressure:

Step 1 - Defining the problem:

Problems should be written down in the most clear and specific terms in order to define the problem.

Step 2 - Rephrasing the problem in positive terms:

This makes the objective of behaviour management very clear, letting the goals to be achieved to stand out as desired outcomes.

**Step 3 - Listing the options:**

This lets the creativity flow by brainstorming as many possible options as can be thought of, including how the problem might be handled by parents, friends or specialists in the field.

**Step 4 - Constructively evaluating the options:**

Evaluate each option for solving the problem by thinking how it will work, what will be likely to happen, how would difficulties in the area be handled. Options should not be discarded because they might take effort to implement. Options should be numbered in order of evaluation.

**Step 5 - Selecting the best option:**

Encircle the most useful options possible and reconsider them, putting the solutions into practice for a time. Continue trying various solutions for a while before looking at other alternatives, always taking into account the ideas of others involved.

**Step 6 - Compromising on disagreements:**

Be flexible and not too set on one's own choice of options. Listen to the reasoning of others. In the case of being deadlocked, one should give in, in order to test other possibilities for a while.

**Step 7 - Carrying out the plans and evaluating the success:**

When a plan has been found, one should stick to it, although the results may not be visible immediately. One should remember that first following the plan should be seen as an experiment, but that there are no guarantees.

In addition to these steps, Barkley (1995:189) names the following as eight golden rules for survival, adapted here to be of general use:

- ◇ Understand the situation of others.
- ◇ Develop a coping attitude and reasonable expectations.
- ◇ Establish clear-cut rules for all concerned.
- ◇ Monitor and enforce rules, working as a team.
- ◇ Communicate positively and effectively.
- ◇ Problem-solve disagreements mutually.

- ◇ Use professional help wisely.
- ◇ Maintain a sense of humour and take regular breaks for relaxation.

### 3.4.7 Domains and settings for life skills training

Nelson-Jones (1991:6-11) identifies four broad domains for life skills training in groups of non-client participants in the following areas:

- ◆ Developmental education, including children through to elderly people in the psychological skills appropriate for their developmental stages.
- ◆ Specific clientele to handle their problems of living more effectively, including coping with dual career skills for married couples (cf 2.9, 3.4.4.4 and 5.5), emotional expressiveness skills for men, assertion skills for women and coping with unemployment skills for the unemployed or those facing job loss.
- ◆ Work-related training, including pre-service or in-service training, for example relationship skills for teachers and doctors; anger management skills for police officers and supervisory skills for newly promoted supervisors.
- ◆ The training of counsellors and social workers in listening skills.

Nelson-Jones (1991:7-11) has identified the following settings for the training of groups:

- ◆ Primary and secondary schools:

In kindergarten to 6th-grade skills would include awareness of feelings, valuing, listening, co-operation and conflict resolution, occupational and educational decision-making, as well as social skills (cf 3.4.4). In secondary schools skills would include study skills (cf 3.4.12), managing relationships and the control of anger, making friends, dealing with sexuality, and sex-role education, AIDS education and counselling for adolescents whose parents are getting divorced. Career education can include awareness of self and opportunities, information-seeking and

interview skills, as well as coping with transition and disability. Staff development at schools can include counselling, relational and management skills, as well as skills for reducing stress and avoiding burnout.

◆ Colleges and universities

A wide range of people associated with universities would include students, staff and helping-service trainees, aimed at remedial, preventive and developmental interventions dealing with study skills, stress management and effective thinking skills. Large groups may include drug prevention courses, date-rape seminars and the problems of various groups, such as minority groups, singles and couples. Staff training may include tutoring skills and reducing 'Type A' thinking and behaviours.

◆ Medical settings

Here there are two main categories of participants: patients and their families, as well as health professionals and para-professionals. Skills courses here would include anxiety management, preventing and managing heart attacks, tension and pain, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, overcoming obesity and coping with depression, insomnia and illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease, as well as working with disfigured or terminally ill patients.

◆ Business and industry

Life skills training in these fields is big business, it being observed by Toomer (1982 in Nelson-Jones 1991:9), that industry spends more money on education and training in the USA than the public service does on the education of school-going children. Much of this training is in non-psychological work skills, as well as the skills of improving efficiency and morale, also in preventing health problems. The main groups here include career development, communication skills and mental health, management and team work.

◆ Miscellaneous settings

Included in this field are voluntary and government agencies, career and employment services, prisons, private practices, retirement communities and nursing homes (cf for marriage and family 3.4.4.4 & 5).

**3.4.8 Specific life skills needed in South African communities**

Life skills programmes have been used in many countries during the last quarter of the 20th century. A programme developed for the Western Cape by the University of Cape Town includes the following points of departure: networking, finding information, advice and help in a community, conflict and agreement in community work and dealing with unemployment in the community. The aim is to help people to learn and the person leading the programme is not a teacher, but a facilitator helping the people in the community to teach each other creatively. In this way they are seen as sources of experience, creative thought and wisdom, who have simply been stimulated towards developing more solutions to problems experienced. Such a programme would include brainstorming, buzz groups, larger and smaller group discussions, case studies, role playing, questionnaires, evaluation and feedback (Lindhard, Mathabe & Atmore 1987:I-vi).

◆ Networking

The kinds of networks to be aware of include technical and news media, administrative networks, such as water and electricity, professional networks, social networks connected by relationships, as well as personal networks, including families, ethnic and cultural bases, religion, interests in sport, art or music or child-minding schemes. The theme here is that of the poem by John Donne, "No man is an island".

◆ Finding information, advice and help

Included here is the need for all people to know what goes on around them, finding facts and opinions to help make decisions and solve problems, finding support in time of need, planning for the future and being in charge of one's own life. These areas include educating children, buying

a house or a car, changing jobs, arranging pensions or taxes, registering births and deaths, getting legal help and finding missing persons. Sources of information are discussed, as well as resources for finding help or guidance. Problem areas would include child care, consumerism, crime, discrimination, education employment, family and marriage, as well as health, housing, law, leisure, culture and money matters. Information for choice of careers would include daily activities, conditions of work and environment, rewards, fulfilment of needs and quality of life. Being well-informed includes knowing what goes on around one, what the main social, economic and political problems of the day are and simply being 'well read', The well-informed person is able to converse on a wide range of subjects and discuss in depth the subjects which hold his/her particular interest, knows a lot of facts and is a good listener. Such a person has a large social network and is able to be most resourceful, is not to be too surprised by events, plans ahead and is useful to many others. Here it is necessary to distinguish between information and advice — information provides facts to solve problems, while advice is someone's opinion about how they would solve someone else's problems (Lindhard & Mathabe 1987:13-29).

◆ Conflict and agreement in communities

Conflict is an open disagreement between two people or groups who have different goals and values. It involves people's feelings as well as objectives, which both have to be resolved. Agreement must be reached or a compromise worked out. Conflict is not necessarily harmful and can make people think deeper and more creatively about the best solutions, also increasing the involvement of people in community problems. When changes are suggested, conflict is often inevitable, with controlled aggression being used by some as a creative force, producing energy whereby things may be changed or moved. Answers may be between two opposing proposals, so a win-win solution may possibly be found which can deal with emotions like anger, disappointment or fear. A suggested skills programme would deal with brainstorming and role playing. The role of peacemakers may not always be popular, as they refuse to take sides, but they are normally highly respected, objective, unbiased and mature. Empathic listening would then be listening with all persons and not only to all, involving many tried and trusted techniques and skills for resolving conflict, including treating all people involved with respect and as equals (Lindhard 1987:33-50, original emphasis).

In the South African context, people need to deal with the realities of violence and crime, which can be seen as the result of anger, not only against poverty and injustice, but also against the perceived inability to deal with contemporary situations in the country, including the inability of men not being able to handle the new roles and status of women (Khumalo, radio interview June 1999).

◆ Coping with unemployment

This may happen to any person, although the unskilled are more likely to be unemployed. Being unemployed means, among other things, not working because of illness, because of outdated skills, technological advancement or economic factors. Being a housewife without remuneration, does not mean not working, but enables others to work for payment. Unemployment is a part of the reality of life in South Africa and the consequences are experienced by entire communities, such as an increased crime rate and divisions because of competition for jobs. Family violence is often a result.

Unemployment in South Africa may have two major consequences, being the question of financial survival and that of re-employment, which is difficult if there is no chance of keeping in line with necessary skills. Two approaches are preparing people for the realities of these circumstances, and dealing with coping styles for unemployment. People are taught how to be motivated and how to challenge their lives constructively in order to take control of their futures as far as they can. Job-creation is more important than job-seeking.

Reasons why people work are psychological (e.g. for security, status and responsibility) and material (e.g. for money, cf 2.2.6.7). Having a job and working (e.g. by selling effort or goods on a part-time basis) are not necessarily the same things (working a few hours per week may mean that a student can have time to study, as opposed to being tied down in a full-time appointment). People working for themselves will need to be confident, reliable, energetic, ambitious, orderly and good with relationships with other people. Lindhard (1987:55) has identified objectives to be sought in programmes for the unemployed, which include attitudes towards challenging traditional ideas of status only being connected to a certain job, demonstrating alternatives for survival by creating one's own income, showing the importance

of choices, discussing ways of being usefully unemployed, by learning new skills and adapting ones already mastered and by discussing the need to remain in good health. It is also necessary to develop empathy for unemployed people and to learn how to set realistic goals for the future, starting with short-term plans for obtaining employment by persistently looking for work (Atmore 1987:61-72).

### 3.5 CAREER SKILLS NEEDED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Skills needed for, not only survival, but for success and prosperity in a chosen career at the start of a new millennium have been seen to be highly different to what has been the experience of humankind thus far (cf 2.13). Moses (1998:110, emphasis added) cites Grove's summary:

The old career was like an animal in a zoo, protected, fed, and nurtured. The new career is like an animal in the wild. You have to look after yourself, and your survival is always at stake. You are competing with other animals all the time for scarce resources.

This situation does have redeeming features though: an animal in the wild is in a more natural, organic state, not living in cages, free to run and to roam. There are more uncertainties to deal with, but also more possibilities. The positive spin-offs of greater career self-management for more individuals, according to Moses (1998:117) are not only negative: there may be more time with family and friends, making the individual a more active player in managing his/her own life.

According to Rich (1997) the skills needed for survival in the 21st century may be called 'Megaskills'. These may be learnt at home or in school, with parents, grandparents and teachers equally involved in shaping children's abilities through basic 'inner engines' of learning and social competence which enable them not only to learn, but also to use that learning as a catalyst for success in all areas of life. These 'Megaskills' include confidence, motivation, the will to work hard, responsibility, initiative, perseverance, caring, teamwork, common sense, problem solving and the ability to focus, empowering people to learn throughout their lives so as to provide assurance in an ever-changing world. Having literacy and academic knowledge is only being marginally prepared for job success: school leavers have trouble giving their best to their work, in having disciplined work habits and having positive, caring attitudes towards others which lead

to adult productivity and happiness. Rich (1997:5-11) sees success as being able to deal constructively with the breaks in life, good or bad, as well as the ability to create some of the good breaks and not to wait for so-called 'luck to strike'. Amid the uncertainties about the future, the ability and perseverance to keep on learning is a constant source of confidence by being ready for pursuing education and job success (Rich 1997:21). According to Rich (1997:305-307 & 333, emphasis added) the world of work is changing faster than schools can keep up with, which means that children need to be prepared by all adults, at home and at school, to be able to be employed in future or to be the ones doing the employing through entrepreneurial endeavours. An added benefit is that adults and children spend more time with each other by means this approach, with both feeling more valued.

A striking conclusion of an empirical study based on a Delphi procedure is by Van Zolingen (1995 in Nijhof 1998:26-27). It was done regarding the opinions of various experts as to what the key vocational qualifications for the future are and what the domains are for learning. The fundamental skills required for both future economical and technical education (converging systems) are the following: problem solving, methodical thinking, having a sense of responsibility, precision, self reliance, exercising initiative, representativeness, quality consciousness, dealing with information, commercial insight/knowledge. Added to the list for economical education are the following: oral and written expression, decisiveness, social skills and readiness to take part in the world of work. These points underscore that experts are of the opinion that the traditional fragmentation of work will disappear and will go over into teams with representatives from all disciplines. The consequences include a greater emphasis on broader knowledge and interdisciplinary training *for all positions*, overriding the abilities that 'smart' machines with almost human intelligence have and that can make the evaluations and decisions needed (Nijhof 1998:21). (The reader is referred Nijhof 1998:24-26 for a more complete list in table form of skills expected to be required for future vocational education).

According to Achtenhagen (1998:138) the traditional *Enkyklios paideia*-curriculum of the past 2 500 years will be substituted in future by a threefold structure of competencies: individual, professional and social competence (cf 2.13, 3.4.4 & 5). These multi-skills include motives of activity seen as professional attitudes, such as motivation and commitment, flexibility, responsibility, the ability to handle emotions, fear and uncertainty. The professionals of the future

need to integrate several dimensions of skill in a multi-layered competence-concept, related to the structure of occupational core problems. Core problems in concrete practice do not occur separately one by one, but in structured, dynamic and often contradictory combinations and professionals are expected to find efficient approaches and solutions (Onstenk 1998:126-127). The essential mission of education must, however, never be left to chance, namely that of helping every person to develop his/her own potential and to become a complete human being (Streumer & Bjorkquist 1998:249, emphasis added).

### **3.6 LIFE SKILLS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

#### **3.6.1 Alternative terminology**

In school curricula in various countries different terms are used for the concept of life skills. Terms such as 'citizenship' and 'skill streaming' have been used. In South Africa the term 'Youth Preparedness' has been used for special periods in the time-table dealing with such issues as First Aid, knowledge about sexual matters and study skills, to name but a few. In a personal interview and discussion with Van Rensburg, one of the consultants for the planning and (re)construction of the curriculum for South African education, he stipulated that the term '**Life Orientation**' has been used in the documents relating to Curriculum 2005. He is of the opinion that this is preferable to the term 'life skills' as it is more widely encompassing and is used in the policy documents for the planning of this curriculum transformation. The word 'life skills', he feels, refers only to cognitive and manual skills, whereas 'Life Orientation' refers to a wider range of abilities and/or competences, including emotional and social capabilities, attitudes and values (Van Rensburg 1999, personal communication).

It must be accentuated that the concept of life skills education should be included in every subject and by every educator, across the whole spectrum of the curriculum.

#### **3.6.2 Life skills in Curriculum 2005**

The development of an outcomes-based curriculum as being implemented at present in South African education, has as its point of departure the intended results of the learning experience.

These results refer to what learners are expected to acquire and these results do not refer merely to the prescribed content. Critical cross-field education, training and outcomes relate to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which all learners must attain in order to help them to be successful in life in a variety of contexts and also to contribute to their communities and the country as a whole (Van Rensburg 1998:27-29).

There are eight domains which learners in general education are exposed to in a balanced curriculum; these would serve as a sound basis for developing learning programmes in schools. A brief reference to each of the learning domains follows, with a more detailed statement concerning Life Orientation included (Van Rensburg 1998:30-40):

- I Language, literacy and communication are seen as intrinsic to human development and central to lifelong learning
- II Human and social sciences contribute to developing responsible citizens in a culturally diverse democratic society within an interdependent world
- III Technology is the use of knowledge, skills and resources to meet human needs and wants, to recognise and solve problems by investigating, designing, developing and evaluating products, processes and systems
- IV Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences is the construction of knowledge that deals with qualitative and quantitative relationships of space and time
- V Natural sciences may be divided into four themes as organising principles, namely the planet earth and beyond, life and living, energy and change, and matter and materials
- VI Arts and Culture are crucial components of developing human resources and unlocking the creativity of people within cultural diversity
- VII Economic and Management Sciences are fundamental in preparing citizens to understand the critical importance of reconstruction, development and economic growth for a sustainable economic future and for an improvement of the standard of living and
- VIII Life Orientation

The time allotted to each phase of Life Orientation in these phases varies according to the age of the learners (cf Van Rensburg 1998:40).

◆ Rationale:

Life Orientation is seen as fundamental in empowering learners to live meaningful lives in a society that demands rapid transformation.

- ◆ It is an integral part of education, training and development.
- ◆ It is central to the holistic unfolding of the learners, caring for their intellectual, physical, personal, social, spiritual and emotional growth and for the way these facets work together.
- ◆ It locates its vision of individual growth within the quest for a free, democratic and stable society, for quality of life in the community and for a productive economy.

Life Orientation, therefore:

- ◆ enhances the practice of positive values, attitudes, behaviour and skills in the individual and in the community;
- ◆ works for a transformation of society in the interests of promoting a human rights culture, underpinned by:
  - ◇ the striving for a fully inclusive, egalitarian society free of all discrimination as underpinned by the Constitution;
  - ◇ a unified co-operative society in which diversity is cherished;
  - ◇ individuals' appreciation of their own beliefs, values and practices and, at the same time, respect for the rights of others to do likewise.
- ◆ promotes the achievements of individual learners' potential by strengthening and integrating their
  - ◇ self-concept;
  - ◇ capacity to develop healthy relationships;
  - ◇ ability to make informed and responsible decisions;

- ◇ independent, critical and creative thinking;
  - ◇ survival and coping skills;
  - ◇ commitment to lifelong learning;
  - ◇ pleasure in the expression and co-ordination of their intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional and moral powers.
- 
- ◆ encourages a healthy lifestyle, characterised by:
    - ◇ specific and contextualised application of the actions and values expressed in this rationale;
    - ◇ celebration of, care for and responsibility towards the self and the social, natural and material environments.
- 
- ◆ Specific Outcomes
- 
- ◆ Understand and accept themselves as unique and worthwhile beings.
  - ◆ Use skills and display attitudes and values that improve relationships in family, group and community.
  - ◆ Respect the rights of people to hold personal beliefs and values.
  - ◆ Demonstrate value and respect for human rights as reflected in *Ubuntu* and other similar philosophies.
  - ◆ Practise acquired life- and decision-making skills.
  - ◆ Access career and other opportunities and set goals that will enable them to make the best use of their potential and talents.
  - ◆ Demonstrate the values and attitudes necessary for a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

- ◆ Evaluate and participate in activities that demonstrate effective human movement and development.

For a more detailed discussion of the rationale, practice and outcomes envisaged by this complete programme, the reader is referred to Van Rensburg (1998:27-41) and Van der Horst and McDonald (1997:62-63).

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

In contrast to other subjects, which are outlined fairly clearly in school curricula, the concept of life skills (or life orientation) is extremely wide in every area mentioned in the sources consulted. It is clear that every aspect of human endeavour may be regarded as being within the parameters of human life skills activity. In reality, every subject included in the curriculum is part of the undertaking of the family of humankind to educate its members for being equipped for participating in life, in succeeding in any vocation or simply, for being regarded as a human being living according to acceptable standards.

The next chapter describes the methodology and research design used in this research, while subsequent chapters will present, discuss and synthesise the actual data generated through semi-structured interviews with twelve professional persons from various disciplines.

## CHAPTER 4

### QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

*There is no scientific method as such.... The most vital feature of the scientist's procedure has been merely to do the utmost with his/her mind, no holds barred.*

Dalton

*(R)esearch ... has been used increasingly in order to make decisions. Because research systematically describes or measures reality, it is a better source of knowledge than one's own experience, beliefs, or intuition alone.*

Schumacher and McMillan

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature study reflected in the preceding chapters forms an important background to the investigation contained in this thesis. In chapter 2 the concepts of careers and professions are discussed, as well as an overview given of career development and various views of career success in the world of work. Chapter 3 examines the concept of life skills education as seen from different angles.

The literature survey carried out provided a comprehensive overview of existing research as an essential preparatory step in the researcher's preparation for investigation into the realm of life skills needed for professional career success. This substantial literature study served to identify many of the significant issues influencing the topics being examined, as well as possible weaknesses and gaps in the body of knowledge surrounding preparedness for career and personal success. Many questions for further enquiry, which emerged in the process were further pursued in the interviews conducted with the successful professionals who were the focus of this study, thus forming the framework of the research project.

Following the literature study (chapters 2 and 3), chapter 4 now presents a detailed description of the methodology and design which were used to study the career progress of the twelve professionals consulted. The chapter begins with a discussion of what is understood to be the essence of qualitative methodology, followed by the rationale for the choice of this approach and

a description of the design of the study, including a description of the procedures used in locating and interviewing the participants. An account of the methods used to analyse, order and understand the data is also given.

## **4.2 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY - THE THEORETICAL BASIS AND MAIN CHARACTERISTICS EMPLOYED**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

With the aim of this research being to examine the life-world of the six professional men and six professional women interviewed, a qualitative approach was considered to be the most suitable for the subject of the examination. This was done with a view to contribute to the knowledge of improving the teaching of life skills in education, after having examined the career success of the persons interviewed. The aim has been to explore, describe and explain or understand the career paths of the people interviewed, in order to obtain new insights and provide meaningful interventions into the teaching of life skills, with education as one of the 'caring professions', functioning in 'a world of scarce resources' (cf De Vos, Schurink & Strydom 1998:5 - 20).

### **4.2.2 The principle characteristics of qualitative research methodology**

To ensure clarity of the methods followed, the principle characteristics of qualitative research have been understood to include the following concepts (cf *inter alia* Glaser & Strauss 1967; Lemmer 1989; Bogdan & Biklen 1982 & 1992; Schumacher & McMillan; De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurink 1998; Gall, Gall & Borg 1999):

#### **4.2.2.1 *The concept of qualitative research***

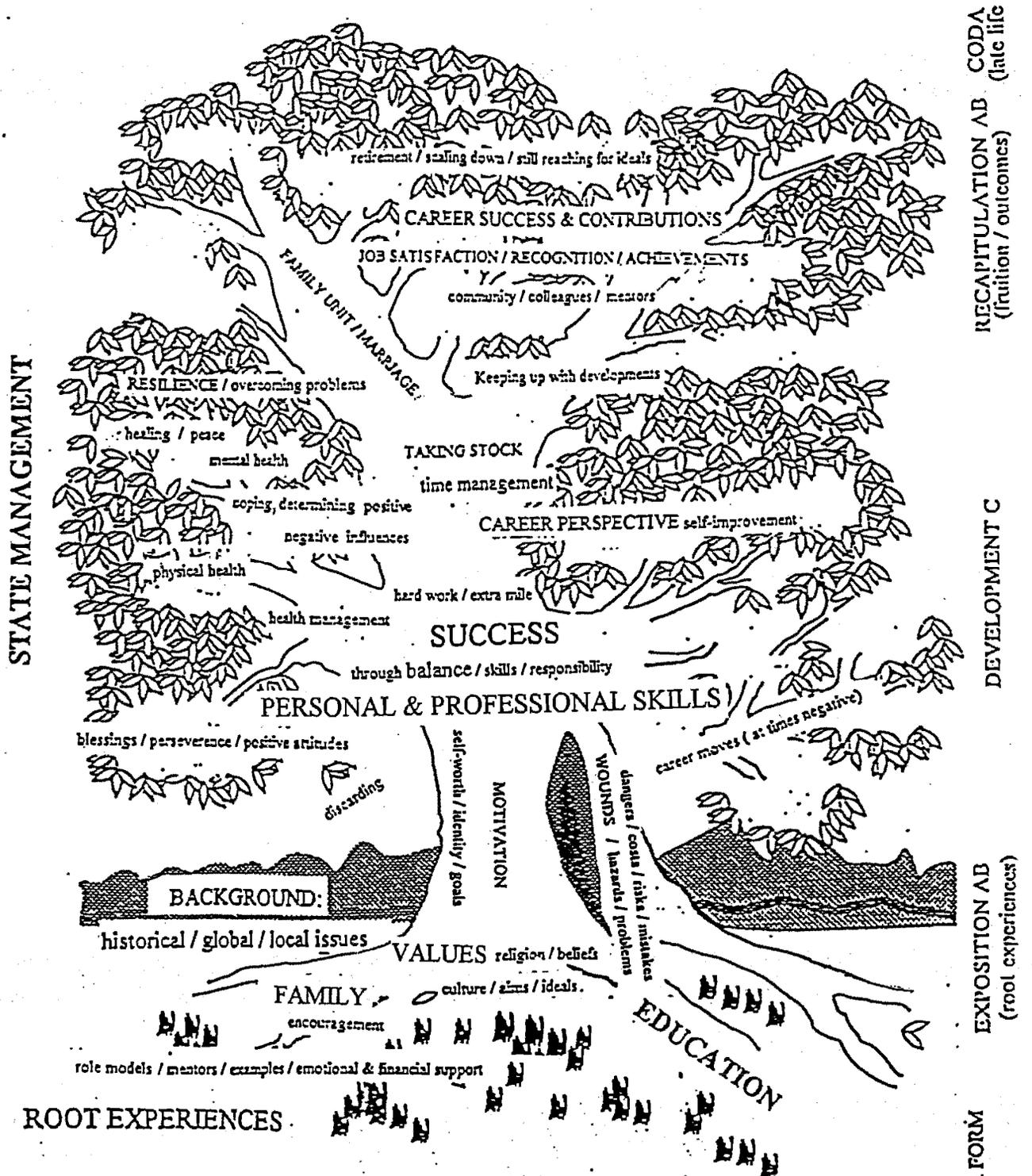
Research in general provides a framework for practical activities by helping to build knowledge for practice through situation-specific data (De Vos, Schurink & Strydom 1998:6). Where quantitative research deals with mainly numerical data, qualitative research data are principally verbal (Leedy 1993: parts 3 & 4). Also, qualitative approaches are not strictly formalised, the

scope is less defined and a more philosophical mode of operation is adopted; yet, ideally, the two approaches complement each other (De Vos et al. 1998:15-17, emphasis added), with qualitative designs being less structured than quantitative designs, and with data appearing as words (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:37 & 41).

Qualitative research is an umbrella term covering many methods and approaches to the study of human behaviour. It involves becoming aware of an observed problem through a willingness or "*a passion to see*", implying a systematic openness to the values of others as they are relevant to the situation (Mannheim in Webb & Glesne 1992:779, original and added emphasis) and becoming aware of new perspectives towards everyday life and human activity (Webb & Glesne 1992:773-805). It involves experiencing the life world of people interviewed, enquiring about their background and examining the data gathered in this regard (Wolcott 1992:22-23), with the ultimate answer to questions being "What is the meaning of all these facts?", hoping thereby to enhance the quality of life of learners involved in future education (De Vos et al. 1998:54-57). Vital to the process of qualitative enquiry is the concept of *observation*, which, according to Wolcott (1992:19-21, original and added emphasis), include the concepts of *watching, asking, listening and examining*, the observation and interviewing yielding complementary rather than comparable data. The reason for this is that what people tell us tends to reveal how they believe things should be, whereas what the researcher observes firsthand is more likely to reveal how things are, especially when field observations extend throughout an adequate time period.

Initial developments in this mode of research have not changed in essence: how the experiences of people, groups, institutions, subcultures and cultures may best be represented for others to understand (Schurink 1998a:244). The research design in qualitative research is not provided as a step-by-step plan and therefore a design is determined by the researcher during the process, following the strategies most suitable to the subject (De Vos et al. 1998:80), which Schumacher & McMillan (1993:15, original emphasis) call an *emergent design*.

MIND MAP TERMS FOR TREE DIAGRAM:



KEY SKILLS FOR CAREER AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Diagram 1 (Wolcott in LeCompte, Millroy & Preissle 1992:23)



METAPHOR: SONATA FORM

Schurink (1998:240-244, original and added emphasis) sees this type of research as an holistic, multi perspective approach, comparable to a voyage of discovery rather than of verification. It is predominantly descriptive in nature, with its main aim to understand social life and the meaning people attach to everyday life. Through this understanding (*verstehen*) everyday human actions may be interpreted and understood more fully, rather than explained. The primary goal of this type of research is to understand the life-world of groups or persons and to present the findings in their natural language, through an interpretation of their language, art, gestures and politics (Lemmer 1989:128).

While there generally is order and patterning in human behaviour, there are infinite variations: the behaviours of human beings are unpredictable. By the concepts employed in qualitative research the diversity in human society may be more fully understood, as the diversity of nature may be more fully understood by studying chaos theory in mathematics (Dobbert & Kurth-Schai 1992:130-135) and also in physics. By attempting to understand an identified problem, qualitative research may throw light on the following aspects of endeavours regarding educational intervention in the observable patterns of human behaviour: determining which causal factors can be affected and which cannot, given the constraints of time, human resources, culture and money, as well as anticipating what changes might be brought about in the domains concerned (Schensul & Schensul 1992:182-183).

In the light of the foregoing paragraphs, qualitative methods may be loosely defined as those research procedures which produce descriptive data, as embodied in people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour, rather than in numbers. By these means the researcher strives to gain access to motives, meanings, emotions and other subjective aspects of the lives of individuals and groups which would be lost in a quantitative project. Even the language used in the findings of the research is the lively, everyday language of the situation (Lemmer 1989:129, emphasis added).

Piantanida and Garman (1999:xvi-xvi, original emphasis, and 67) encourage students to let go of the *definitional* mode of knowing and to enter into a *discursive* and interpretive mode related to the study of literary criticism. They argue that, on the whole, they have observed that their

women doctoral students share this proclivity for interpretive knowing, especially those intending to remain in educational roles, for which the style of personal narrative is ideal. Piantanida and Garman (1999:7-8) compare the challenge of writing a qualitative dissertation to running a marathon. This analogy raises the important issues of both pacing oneself and mobilising support along the way. They also divide the development of the research into four phases : the beginning phase (facing and moving into the dissertation, crafting and proposing the study), the middle phase (living with the study and getting to portrayals), the ending phase (again living and portrayal, entering into academic discourse) and the transitional phase (adjusting to life after the dissertation). In all stages the feeling of despondency experienced may not necessarily be a disadvantage: it is often needed for emotional distancing and the thinking through of problems more objectively.

(For a more complete discussion of the criteria for evaluating case studies which have been taken into consideration, the reader is referred to Gall et al. 1999:303-308. These are subdivided into three sections relating to readers' needs, the use of sound research methods and to the thoroughness of data collection).

#### **4.2.2.2        *Problem formulation and reformulation***

Beginning with foreshadowed problems of observed phenomena, qualitative observations, made from the literature study, personal observations and the narrative descriptions made after data have been studied, researchers are enabled to inductively delineate concepts. A concept is an abstraction from observed phenomena, the word indicating commonalities among the observed events and situations, as well as distinguishing specific phenomena from other events and situations. Anticipated research problems will normally be reformulated during data collection and analysis, always endeavouring to focus on issues of social concern (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:92-95).

#### **4.2.2.3      *Understanding the life-world of the participants***

To aid the understanding of the life-world of the participants involved, the findings are presented in natural language to be able to represent the findings from their own frame of reference. This attempts to seek direct understanding of the 'what' of the life histories, circumstances and activities, as well as the 'why', gathering and presenting data in such a way that the subjects speak for themselves (Schurink 1998a:245; Piantanida & Garman 1999:167). The qualitative researcher believes that human actions are strongly influenced by the settings in which they occur (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:15).

Qualitative research is based on a naturalistic-phenomenological philosophy that views reality as multi layered, interactive and as a shared experience interpreted by individuals. The focus is normally on one phenomenon (or group of phenomena shared by the participants), selected by the researcher in a case study design and which form the basis for asking the important questions in the matter (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:373-375).

In this study the group selected was a group of successful professionals. The experience of the participants chosen have proved to be particularly useful, as they have been faced with the problems studied and have made conscious attempts to address them (cf De Vos 1998:391). Woods (1992:372) expresses the view that few straight answers may be expected in this type of research, as there is always more to be said in the infinite scope and depth of human experience. As was observed by Woods, the discussions may be voyages of discovery for the participants as well. In the present research programme, participants also mentioned that they had gained new insights into their own experiences, which they viewed as enriching or empowering.

#### **4.2.2.4      *Social realities of the participants***

In qualitative research, social realities of the circumstances are sought as embodied by people's own written and spoken words, as well as by their observable behaviour. According to Gall et al. (1999:14 and 289) qualitative research is based on an interpretivist epistemology in which social reality is seen as a set of meanings that are constructed by the individuals who participate

in that reality. According to Woods (1992:372-373), research interviews are a process of reality construction to which both parties contribute and who are both affected by it. The experiences of the interviewer are, of necessity, reflected in the construction of the discussions and ensuing considerations (cf 4.2.2.6).

Data collected have needed to be rich in description concerning the life worlds of the people studied, with sufficient sources to confirm or challenge the understanding of the researcher, until a point of relative saturation is reached (Schurink 1998b:252-255). One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that of a 'naturalistic-phenomenological' philosophy, which assumes that *multiple realities* are socially constructed through individual and collective definitions of the situation. Participation observation enables the researcher to obtain people's perception of reality expressed in their actions and expressed as feelings, thoughts and beliefs. This includes muted cues, such as facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and other unverballed social interactions which suggest the subtle meanings of language. This does *not* mean that everything that happens is successfully captured (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:14 and 419-422, original emphasis). In addition, according to Brennan (1997:164), the mere observation of research participants alters their behaviour.

The specific views of women have been important for this study. The life experiences of women are vastly different to those of men, compared by Aptheker (in Grant & Fine 1992:437) to bits of textiles composing tapestries. Even when talking of goals and motives women's style is different to that of men, who usually have the power to exert more control over the course of their lives. Women's accounts leap back and forth between the private and the public activity domains, being experienced as less separable than those of men. According to Harrington & Boardman (1997:28, emphasis added) it is important to build a comparison between men and women, because the traditional subordinate status of women in society introduces additional obstacles to be overcome for levels of career success to be reached. It is also most important to gain insight into why women's lives follow clearly distinguishable patterns as they are a socially less powerful group than men (Lemmer 1989:147, emphasis added), often torn between loyalties to both their careers and to their homes and family. Qualitative research is valuable in attending to their concerns, supported by their own views.

Wellington (1998:100) states that until recently, women were all but excluded from the upper reaches of the corporate business world in the USA. The entrance of women into the business world is having a significant effect on the lives of Americans as 49% of the professional, managerial and administrative work force consists of women and women constitute half the nation's talent pool. According to Fritchen (personal discussion, Dec. 2000), women are making significant inroads into the corporate management world in South Africa.

Roman (1992:556-587) states that feminist researchers working across a variety of theoretical and political traditions have repeatedly been challenging exclusively masculine ways of knowing and describing the world. In the process attempts have been made to revise traditional research epistemologies and modes of representation, especially regarding the women's gender-specific experience of subordination and discrimination. Attempts have also been made by feminists of various orientations who worked to revise gender-blind epistemology and represent women's 'historically silenced' experiences of motherhood and childbirth as more natural and democratic in social transformation. Jansen and Peshkin (1992:692-695) state that feminism overtly challenges the credibility of patriarchal views where there is a total lack of attention to women as agents of knowledge. They stress that androcentrism is a bias like any other bias, which can be eliminated. These 'emancipated' views have had special significance for this research, without dismissing the value of the sympathetic views of many male researchers and participants.

It has been observed in the literature study preparing for this research, that women authors and researchers have more often been recognised and included since the second part of the twentieth century, whereas before that, feminine scientific work and writing were relatively scarce, inferring, as it were, that feminine observations of the world were, what Roman (1992:573, original emphasis) views of a scientific existence where women's experiences were seen as part of "a social world that is meant to be *gazed upon but not challenged or transformed*". According to Jansen and Peshkin (1992:693), citing Harding 1987, the voice of science is a masculine one and history is written always from the point of view of men of the dominant class and race.

#### 4.2.2.5 *The role and stance of the researcher*

The researcher comprises the key research instrument in qualitative research, collecting and analysing the data obtained from the natural setting of the participants with a view to improving or contributing to reform, in this case the world of education. It also involves 'posturing' (taking a stance) by the researcher, through *active listening* and being 'problem-focused', analogous to being familiar with the field as with a 'marketplace of ideas' (Wolcott 1992:4-15; Woods 1992:372, original emphasis). This listening requires dialogical listening to at least three voices: that of the voice of the research participant represented by tape or text; the background of the theoretical framework providing the concepts and tools for interpretation and that of self-awareness for drawing conclusions from the material (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber 1998:10).

Lemmer (1989:132-137) views the stance taken by the researcher to be crucial in obtaining valid data, with personal characteristics being simultaneously advantages and drawbacks. Although the researcher attempts to work with scientific appraisal and objectivity, s/he is nevertheless a person with values, beliefs and a self, interpreting what is seen and heard, being neither too involved nor too distant, yet never manipulating truth to serve the quest for authenticity (Woods 1992:373-379). The researcher should maintain a certain detachment from the participants, so that after having completed the reconstruction of the participants' reality, the researcher can transcend this view to see what they do not see in an attitude of *critical awareness*, yet refraining from passing any judgement (Lemmer 1989:133, original emphasis).

Interviews are termed ethnographic interviews, in which the researcher has in-depth discussions with people included in the study and these discussions are taped for later analysis. The persons interviewed are encouraged to talk in detail about topics and areas of importance to them. The art of listening is also a demanding task, requiring that the researcher listen with all senses, being able to take on the role of the other person and to see the world as the participant does (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:43 and 415-421). Woods (1992:374-5) believes that the research subject and researcher need to work intensively between meetings, reflecting on the material, refining points, discovering new slants, spotting apparent inconsistencies and contradictions, as

well as attempting preliminary analysis. The researcher does not stand above or outside these activities, but in the centre, not just as a trigger to release the other's thoughts, but as the main contributor to a situation where both parties project themselves into the interaction and both construct meanings. It is to the researcher's advantage to know the background of the interview situation, so as to be able to identify with the scenario, as no information is straight and unidimensional, but should be seen within a context of meaning (Woods 1992:375, emphasis added). According to Fisher & Adams (1994:4-5) observable human behaviour is often viewed only as an indicator of internal psychological processes, but it does, in fact, connect people and creates a new phenomenon to observe, as part of its social system as a whole.

With particular reference to the use of qualitative research in the caring professions, the final product is then that of the experiences of people speaking for themselves through the researcher, with the researcher being merely a link between the field text and the community, in an attempt to elicit a common body of knowledge. With no bedrock of knowledge or complete agreement on the nature of knowledge about human beings from which the caring professions may draw, emphasis has been placed on making these professions increasingly scientific, especially as they are in a unique position to collect information concerning the innermost experiences of human beings. In the social sciences 'ecology' (meaning equilibrium between all life and the environment) may be defined as the scientific study, analysis and evaluation of the development and maintenance of relationships between people and their social environment. According to Schurink researchers working in the field of the social sciences need to be acutely aware that this fieldwork is not a soft option, but rather an emotionally difficult, committed and time-consuming task (Schurink 1998a:247-263, emphasis added).

Qualitative researchers accept and acknowledge their own role in the construction of social realities, which focuses on the self of the researcher and is termed *reflexivity*. In addition, it entails an awareness that readers will form their own constructions from what is reported (Gall et al. 1999:14-15, 297-298 and 307, original emphasis). Where the ideal quantitative researcher is detached from the study to avoid bias, the qualitative researcher, playing a pivotal role, becomes immersed in and inextricably interwoven with the situation, present or past, with

Erikson's '*disciplined subjectivity*' (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:15, original and added emphasis, Lemmer 1989:136-137).

Woods (1992:373-375, emphasis added) observes the researcher to be a finely tuned instrument, taking years to complete a study as a major slice of one's life, with considerable personal investment as part of the research, not separate and hidden from it. Findings are penetrations of layers of reality, with a tightness of fit between various data collections which need to be tested and retested in an ongoing construction.

#### 4.2.2.6 *Dilemmas of the researcher role*

Meanings and interpretations of interaction deduced by the researcher in qualitative research, may give rise to certain dilemmas. However, if these matters are handled sensitively, they can also be a source of strength (Woods 1992:375-381). The first consideration is that of involvement versus distance: immersion on the one hand and scientific appraisal and objectivity on the other. By reflectivity outside the situation, triangulation of methods to increase validity, reflection and *post hoc* consideration of material all aid the scientific process and, if involvement and distance are cultivated in a judicious mixture, the researcher may have the best of both worlds.

Secondly, there needs to be a balance between creativity and evaluation, which may be arrived at by constant checks and discipline through literary comparisons, searching, monitoring and sifting for ambiguities and negative cases and contrary evidence. Covert versus overt research is the next problem in the field of ethnography, representing the tension between the public's right to know and the subject's right to privacy. This problem may be countered by the principle of 'informed consent', where the research participant knows what the research is about (Woods 1992:379-380). In this particular study there has been no experience of moral conflict, as there has been a clear and open relationship between researcher and participants, resting on a clear understanding of what the objectives of the research have been, within fairness, respect for persons involved and 'non-negotiable' markers laid down by academic rules of conduct agreed upon.

Roman (in Hammersley & Atkinson, 1992:571) accentuates the fact that the researcher describes and explains only a limited or partial construction of the social totality being studied, as, even in a small-scale setting, no researcher is able to describe or reconstruct the totality of any segment of a culture.

Piantanida and Garman (1999:170) refer to the question of the drudgery of doing one's own transcriptions when not being able to afford the help of a transcriptionist, as having the benefit of adding an important level of discipline to the enquiry. Although this can be extremely tedious, the exercise of creating stable records of the research allows the researcher to resonate more fully and carefully with the data of the enquiry. In this study it has been found that this has made the researcher more intimately familiar with the contents of the interviews.

#### 4.2.2.7 *Issues of objectivity and subjectivity*

These two concepts form a dyad as partners in research. Subjectivity is often seen as distortion and bias, depending on the stance taken (cf Jansen & Peshkin 1992). It is, however, strongly connected to the place of values in society and prevailing mental and philosophical attitudes, such as current gender issues. Jansen & Peshkin (1992:703) cite Rubin as providing a plausible answer to the various debates, the issue being not so much objectivity, but the core of the matter, namely that of self-awareness and the consciousness of being partially confined by personal convictions (cf limitations of this research in 4.4.8).

In qualitative research the researcher occupies an integral position crucial to obtaining valid data, which is built on a relationship of reciprocal trust and *rapport*, thereby enabling the participants to willingly share knowledge of their life-world. This requires that the researcher has to temporarily attempt to suspend own beliefs, maintaining a certain objective detachment and an attitude of critical awareness in a stance of delicate balance between objectivity (or scientific distance) and empathy. According to Grant and Fine (1992:432-433) all research has some element of subjectivity, with a contemporary trend to view qualitative research as more akin to literary criticism than to quantitative research. Jansen and Peshkin (1992:704-705) cite Stake as calling for a needed subjectivity in educational research and evaluation, because personal

experience and meaning, together with introspection, often have the more urgently required concern for relevance than unfeeling objectivity, as emotional reactions can often enhance the accuracy of research concerning the personal experiences of human beings. LeCompte (in Jansen & Peshkin 1992:705-706) stresses that what is needed is in fact 'disciplined subjectivity', taking care to analyse oneself as carefully for biases stemming from gender, social class and ethnicity, as what one attempts to analyse other people. This self-analysis is termed by Krieger (in Jansen & Peshkin 1992:711-712) as 're-engagement' with hidden personal agendas which the researcher may have, which were significant in understanding the importance of how personal qualities affect the research process. This personal involvement of the researcher has, at times, the added advantage of gaining deeper understanding of the topics under study (Jansen & Peshkin 1992:715-717).

#### 4.2.2.8 *Issues of validity and reliability*

**Validity**, as the *sine qua non* of good research design, is generally defined as the trustworthiness of inferences drawn from data. This has always been a concern in educational research, especially since the emergence of qualitative research methods, which have posed new questions (Eisenhart & Howe 1992:644). The question of validity in qualitative research is determined, to a large extent, by how the data represent the accurate subjective experience of the participants. This information is determined primarily by the participants' willingness to communicate their experiences to the researcher in an atmosphere of co-operation, trust and understanding (Lemmer 1989:156).

Within the post-modern skepticism towards conventional understandings of validity (cf Eisenhart & Howe 1992), the concept of 'trustworthiness' of research is taken to mean that the researcher should attempt to ensure the readers of the research report that the enquiry is worth paying attention to and taking account of, by the mounting of arguments and criteria used, as well as questions asked, that would be persuasive on the issue under scrutiny. These include the accuracy or truth value of the findings being studied, with applicability referring to the likelihood of comparable findings pertaining to other groups in other situations, while the findings should also be consistent and objective. The main aim is always that the researcher's interpretations of data

gathered are credible to those who provided the data. However, it must be understood that specific research designs have their own logic and coherence, which therefore imply that a general approach to validity must accommodate differences among specific research designs with the understanding that the metaphors used encourage openness and scrutiny of research processes and results (Eisenhart & Howe 1992:649-655).

**Reliability** in qualitative research is viewed by Bogdan and Biklen (1992:48) as the fit between what is recorded data and what has actually occurred in the setting being studied, rather than literal consistency in results and observations made by different researchers across different observations. For this 'fit' to be ensured, all collected data in the present investigation were analysed and interpreted in a uniform manner, as the researcher needed to avoid disturbing the natural flow of information from participants as little as possible.

In this investigation, and in the light of the stated criteria for validity, all participants in the study voluntarily shared information and were sincere in being motivated to share their experiences regarding the field of investigation. All were keen to endorse the investigation, regarding it as a compliment to be invited to join the '**winning team**', as the researcher liked to call the group of professionals involved. They all expressed the hope that the results would be of help to other professionals in their endeavours to be successful in their careers, as well as in their private lives and all wanted copies of the interview transcriptions as a general contribution to schooling. In all interviews the researcher experienced a high level of *rappport* with the participants. The researcher returned to some of the participants for brief clarification and confirmation of some basic aspects of themes which had emerged from various interviews.

Owing to the duality of being objective yet empathetic, the background characteristics of the researcher may have some effect on the validity of qualitative research. However, it may also be argued that certain personal attributes may enhance the research project, rather than hinder it. Therefore the researcher had to make sure that the interaction with informants was natural, unobtrusive and non-threatening. The values, assumptions and beliefs of the researcher are inextricably interwoven with the research process. For this reason the assumptions, beliefs and

interests are stated clearly, as well as how they are expected to influence the research (cf Lemmer 1989; Schumacher & McMillan 1993:386-397).

Schurink, Schurink and Poggenpoel (1998:331, original emphasis) accentuate that Lincoln and Guba's 1985 model for ensuring validity and reliability in audio-visual recording of data can be applied with positive results: *truth value* deals with the credibility of the work methods, while *applicability* is concerned with how the findings can be applied to other settings; *consistency* is closely linked with dependability, whereas the fourth criterion is that of *neutrality* or confirmability, whereby the findings are a function solely of the research participants and conditions of the research and not of other biases and perspectives.

#### 4.2.2.9 *The inductive nature of the research*

As in other qualitative research, theory in this study is derived from the material collected during the research process, which reformulates and clarifies the thinking of the researcher in the process of the investigation. Patterns emerging from the data form the theory known as grounded theory, which fits the situation under observation and attempts to provide relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications. In addition to theory being formulated from the existing data, concepts are worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research, with the generation of theory based more on observation than on deduction. The research needs to be true to the problem being investigated, with clear boundaries of exactly what is to be investigated (Glaser & Strauss 1967:1-6; De Vos and Van Zyl 1998:265-267). Birley and Moreland (1998:28-29, emphasis added) state that grounded theory seeks to establish theory anew, as it were, from the data collected in the research, reworking facts in an original way to add to the pool of knowledge. As Schumacher and McMillan (1993:11) state, "The ultimate aim of research is thus to reduce complex realities to simple explanations".

In qualitative research, as an **inductive mode of research**, theory is perceived to be derived from material collected during the research process, emerging 'from the bottom up', as an alternative to quantitative research, with patterns emerging from the data collected during the research (Lemmer 1989:130-131, emphasis added). Glaser & Strauss (1967:21-46, emphasis added)

consider that the units used in the formation of grounded theory may be of any size, large or small, being useful in the study of various sociological groups. The concept of comparative analysis has proven to hold important potential for social research dealing with the generation of theory relevant to the field being studied, as well as being part of an 'ever-developing' theory, becoming more rich, complex and dense as it evolves. In the field of professional education, theory may be reformulated, ensuring that the research becomes open-ended and continually developing.

De Vos and Van Zyl (1998:267-270, emphasis added) have stated that questions need to be asked which would enable researchers to find answers to issues which seem to be important but remain unanswered. These questions, in an attitude of comparative inquiry and healthy scepticism, become progressively narrowed and more focused as concepts are discovered to be relevant or irrelevant, so that the concepts become sensitised and oriented towards action for imaginatively improving the situation in practice. This qualitative evaluation is seen by Patton (in Pitman & Maxwell 1992:735-736, emphasis added) as an "effort to increase human effectiveness through data-based inquiry". He states that this form of research must describe and interpret, with accurate description being the precursor of interpretation. In addition, creativity in analysis is the artistic side of qualitative research, where science is involved by being rigorous and critical, as well as being artistically imaginative. Thus, the 'multiple realities' of life may be seen more clearly and every aspect of human behaviour can be analysed from more than one perspective (Webb & Glesne 1992:782). The view of the poet Blake, who claimed that "imagination was the highest expression of the human spirit", as well as that of Bronowski, for whom "imagination is an implement of science, not a substitute for it" are cited (Webb & Glesne 1992:808).

Guba and Lincoln (in Pitman & Maxwell 1992:738) see interpretation as the construction of reality by people when they "attempt to make sense of their surroundings". Hereby it might be deduced that there are various approaches and that "the researcher seeks to describe not simply what he or she sees people doing and hears people saying, but primarily what the members of that community see themselves doing and hear themselves saying", with the researcher only mediating in the situation, working with procedures that work for that person in that setting. Decisions about whom to observe and talk to all depend on what is possible and appropriate for these

stakeholders at the time, working “within the context of the real lives of real people”, all aspects being ongoing and shaped according to the particular study (Pitman & Maxwell 1992:753-754).

Woods (1992:382-389) states that much qualitative work has been criticised for being merely descriptive, for being limited to ‘how’ rather than ‘why’ questions. True qualitative research starts from a ‘foreshadowed problem’ and works through the many ‘layers of reality’, classifications, categories and typologies. This is called ‘thick description’, in the process ‘mapping out’ previously uncharted territory. Once in the field, the search begins for new theory emerging from the situation being studied, which is actually constructed in the researcher’s head, but which is rigorously checked and rechecked against ongoing data received. Thus, new theory emerges from the indicators one identifies among the sheer weight of the information collected, through connections and relationships between apparently isolated ideas. These are signs that alert one to the fact that ‘something is up’, that there is something unusual about what is being witnessed and that there is a connection between events previously unsuspected, or a pattern that is gradually revealed over time. This is done primarily by means of comparative analysis across a range of situations, over a period of time among a number of people and through a variety of methods. These comparisons are made with a representative set of people both inside and outside the study, leading to an ‘escalation of insights’. The researcher becomes steeped in the data and consults the study supervisor, the literature and colleagues, which act as most important ‘sounding-boards’. The sounding-board is an important device for helping to articulate and shape ideas. A factor which is of crucial importance is time, which results in deeper involvement and therefore, through a wider field of contacts, knowledge and intense reflection, provides a stronger promise of groundedness. Woods (1992:388) cites as an example, research where observations used were worked over for 15 years, the ideas grew slowly, albeit painfully, and had the benefit of being truly ‘grounded’ though slow ripening in a challenging professional climate. Woods sees this pain barrier as being essential for most people and believes that it must be confronted and broken for quality theory to emerge. [The observations leading to the formulation of the present study were made over approximately 25 years, with original basic observations gestating into what has become this research topic].

#### **4.2.2.10      *Selection and interviewing of participants***

In qualitative research purposeful sampling is often used. This is done for understanding aspects of the phenomena identified with a view to increasing the utility of information obtained. This identification of phenomena needs to be done before the sample is chosen. This long process of observation is called “mapping the field” and requires establishing good relations with all possible and selected individuals, called participants in this study. Case studies, according to Birley & Moreland (1998:36), study singular phenomena occurring in singular cases or with small numbers of individual instances. The aim of any case study is to describe and understand the phenomena ‘in depth’ and ‘in the round’ indicating completeness. This serves the specifically useful purpose of uncovering important issues which can be overlooked in more superficial studies such as surveys. Birley and Moreland (1998:54) accentuate the view that life is about making decisions, revolving around particular critical incidents occurring in people’s lives. Making close contact in individual discussions and reading personal documents is more likely to reveal that which may be seen as ‘essential’ data in these instances. This corroborates the view of Webb and Glesne (1992:785) “that the backbone of social order is found in the trivial and mundane”, as these are often part of the fundamental requirements of social life.

#### **4.2.2.11      *Reciprocity and assuring confidentiality and anonymity***

In the approach to qualitative research, the researcher is restricted by boundaries of morally permitted behaviour while doing educational research, as education is an integral aspect of life of any society; nevertheless, the objectives of the research requires it to have immediate or potential applications or implications for educational improvement (Deyhle, Hess & LeCompte 1992:598-639). To enable the researcher to be successful in his or her ability to make connections with research participants, hard work needs to be done to cultivate the trust and willingness to participate, of the persons involved. This reciprocity and interaction involves exchanges of visits, access to private and professional life worlds and sharing of confidences as mutually beneficial information, which imply interdependencies. Each side of the research enterprise benefits from the exchange of information and services, but the level of reciprocity must be negotiated within an understanding of the importance of the research being conducted. The establishment of an

understanding and appreciation of the work is significant in the light of the fact that this research brings researcher and participant into close and prolonged proximity with each other. This is experienced as a positive encounter when done in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and regard, as has been the case in this study.

#### **4.2.2.12      *Data collection techniques***

Data collection is, according to Birley and Moreland (1998:40), not merely a process of collection, but also a process of creation. The data collection techniques used in this study have involved participant observation, intensive interviewing recorded on tape as well as the use of personal documents, with the semi-structured interview (Harrington & Boardman 1997) being the dominant strategy employed as a guided conversation, for which the foregoing literature is used as a basis for uncovering data-rich material. The participant's personal experience and perspective are revealed as 'the life behind the data'.

#### **4.2.2.13      *Data analysis***

The process of data analysis has been reached through the themes emerging from the field notes, interview transcripts and documents, with a simultaneous collection and analysis of data, which was then organised through predetermined steps of careful recording, reading and rereading, analysis and grouping according to important recurring topics or emerging themes. This is, according to Birley & Moreland (1998:58, 77 & 80) just as important as data collection and is the real essence of the research process. Furthermore, there is always a sense in which research results are provisional and it cannot be assumed that findings will apply to whole populations or through time. Qualitative studies aim at extension of understandings rather than generalisation of results. Generalisability is frequently *not* the intent of the study (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:402). However, qualitative methodology reflects an epistemology of which the distinguishing feature is that valid knowledge of the social world is to be found in direct knowledge and contextual understanding (Lemmer 1989:144-145, emphasis added).

#### 4.2.2.14 *The qualitative research report*

A vital section of the research is the research report and may be seen as the *raison d'être* for any research being done at all. The researcher has an ethical obligation to structure and present findings, based on the principle of fair return. Having had access to the private workings of the beliefs and behaviours of a group, the qualitative evaluator must represent the results of that access, whether for reasons of a field of academic study or as a social contract. This would include reporting on aspects that are found to be less than positive. This report needs to maintain the integrity of qualitative research as not just 'hearsay', as well as how to represent the responsibilities of evaluation towards those financing the study. The form of the report may vary, but, regardless of format, the recommendations of the study are reached after research has been conducted within the tenets of the discipline employed. Explanations of the data are eventually presented in the form of perspectives and recommendations which would not have been achievable otherwise. These recommendations should be based on the researcher's most creative, rigorous, insightful, carefully conceptualised and demanding application and extension of known theory. This is the reason for researchers to take an approach which explores every possible point of view conceivable within the known paradigms of the theoretical field, so as to be able to shed light on the question at hand. According to Pitman and Maxwell (1992:766-768) this exercise is intellectually challenging, physically demanding and time-consuming work. Bogdan and Biklen (1982:57) view qualitative research as "labour-intensive research". Pitman and Maxwell (1992:768) see this interactive labour as mining the theoretical landscape "to contribute a richly contextualised, emically sensitive, humble wisdom to the understanding of human processes, structures, struggles, and possibilities".

Following the rationale for the choice of methodology, the design of the present study is expounded in the following section.

### 4.3 THE CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Following the foregoing theoretical framework, a qualitative research method using semi-structured interviews was selected for this investigation and a discussion follows.

### **4.3.1 Introduction**

This study was carried out within the framework of a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews with an interview guide, by means of which major themes and questions identified during the literature study were used to elicit data from twelve professional men and women aged 45 and over. In the ensuing representation, a description of delimitations and procedures implemented in this study follows.

### **4.3.2 Personal rationale for the choice of this methodology**

A qualitative approach was regarded as suitable for this investigation due to the following reasons (cf Lemmer 1989; Bogdan & Biklen 1982 & 1992; LeCompte, Millroy & Preissle 1992; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993; De Vos et al. 1998; Gall, Gall & Borg 1999):

- ◆ It is seen as the most appropriate methodology for an exploratory study of a hitherto little-explored field, such as what personal factors influence professional career success, especially with regard to a dual career marriage.
- ◆ It is regarded as suitable due to emphasising description, induction, grounded theory and for general understanding of the lives of a group of people with their daily struggles.
- ◆ It has been found to be particularly appropriate for the study of people's lives with regard to their career development since the late 1960s.
- ◆ It contributes effectively to the identification of suitable life skills for future envisaged career success.

### **4.3.3 Sample population and sampling strategies**

It was decided to interview a sample population of six professional men and six professional women in this investigation. Most qualitative research uses small samples (Bogdan & Biklen

1982:2, Bogdan & Biklen 1992:50 and De Vos 1998:253-255) on account of the following methodological considerations:

When searching for understanding of the meaning behind behaviour, a small sample approach is seen to be more effective regarding the detail and quality of the experience of an individual or a small group. It portrays representation of certain cultural experiences influencing the validity of the sample, with depth of investigation being the aim, rather than breadth. Lemmer (1989:150) emphasises that experienced researchers have found that after intensive interviewing of eight individuals, a saturation point is reached, identifying key themes and sufficient data generated to substantiate them. As the life histories of both men and women are used in this investigation, it was believed to be functional to use six of each gender as a more reliable number than four of each. Therefore the sample size was decided upon to be twelve professional people.

#### **4.3.4 Designation of research participants**

This was done by purposeful sampling in which information-rich cases were selected for in-depth study concerned with professional success. People were chosen for being knowledgeable and informative about their chosen careers and for the interface between private and professional lives. The persons interviewed were not selected by random sampling techniques, but by *purposeful or judgement sampling*. *'Snowball' sampling or chain referral* was not needed, as enough participants were found (Lemmer 1989:150, Schumacher & McMillan 1993:381 and Schurink 1998b:254, original emphasis), (cf 4.2.2.10).

This case type sampling technique requires that participants are chosen deliberately by virtue of their status, that is, specific qualities which endow them with a special knowledge that is valued by the researcher. Purposeful sampling requires a clear-cut definition of the field about which the sample is intended to provide information (Honigman 1982 in Lemmer 1989:150; Schumacher & McMillan 1993:382-383). Therefore an indication follows of the criteria used to identify the professionals interviewed in the investigation.

For the purpose of this investigation successful professionals are distinguished from less successful mature men and women in that they had reached observable professional success. They are also distinguished from men and women working in vocations not identified as professions according to the definitions cited in 2.2.6. The research focus having been conducted with persons considered to be influential, prominent and well-informed in their professions, organisations or communities, the type of interviews conducted may be classified as *elite interviews*. Elites have been observed to prefer a more active interplay while being interviewed, responding well to inquiries in broad areas of content and to ask provocative, intelligent questions which allow them freedom to use their knowledge. They often contribute insights and meanings because they are comfortable in the realm of ideas, policies and generalisations (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:378-379 and 412-427); (cf the life-world of participants 4.4.2.3).

Participants were also chosen because of the following characteristics:

- ◆ they were all over the age of 45, being within the age group by which achieved success in their professions is apparent
- ◆ they had had recognition for observed professional success in senior positions
- ◆ all had been known to the researcher for a number of years
- ◆ all were or had been married and all had children
- ◆ all participants were from European descent, although no restriction was placed upon language group or religious background

It was recognised, from literature studied, that, as an initial exploratory study, it would be more straightforward to identify emerging themes if a relatively homogenous ethnic group was studied.

#### 4.3.5 Locating participants

As is typical of the tradition in qualitative research, both formal and informal access routes in the process of finding suitable participants may be used. The more informal route of personal contact was eventually taken for locating participants, also called *key persons*. Use was not made of *gatekeepers or sponsors* to contact participants (Lemmer 1989:153 -154). The possible research was discussed with acquaintances and much interest was shown in the project, with many more people willing to co-operate than was needed for the research. In this way a feeling of trust and *rappport* was established with participants, which was seen to be essential to the success of the study.

After drawing up a master list of several possible research participants, a few of people were eliminated due to other personal commitments. Telephone calls were made to selected participants, followed by a letter to each, inviting them to participate and to prepare their minds for a dialogue concerning their own successful professional careers, as well as their family lives. It was explained that interviews were to be treated in confidence, that they were to be recorded on tape and that the anonymity of participants was to be ensured by the use of *pseudonyms* chosen by themselves. Consequently interviews were arranged to suit participants in the privacy of their homes or other places convenient to them.

#### 4.4.6 Statement of subjectivity

As it is customary for a qualitative inquiry to include a statement of the researcher's background and values (cf 4.2.2.5 & 6), a simple and explicit statement of the present researcher's own background was relevant to this investigation; this is deemed necessary to minimise possible distortion of and bias in research findings. It is equally recognised that, in the case of the study of successful professionals, the researcher has shared some of the experiences of the participants. In various ways this was experienced as a definite advantage in the establishment of a sympathetic relationship with participants and may have been instrumental in eliciting valid responses from them.

The researcher is of the Christian religion, is at present single, having been divorced for six years and is in the same age group as the participants. Three daughters were born from a long marriage, of whom the youngest died from leukemia as a child and the two remaining daughters are married to men with professional careers, have children, are qualified professionally, and have experienced many of the problems discussed in this research. Many of the problems investigated were also experienced by the researcher, who is a professional music educator, with a basic degree in music and a diploma in music education. After initial tertiary education and professional training, followed by a short period of employment, the researcher interrupted full-time employment for a period of ten years for family formation. A period of self-employment and part-time work was followed by a return to the fulltime labour market as a music educator. Study through part time education in the form of postgraduate distance education was followed for gaining a general education diploma, followed by an honours degree in music education, a BEd and a Master's degree in Comparative Education. This was done to enhance occupational employability and mobility, as well as to improve the quality of the own contribution to the field of education.

Coming from a background where **examples of both professional success and lack of success were evident**, the researcher was interested in what the many differences were between people who were able to reap success in their professions and those who were unsuccessful. Furthermore, the researcher was interested in what the factors were that led to **harmonious dual-career marriages**, having been highly aware of certain characteristics and actions of couples who formed successful teams in such marriages. Nevertheless, while acknowledging these personal facets of the investigation, the researcher observed certain themes emerging from the extensive review of the literature mentioned in chapters 2 and 3.

This personal statement of subjectivity exemplifies the prominent role played by the investigator's past and present situations, as well as past involvement in arousing initial interest in the problems emerging from the investigation. This personal interest in a field of investigation chosen for research is an acknowledged characteristic of the qualitative tradition (Lofland & Lofland 1984:2-8). In this approach, the researcher has consciously been encouraged to start research from her own perceived problems, remote or personal, to use as a topic for research, as an intimate,

personal commitment to the area of study. This is seen as an advantage. This point of personal linkage is made clear in 4.2.2.5 and 6, as well as in this paragraph.

#### **4.4.7 Data collection and interviews**

This research report was done with the aims of pinpointing the essence of the project and winding up the investigation with the hope that it could contribute to the pool of knowledge for understanding the world of professional work and the interface with personal lives. This was done in as legible and intelligible a way as possible, for use by persons connected to the fields of academic and educational involvement.

The interviews were conducted during the period October 1999 to November 2000. Interviews were tape-recorded and brief notes made throughout. Before starting interviews, participants filled in brief questionnaires concerning basic biographical information, as well as a declaration of consent (cf Appendix). Most interviews began with some brief social contact and were followed by the researcher's short re-explanation of the purpose of the project and a few general guidelines for the interview process.

A semi-structured intensive interview was then conducted, focusing on, among other things: family and educational history, work experience, career development or changes of direction, further education, present work experience and experience of key transitions. This was done in an effort to obtain insight into their key professional career skills and strengths, as well as perceived lack of skills in their own lives and in those of people close to them and was observed as a route by which greater understanding in the field of life skills could be gained.

The researcher used a flexible interview schedule to ensure that all major topics were covered (cf Appendix). The interview was conducted as an ordinary conversation, during which the researcher listened intently and occasionally asked for further information. Data collection was closed ('leaving the field') when further collection would not yield more relevant facts (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:384-385).

Recorded interviews were carefully listened to and transcribed within days of the interview. Key themes emerged, developing into discernable patterns (cf chapters 2 and 3) as the data generated by the interviews were analysed. The researcher modified subsequent interviews, always attempting to include new and emerging themes, continuously making comparisons in the building of frames of reference encompassing the data. In this regard there are many striking similarities between field work and library research, where a person standing in library stacks is, metaphorically, also 'surrounded by voices begging to be heard' (Glaser & Strauss 1967:133, 163)

Aspects of the following two types of interview were also incorporated: *key-informant interviews*, which are in-depth interviews with individuals who have special knowledge, status or communication skills which they are willing to share with the researcher, as well as *career or life history interviews*, which elicit life narratives of individuals. A truly open-ended style of questioning, or semi-structured interview, was used according to the guidelines recommended (cf Appendix), followed by transcriptions and interview elaborations referring to reflections on rapport, reactions, additional information and extensions of interview meanings (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:427-433). According to Harrington and Boardman (1997:28-30) a semi-structured interview can be seen as a guided conversation, in a free and open atmosphere.

The interviews were conducted more in the spirit of friendship than of a contract, seeking to *understand* human behaviour and experience through seeking to grapple with the processes by which people construct meaning. Of special interest were the ways in which participants reconstructed their careers in the various positions, stages, and ways of thinking that they had passed through. Of special importance was how they saw their career development in the light of the roles of organisations, crucial events and significant others in shaping their various perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:49,53 and 65). Life histories and the development of career paths have been valuable in retrospective explanation of temporal links between events and dimensions in career paths used in this study. The literature study has had the added advantage of comparative accounts of the suitability of the research methodology used.

Emphasis has been placed on accurate and complete information, disclosing only what the participants would like to disclose, with the understanding that all data is confidential and anonymous. A form was completed (cf Appendix) in which informed consent was given to use the data obtained from interviews in the research report under the pseudonym chosen, with the understanding that no one will be able to identify the research participants afterwards. 'Adequate information' has been gathered, which can be viewed as a vague term, but means that demands required by the project have been met as far as the respondents have been willing to disclose information. There has been no deception or violation of privacy, nor have value judgements been made. Participation in the research project has been regarded as a learning experience for all concerned (cf Schumacher & McMillan 1993:399; De Vos et al. 1998:24-33).

#### 4.3.8 Data analysis strategies

The detailed analysis of the data began during the interviews and continued during the conducting of the different interviews. Continuous examination of thematic material took place and emerging patterns were taken note of and integrated into subsequent interviews. At the stage when all the interviews were concluded, transcripts were made, printed out and filed under the pseudonyms, together with the sheets containing background information. These transcribed copies were read, re-read and contemplated upon. Printouts were then marked according to different coded themes. Emerging patterns and themes were marked by means of different colour highlighters and files opened for each theme. These thematic files were then explored case by case, and the participant's response to a particular theme compared to those of the other participants, until a stage was reached where dominant themes were classified. Glaser & Strauss (1967:61-69,101) refer to the situation of *theoretical saturation*, meaning that a point is reached when no additional data are found which can contribute to further development of the category under investigation. Such categories are referred to as *slices of data*, while the *depth* of theoretical sampling refers to the amount of data collected on a group and on a category. Late revision in the inquiry included 'pinpointing', where data were checked and rechecked according to main categories, some which were initially not planned (Glaser & Strauss 1967:173-174, original emphasis). Research results were then written and discussed under headings of the emergent themes, supported by quotations from interviews with participants.

#### 4.3.9 Limitations of the research

A small sample of research was used, as was indicated in paragraph 4.2.2.10. The various groups of data collected are therefore of little predictive value. The aims of the research were, however, to gain insights into the life world of successful professional persons, male and female, to understand and to describe the behaviour of successful professionals in both their public and private lives, as seen from their viewpoints, and not to determine cause and effect. The question of the researcher being female could possibly have inhibited the male participants, but was not experienced as a problem in this research.

The study does not claim to identify all possible themes relevant to the lives of successful professionals, nor does it attempt to generalise that the themes identified are typical of all professionals who experience success, either publicly or privately. **The focus of this study has been on the skills needed and developed in the educational and work history of a particular group of men and women, as well as on their efforts to achieve success in public and in private life. The perceived elements, qualities and skills needed for this success were carefully contemplated and analysed in chapter 5. Their strategies for achieving balance between their various responsibilities was another important theme investigated.**

In the light of these facts, the investigation must be seen in terms of suggesting guidelines, approaches and strategies for the support of the educational preparation of future professionals in obtaining the life skills, seen as life chances, needed for balance and success. In gaining deeper understanding of the opportunities and obstacles encountered by these men and women and how they have coped with them, it is hoped to make a slight contribution to diminishing deficiencies in the body of knowledge concerning the work force in the professional field.

#### 4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter described the rationale for the choice of a qualitative approach for this study of successful professionals and a clear explanation of the tenets of qualitative methodology used, as well as of the semi-structured interview used as method of data collection. In addition, the

actual research methods used to investigate the professional career experience were described. These included the selection and locating of participants, the semi-structured interview design and data analysis procedures used.

In the next chapter the data generated, using the research methodology described, will be presented and discussed.

## CHAPTER 5

### CAREER AND LIFE EXPERIENCES OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

*There is no real excellence in all this world which can be separated from right living.*

DS Jordan

*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence therefore, is not an act, but a habit.*

Aristotle

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

##### 5.1.1 Background

In chapter 2 an overview was given of professional career development with reference to career development in historical perspective and different theories thereof. Attention was paid to the dual career marriage, which became prevalent during the 20th century. Factors contributing to and impeding career success were described. In chapter 3 the diverse facets of success were reviewed and an anatomy of life skills undertaken, examining approaches needed for the 21st century. Chapter 4 dealt with the characteristics of qualitative methodology and the design of the present study.

This chapter presents and discusses data generated during in-depth interviews with six professional men and six professional women between 45 and 65 years of age (cf 5.2). Initially, the characteristics and background data obtained during the interviews are outlined (cf 5.3.4), followed by a summary of the overall interview process. The following section (5.3) presents significant themes emerging from these interviews. Themes are divided into identifiable units in the participants' narratives. Phrases quoted are used as recorded and some quotations originally in Afrikaans were translated into English, keeping as close to the spoken idiom used as possible.

### 5.1.2 Construction of the chapter

When meditating on the findings elaborated on in this chapter, a mind map was made for obtaining a greater degree of insight and clarity. This took the graphic form of a tree with roots, a trunk and crowning branches, possibly indirectly inspired by a print of a tree painted by the French impressionist artist, Monet, which hangs on the wall behind the computer used for this study. Trees have many symbolic meanings and are often used to depict the ecological health of a region or the growth of a person. In the representation of this research, the “career and psychological health” of the successful professionals interviewed were originally represented as a well-known natural shape, that of a tree (cf diagram 1).

It has been debated since the days of the Greek philosophers whether art imitates nature or nature imitates art, as Aristotle viewed nature and art as the two initiating forces in the world. Where nature works by urging all things to realise their capacities to the full, art is the result of this drive towards self-completion. Possibly these concepts are simply like the two sides of a coin. Greek mythology hints that the concept of ‘art’ came into the world as skills and resources by which man could meet his first needs when bare nature was not enough (Gilbert & Kuhn 1972:19, 63-64, emphasis added).

The analysis presented in this chapter has been done according to the second metaphor, where the lives of the twelve participants are seen as examples of this **striving towards self-completion**. Striving towards self-completion as multiskilling may therefore be viewed as **the nucleus of this study**. This is to be seen against a background of theoretical issues as discussed in chapter 2.

The data has been represented in the style of arguably the most important form (or plan of construction) in Western art music, that of **the Sonata form**. An analysis of various international folk musics of the world shows that most folk songs are constructed naturally in either binary (**AB**) or ternary (**ABA**) form, with **A** representing the main musical material and **B** strengthening the interest by way of contrast. According to Scholes et al.(1956:369-380) and Apel et al. (1970:791-794), this construction in music is a psychological necessity to retain the interest and

attention of the participant and listener, providing material familiar to memory and adding variety which is still connected to the initial material.

According to Tovey (1931:iii-iv), the main lesson of the analysis of great music is one of organic unity. In the last resort it also concerns the study of what has proven to be successful in musical works of art. For musicians and music appreciators, another striking lesson presented by classical forms is their infinite variety and their immense rhetorical and dramatic force. As in the study of music, the development of human career endeavour has a certain organic unity, which may be analysed according to certain main themes, linking themes and personal characteristics. For educators and career advisors, these themes may help to focus the attention of their consumers (learners, students and clients) on what has proven to be **strong recurring thematic material in the observed career and family success** of people in the literature reviewed and those participating in this research.

Another analogy to music is the question of **time**: where the element of time is central to the study of music, time is also central to career success. This involves not only historical time and where a person fits into sociological and historical development, but the wise use made of time and of opportunities connected to the phases of life, as well as the judicious use of daily chronological time in human activity. A successful piece of music has a beginning, a development leading to a climax and a satisfactory ending within familiar territory . The same may be observed when dealing with the development of career success.

**Sonata form** is used in many of the major works of Western Classical Art Music, such as sonatas and symphonies, to give the work a solid foundation and yet provide sustained interest. The findings of this research are presented according to the metaphor of a **symphonic movement** in sonata form. Sonata form may be diagrammed as follows:

EXPOSITION	DEVELOPMENT	RECAPITULATION	CODA
A primary group of thematic material in home key ●	C Reworking of thematic material by various means ●	Return to primary themes: A in home key ●	Ending/ Final section ●
Bridge as link →	→	Bridge →	→
B secondary group of thematic material in related key ■	■	B in home key ■	■

(Cf diagram 2)

At times, such as in the symphonic work of Beethoven, there is a **redevelopment** of thematic material between the recapitulation and the coda. In this research the participants may be viewed as 'redeveloping' the skills learnt earlier in life and during their early careers according to their contemporary career, family and life-style needs.

In this study, this outline has been used to give coherence to the whole, yet providing a detour from a more rigid academic style of writing. The phases of human life have been divided roughly according to the form outlined as follows, with career and family involvement being prepared in the 1st section, actively practised in the 2nd and 3rd sections and tapered off in the closing section:

EXPOSITION/ EARLY LIFE	DEVELOPMENT	RECAPITULATION/ CLIMAX/FRUITION	CODA END PHASE
Childhood/ background (0-20 years)	Adult life and career development (20-40)	Experiencing career and adult life success (40-65)	Late career branching retirement (60+)

The mind set, motivation, work ethic and use of opportunities of successful professionals may be difficult to establish and record. Therefore, as a qualitative study represents only what may be observed in the life history and verbal communication of participants, this confirms the saying from the Talmud: "If you want to understand the invisible, look carefully at the visible" (in Apel 1970:xviii).

## 5.2 THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Albert Einstein's philosophy of life may be condensed to the concept that one should not try to become a successful person, but rather try to become a person of value. Having been chosen as the "Person of the Century" (Golden 1999:25-47), it is important to note that a person of such eminence is aware of the significance of people's success not only in their work, but also in their relationships with other people.

According to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990:164, emphasis added) studies on optimal performance and experiences (cf 2.5, 2.10 and 3.4) **the quality of life primarily depends on two factors: how work is experienced and relationships with other people**. The most detailed information about who a person is as an individual comes from relationships with people with whom one communicates and from the way in which a person conducts his/her job (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:164). He cites Freud who summarised his prescription for happiness as "love and work".

After much deliberation, the participants were chosen from a lengthy list of those who had been observed by the researcher over a lengthy period as representing representative pinnacles of their chosen professional careers (cf 2.5, 2.9 and 5.3.2). In keeping with the musical metaphor, the twelve participants may be seen as symbolic of the musical instruments used to make the music referred to in the use of sonata form. In this introduction they are organised according to gender and placed alphabetically according to their *pseudonyms*, with their respective professions:

### **MEN:**

**DONALD (60+):** educational psychologist, freelance motivational speaker, television and radio presenter of his own programmes on parental involvement, education and study methods, provincial tour guide.

**ELMAR (60+):** CEO of an agricultural research, development and marketing agency.

**FRANZ (55+):** businessman, senior management participant in a large metropolitan municipal council.

**HANS (50+):** head of a faculty of science at a large university.

**HENRI (65+):** retired senior educational advisor and former mathematics teacher and school principal.

**STEVEN (50+):** former airforce pilot and self-employed architect.

**WOMEN:**

**ALETTE (50+):** clinical psychologist in private practice.

**ELKE (45+):** linguist, freelance journalist.

**INNEKE (55+):** paleontologist, retired deputy director of a museum.

**JESS (60+):** language educator, secondary and tertiary levels.

**LYNNE (45+):** gynaecologist and obstetrician.

**SUSAN (50+):** lawyer, professional tennis coach.

### **5.3 PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS AND BACKGROUND DATA**

#### **5.3.1 Age and family background at the time of the interviews**

During the period in which the interviews were conducted (Oct 1999 to November 2000) the ages of the twelve participants ranged between 45 and 65, with birth dates ranging from c 1955 - 1935. There were certain differences in career experience between men and women regarding career

development, as well as the birth and raising of children. Eleven of the participants had forebears who originally stemmed from various regions in Europe, namely France, Germany, England and the Netherlands and one was born in Amsterdam. At present they represent various cultural and religious groups. While all twelve speak mostly Afrikaans at home, three regularly use both Afrikaans and English at home and two speak both Afrikaans and German at home. Superior language ability is evident as all participants are fluently bilingual in Afrikaans and English, either speak German fluently or have a working knowledge of it and one can also speak Zulu fluently.

Originally a successful marriage was one of the criteria for inclusion in this research sample and ten of the participants are happily married. However, the two divorcees were later included as exemplary contrasts. The divorced man still has a very deep friendship with his former wife and the divorced woman now includes marriage therapy in her psychological counselling as a direct result of lessons learnt in the process of divorce (cf Table 1).

### **5.3.2 Discussion of observations made during the interviews conducted**

As observations constitute an integral part of qualitative research, attention is given to observations made before and during the interview processes. One participant has been known to the researcher for more than forty years, having been the researcher's mathematics teacher at high school; he later occupied a prominent position as educational advisor to the Department of National Education. Five had been known to the researcher for more than twenty-five years and six for approximately five years. Therefore these persons were chosen by the researcher on the grounds of having been respected for a considerable length of time, both professionally and in their personal capacities, either as colleagues and friends or having had professional ties with the researcher. This concurs with the requirements of judgement or purposeful sampling (cf 4.3.4) where participants are chosen for their capacity to render appropriate information rich data.

The atmosphere of the interviews was that of a warm, friendly and informal conversation, resembling happy and generally satisfying reminiscence of the life worlds of the participants. In every case the participants showed a high degree of *rapport* with the researcher who brought to the interview a clear sense of appreciation for their individual circumstances and contributions (cf 5.2 and 5.4). The result was reciprocity, openness and interest in the research. One

interview was done at the office of the participant, one at the home of the researcher and the others at the homes of the participants. These settings offered the researcher an opportunity to appreciate the context of each participant's life. In every case the homes of the participants were comfortable, attractive and tastefully furnished, reflecting a well-developed literary, musical and artistic taste and their prosperous financial level, as well as displaying evidence of their wide travels.

All interviews revealed a strong commitment to the participants' individual careers, as well as to their families. As two pairs of the participants are married to each other (Hans and Susan; Elmar and Jess, cf Table 1), this 'team effort' was experienced as an added interest, with the separate interviews corroborating what individual participants had said. The interview with the retired education advisor was interrupted by his wife who brought tea and confirmed what a devoted family man he had always been and ended with the arrival from school of two grandchildren who stay with the couple until their mother returns from work in a professional capacity. There was a very long period of waiting for the architect to return from supervising building projects in Southern African countries, the Cape Province and KwaZulu Natal.

### **5.3.3 Discussion of birth cohort characteristics**

The importance of the influence of a birth cohort on research such as this being taken into consideration was pointed out in 2.8.6 and 4.3.4. Attention is therefore given to the birth cohort to which these participants belonged and of the characteristics and possible effects of the birth cohort represented in this study. References are made to the historical survey in chapter 2 where characteristics of the historical periods referred to were mentioned more fully (cf 2.3.2.8 and 2.8).

Most of the participants interviewed grew up in the transition years after the Second World War, when the career roles of women were changing incisively. The years referred to include the 1950's to the 1970's. These people were thus part of the generations who were making career choices and adaptations in their married lives to accommodate the role of the woman with a career of her own. Only one of the participants had the example of a mother working outside the home environment and the women had few examples and role models of older women who were

working wives and mothers. Five of the male participants have wives who stayed at home when their children were small and four of the female participants were able to stay at home during this period. Two women either studied part-time or had maternity leave during the time when their children were babies or toddlers. The women were all aware of the possible psychological harm that could be done to children of working mothers. All the wives of the male participants had higher education and all the female participants were university educated. In the interviews the latter expressed some of the frustrations they had experienced in having to leave their children to the care of others at times when they were obliged to work for financial reasons or due to study for career improvement. Shared parenting and the role of grandparents and trusted day care or housekeepers was expressed as the reasons for being able to divide their attention during this period. The divorced man in the study was closely involved in raising his children. Problems experienced are referred to in the subsequent discussions of key themes of the research.

#### **5.4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH THEMES**

In this section the participants' responses to questions regarding demographic, personal characteristics and personal experiences are presented. These questions related to their family background, their education and professional career preparation, their experiences of striving towards success in their careers and of balancing the commitments to family life. Observations made during the interviews are included as the interview process was regarded as a rich source of data. Reference is also made to characteristics and possible effects of the birth cohort represented by the six men and six women participating in this study.

##### **5.4.1 Exposition (root experiences)**

The participants' responses to questions have been divided into those relating to their family background and those concerning outside people influencing their early career choices (primary thematic group). This is followed by the value systems in which they were raised (bridge) and their education as preparation for their career success (secondary thematic group).

[A = family, background, bridge = religion, values, culture, B = education].



(Cf diagram 2)

#### 5.4.1.1 A: Primary thematic group in home key ●

##### a. Facilitating environment

The family and their encouragement and emotional support are the common denominator in the majority of the backgrounds of the participants (cf background 2.10.1 & values 2.10.2). The influence of the family background on the development of individuals was of great significance regarding participants' attitude towards career choices, their subsequent dealing with opportunities, as well as their attitude towards creating opportunities for themselves (cf 2.10). **Belief in the importance of the family as a mutually supporting unit** is another shared characteristic (cf 2.10.1, 5.5 and 5.6).

Traditionally, sons were given greater opportunity to study than daughters (cf historical perspective 2.3). However, five of the six women participants had the full backing of their parents in choosing to prepare themselves for careers, even "if only to have something to fall back on" (cf Gerdes 1998:4 & xii-9, and 2.3.2.8).

**Donald** grew up with the example and guidelines of high standards and commitment from parents, extended family and educators. In particular, his parents were people-orientated and caring and he attributes his own desire to facilitate other people in their intellectual and social development to this. As a psychologist he points out that all people with whom one comes into contact have an influence on one's life: "I am a part of all that I have met". Donald's bubbling sense of humour is evident in his quip: "Behind every successful man there is an astounded mother-in-law!". For him life on the farm where he grew up was a series of adventures in exploring everything in nature. He found the radio vital in keeping in touch with world events. He remembers his school hostel days as excellent for learning discipline and working according to a time plan.

For **Henri** growing up on a farm also provided an experience of care and support from his parents. His loving parents and older siblings were consistently able to boost his confidence with the assurance that they supported his efforts with all they could do for him. As the youngest child his older brothers and sisters were also most supportive and helpful, as he showed early promise of gifted ability in many areas. He experienced boundless opportunities for trouble-free play in the great outdoors and some of his best friends were the children of farm workers. Likewise, **Elmar's** parents, brother and sister were always most supportive and interested in his activities and he was consistently encouraged to deliver his best at school. He describes his relationship with his father as "comfortable" and he had great appreciation for his mother's example of hard work.

**Franz** was born after his father had been compelled to leave their farm due to drought and to seek employment at 50 years. This left the family in a financially strained position, so that his mother was compelled to earn housekeeping money for the first time in her life by doing needlework. His father was supportive in a more passive way, but a 'go-getting' example and active encouragement came from his mother. In this way he started helping with housekeeping budgets and formed part of the "management team of their home" at the age of about eight. He worked late into the night to help his mother with domestic duties and to keep her company. He describes his parents' ongoing support for all his efforts as "encouragement through thick and thin" throughout his multifaceted career. When his father was a pensioner, they started a small urban boarding house to make ends meet, which was to prove the first small step in Franz's active involvement in the tourism industry.

A father in the legal profession in a rural district, was experienced as a great privilege for **Hans**. He describes his father as a "highly intellectual man". Apart from consistent warm, loving support in all his school efforts, he values the constructive and informative discussions they had during his childhood. He was taught to debate every angle and aspect of a wide variety of matters, including the sciences, where the children were taught to argue any possible angle of a matter or subject. The family always bought two newspapers, supporting both the government of the time and the opposition respectively, so that they could have an informed opinion of how politics were conducted, empowering them with greater freedom in finding the basis of various views and teaching them to ask the question "What then is the truth?". Hans feels that he was appreciated

for his various abilities and was always encouraged to do well. He was sought after to help other classmates. Their family was interested in intellectual activities such as playing chess. Nurturing excellent personal relationships was a feature of his upbringing, which he feels is more of an inborn strength than a learned ability. The caring, supportive and stimulating atmosphere in his home gave him a great deal of self-confidence and he has tried to pass this on to his own children.

**Steven** came from a home where hard work was the norm, combined with thoroughness and commitment. His fascination for flying was experienced as a passion for everything connected to aviation and this led him to join the airforce after matriculation. Enrolment in the airforce was a dream come true. However, after qualifying as a pilot he was drawn to another of his enthusiasms, the world of architecture, but was able to maintain aviation as a sport and a source of an extra income. He was able to enrol at a university near his home and found that this was where he was able to reach his full creative potential through the study of architecture. Coupled with his scientific training and interest, he was later able to form the connection between the many disciplines involved in the building of major projects.

Another facet of Steven's background is a very good relationship with both his parents. He and his mother had not only a mother-son relationship, but

shared so much in the sense of future dreams, due to her being a professional as well. I was exposed to an environment where not only the male's voice counted at home, it was an equal status in our home — that each one had his own discipline and I believe my unisex approach to life developed there, not only seeing the male as a dominant figure, but with the matriarch in the family as an equal partner.

This perspective is very evident in the warm and mutually respectful relationship he has with his two daughters and with other professional women. He is also tender and compassionate when needed as a friend. His wish to be a self-employed architect originated with a long family tradition of having own businesses in various services. He simply does what he grew up with, with his eldest daughter following in the footsteps of his mother in the field of psychology.

For **Elke** her linguistic ability was probably a legacy of her gentle and caring mother, who was secretary to an editor of a dictionary before her marriage and very much aware of correct

language usage. Her father was also appreciative of her early creative writing and journalistic efforts and most helpful with financial backup when she wanted to do postgraduate studies in an area to which her civil service bursary did not extend.

**Inneke** was almost forced to leave school before matriculating, due to difficult economic circumstances. Where her parents had grown up without the benefit of much education in the Netherlands, they did not see the need for her to stay at school after grade 10. However, her school principal was instrumental in persuading them that it would be better for her future to pass matric. Her parents' misfortune of little education was due to the depression of the 1930's and the Second World War, which also encouraged them to emigrate to South Africa when Inneke was a small child. When she found work in a university library after matric and started part time graduate studies, her parents were most encouraging. They were proud that someone in their family had been able to proceed to tertiary education, although they found her aspirations odd. She says with a twinkle in her eye that she was seen as "a strange duck on the pond".

Although she was not emotionally very close to her German-speaking parents, **Jess** feels that they had a profound influence on her in their efforts to encourage her to give her best in all aspects, including the typical German thoroughness. She also had an aunt living with them who gave her a great deal of personal attention, especially regarding the folklore and rich cultural inheritance of German literature, songs and dances.

Having grown up with a father who was a dedicated general medical practitioner in a rural town, **Lynne** had wanted to go into medicine since childhood. Her father firmly encouraged her and her four sisters, of whom three are also in the medical field and the other married a doctor. Her father believed that tertiary education was compulsory, as he saw too many female patients abused by their husbands and unable to leave them as they had no career training to support their children and themselves.

Although her parents were eager for her to have a tertiary education, **Susan** says that the lure of having a salary to spend on stylish clothes and a car was too strong and that she did not have any desire for study at that time. She did not feel any need for added self-esteem through tertiary academic achievement as she was consistently boosted by her parents and most of her teachers

throughout her childhood. Her parents were financially comfortable and were socially well accepted by their many friends. Thus she experienced a happy and care-free childhood, always admiring her parents for what they achieved with what they had. Her versatility made choosing a career difficult, so that doing what was at hand in an accounting job was the more attractive option at the time.

**Alette** was an exception to the other participants as she experienced severe emotional rejection as a child, from both her parents, but especially from her mother. She did, however, find that her teachers were always very fond of her, although she was cheeky and rebellious.

b. Role models and mentors

All twelve participants emphasised the part played by role models and mentors in their development (cf 2.10.6). For eight of the participants both parents were seen as role models; for one his mother was the stronger influence, while two men and two women mentioned their fathers having been the strongest influence in their career choice and management. Two women saw their husbands as their main career mentors.

Donald's parents' interest in other people led him to a successful career choice in the same vein, namely that of developing the human psyche. He remembers consciously wanting to be associated with positive teachers that often laughed. Even the teachers he experienced as professionally weak, he realised later were apt examples of what he did not want to become (cf 5.4.2.2.b). When starting his teaching career, his mentor was his first high school principal who not only had a striking sense of humour, but also a sense of creativity and a good self-image (cf 2.10.6). When he did postgraduate studies in education, he became engrossed in educational psychology, still maintaining that this is one of the most fascinating branches of the human sciences.

Henri's father did not have more than three months' formal education, but Henri found him an extremely well-informed philosopher, contributing in this way to Henri's experience of their farm as a microcosm of the outside world and a good place for balanced development. His direct inspiration for a teaching career was a group of student teachers who visited his high school for teaching practice. He remembers their happy singing and *esprit de corps*. He also sees his first

principal as his strongest career mentor and advisor. When he was later appointed as school inspector, he could always 'sit at his feet' with any educational problem. The mentor's statement of "the sky is your limit" when he first started teaching, was a lasting source of inspiration, although his parents' loving and supportive style were his greatest influence.

For Franz, his mother was his mentor and lifelong inspiration in her many endeavours for financial survival and sound management, as well as in politics and general knowledge. She taught him from an early age to set goals for excellent service to clients and to work to meet these aims whatever it took (cf 2.10.6). Other role models he found in the political arena. Although he was later to realise they had their share of human weaknesses, he learnt a great deal from a few prominent people regarding management and self-discipline. One school teacher in particular, had been a university wrestling champion and from him he learnt much regarding psychological preparation through, among others, physical fitness.

Hans looks back on his father as the greatest influence on his career preparation. Although he was in the legal profession, his objective way of thinking and attitude towards knowledge played a decisive role in Hans's attitude towards the sciences and his personal relationships. He credits his father with a formative role in his attitude towards seeking the truth (cf 2.10.1). The head of the science faculty, and especially his promoter for his post-doctoral research in Germany, both world-renowned physicists, had a great influence on his ability to do incisive and meaningful research. Especially the German physicist, a world leader in the field, taught him the essence of true research, as did the other top overseas researchers with whom he worked. In the field of management, a colleague taught him many of the social life skills needed for running a department, staff organisations and organising conferences. These people all had a great influence on his endeavours to be among the best in his field.

Elmar could not pinpoint any specific mentor or role model, but experienced that there were many people who influenced his scientific and managerial career, especially during the early working days. He feels that many people had an influence on his positive attitude regarding responsibilities in his work. Having a very thorough and hard-working German mother may have been part of this strength (cf 2.10.1).

Steven had a neighbour during his childhood who had been in the flying team of Douglas Bader, the disabled flying hero of the Second World War. This led to Steven's meeting and flying with this role model in Cape Town when he was eight years old, which fired his passion for aviation (cf 2.10.6). In his architectural career his father-in-law later became his mentor, a situation which was not changed by his subsequent divorce. He still often consults with this respected mentor, who is a well-known consulting engineer with many famous landmark constructions to his credit. Steve feels that this mentor strengthened his own approach of thoroughness with his typical German precision and dedication (cf 2.10.7), emphasising that

anything you do twice is once too many. And I still have that attitude that what you do you should do correctly and there's only one way of doing it.

Among the women interviewed, Elke felt privileged to have her journalist husband as both role model and career mentor. They met in this field and by that time he was already a seasoned journalist in the newspaper world. He helped her both with her style and acting at the right place at the right time, as well as helping to "destress" since they could understand what each one was experiencing at work and in coping with household duties (cf 5.4.3.1.d). His career-branching in the diplomatic service led them to various tours of duty in African and leading Western countries. Consequently, Elke was able to do work with a United Nations' women's organisation and also to teach the history of Afrikaans as a Germanic language at the second oldest European university.

Inneke also had the privilege of having her husband, a psychology professor, as a role model and most enthusiastic mentor in many ways, especially regarding academic thinking, personal relationships and always striving for new heights in research (2.10.6). The woman, who was the curator of a museum and another famous male archeologist with whom she had worked on archeological research were her first career mentors who zealously taught her how immensely revealing the bones and fossils found in their archeological digs could be; that these artifacts could in fact tell the trained mind very much about the pre-history of a country and of the animals, pre-humans and humans who had inhabited that country. During post-doctoral research in Germany and Holland there were also two female palaeontologists who were most influential in guiding her towards international recognition.

Jess found her ten-year older educator sister a most influential role model and mentor. This sister was a highly successful educator and deputy headmistress of a well-known girls' high school and she modelled herself on her from early childhood. As a high school pupil, she was inspired very much by a teacher's encouragement after a badly broken elbow, to such an extent that she was able to become the school's discus champion. He also demonstrated how a teacher could have such a relationship with a child, that the child can enjoy complete trust in a teacher and in this way may inspire the child to deliver its very best. At the distance-education university where she taught English, a female colleague, who was later to become professor at a larger academic institution terrified her at first but later inspired her greatly to be successful in her educative role. The example of teachers who inspired both learners and colleagues was a decisive factor in her own career aspirations. She has developed a gentle "motherly approach" which is her most endearing personal characteristic among school children and students, as well as with colleagues.

Susan's mathematics teacher at high school played an important role in encouraging her, often telling her that with her versatility she would be able to reach any goal she set herself and make a success of any career. As a legal article clerk Susan had an officially appointed mentor in the legal firm where she worked. She nevertheless found that another senior lawyer in the firm actually played a far greater role in her legal apprenticeship than the official one, as she eventually learnt more from him about the practice of law and court procedures.

Once more following a path different to that of the other participants, Alette remembers having many differences of opinion with her academic mentor for clinical psychology. She sees herself as an atypical person and often found herself taking a stand completely different to her mentor and other male colleagues. She attributes this to being able to feel issues more intuitively as a woman than her male colleagues and this is a distinct advantage. Her official mentor was an academic appointment. She credits him, among others, for her thorough psychodynamic training, although he was often dissatisfied with her for not working hard enough and allowing her intuitive instincts to guide her. With these intuitive strengths she consequently evolved a unique and highly successful therapeutic approach in her own clinical curative practice. Her mentor did eventually acknowledge her lateral approach as an inordinate ability towards synthesis of given facts in the treatment of patients.

Initially Lynne's dedicated and hardworking medical practitioner father was the person she regarded as her mentor who encouraged her to choose a medical career since early childhood (cf 2.10.1). She says that all five his daughters adored him. However, after her hospital year in the defence force, her senior medical officer was instrumental in persuading her to specialise in gynaecology, although she does not know why he specifically chose her to encourage.

c. Financial support for studies

Not one of the twelve participants was able to enjoy tertiary study without any debts or bursary commitments (cf 2.10.1). Donald, Henri and Jess studied with education bursaries and Elmar had an agricultural bursary, for which they were committed to work back for a number of years. Even though their fathers were professionals, Hans and Lynne needed loans to be able to study. After his training as a pilot in the air force, Steven was able to finance his own architectural studies by part-time commercial flying. Franz, Alette, Inneke and Susan financed their own part-time studies.

Only four of the participants described their parents as "comfortably off"; two described their parents' financial situation as average and six described their childhood financial background as "difficult" (cf 2.5.5 and 2.10.1).

For Henri the farm where he grew up was the 'world in a nutshell'. The lack of money was never experienced as a problem, as it actually played no visible role at all in his childhood. His family lived "an aristocratic life", carefree and happy, living on the abundance that the farm had to offer every season. One of his older married brothers took him as a boarder during his high school years, which meant a great deal financially, as it offered him the opportunity of attending a good academic high school in a large town where he was able to develop his many aptitudes, especially those in the scientific field. His scientific studies were with a view to becoming an educator and were funded by an educational bursary and various merit bursaries.

Donald experienced the freedom on the farm where he grew up as a privilege, being able to explore and enjoy many adventures in spite of not having much money. His university studies, including physical education, were with an educational bursary. Due to the lack of funds he wore

clothes of family members and was not able to buy new textbooks at university, having to rely on secondhand books, photostats of important chapters and borrowed books. He conceived the plan of sometimes finding out when a hostel mate was going to bed and then borrowed his books for that section of the night before an exam, sleeping earlier in the day or evening. He does not consider the lack of money to be an obstacle for those who truly want to progress. Likewise, Alette found that farm life and the various forms of playing in the fresh air and in the veld were actually splendid opportunities for development, making up for a lack of money in many ways (cf 2.5.5 and 5.4.2.3.a).

Franz found that he was disadvantaged in many respects by not having had the financial backing for full-time study after school. However, when he had been working for a while he found that having had to shoulder many duties as a child gave him a distinct advantage over peers who were able to study full-time. About five years after matriculating he realised that he had five years of experience in the business world, such as hotel keeping, which was a definite bonus. Moreover, looking back, he was able to see that he had never had only one job at a time and was always involved with a day job, administering one or more other business ventures during the evenings, as well as self-financed part-time study. He also saw friends who had studied hard for a few years to qualify in their chosen careers, such as law, start to doubt whether they were in fact at all suited to the field. Today he feels that by obtaining his career training the hard way, he was able to eliminate, at an earlier stage, aspects and areas of working life that he disliked.

Steven was able to finance his architectural studies by commercial flying between academic commitments, thus being able to realise his devotion to flying as a hobby at the same time (cf motivation 2.10.5).

Not being able to study what she had really wanted to, Elke felt that having to work her way through a civil service bursary in personal management was in fact a waste of precious time that she could have used to her advantage if she had had the opportunity to study journalism from the start. This was her first choice of career, but was not offered at the university closest to her home town at that stage.

With a husband engaged in industrial scientific work at the time and her own work in a university library, Inneke remembers that both were interested in archaeology and psychology and engaged in their self-financed correspondence studies. They literally tossed a coin to see who would take the archeology course and she won the toss, which was decisive in her career as an archeologist. The rest of her studies were also part-time and self-financed, eventually leading to work at a museum, of which she was later to become deputy director.

Susan was also able to finance her own studies, as she had worked for seven years before deciding that she would like to study law and she had a good pension fund that was paid out at this stage. As she had her own car, she had offered to take her sister to evening classes at university. After attending some classes in law, which she found very interesting, she decided to do the course with her sister and was able to make a career change before meeting her husband in her late twenties.

Alette was supported by her father for her first year of medical studies. When she found that she really did not want to follow this choice of career, she left her studies and got married. This marriage was not happy, as she found that her husband did things in his professional career which she found morally unacceptable. Realising that she would have to support herself and her two children, she later left her husband and started self-supported study for a career in clinical psychology. She felt this to be a challenge because people had regarded her not to be very clever but she knew differently (cf motivation 2.10.5).

#### ◆ Concluding remarks

The participants had been shaped by their family backgrounds to become widely-developed and balanced. They were taught directly by their parents and family and formed by their circumstances to be robust, co-operative and self-reliant since childhood. They developed many skills for thriving in the various spheres in which they found themselves. The facilitating aspects of their various backgrounds were empowering for the diverse careers they would eventually choose.

## 5.4.1.2

*Bridge to B: Value system* 

In the analysis of the interview data according to sonata form, the value system of participants may be seen as the bridge between the family and the world outside their home. Family attitudes towards a general value system appear to have significantly influenced the participants' own attitudes towards religion, beliefs and cultural direction (cf 2.10.1 & 2).

Badenhorst (1994:397-400, emphasis added) states that values form the very fibre of society, as they have a compelling character, driving members of a community to live according to certain principles and causing serious clashes if these are threatened. Badenhorst cites Sperry, whose Nobel Prize in Physics for innovations in mind/brain research included the conviction that the human value system concerning the concept of service is going to determine the future. The value system is fused to the concept of motivation, from Latin *movere*, 'to move' (cf 5.4.2.1 a), and thus moves people to act at their deepest level by fundamental values. As the modern school is a product of Western middle class culture, children coming from this type of background have an obvious advantage over those who do not (Badenhorst 1994:404). According to Gerdes (1998:70) values and the philosophy of life is a system of ideas about life and people, involving ideals and what is to be seen as desirable, giving direction to social standards and ultimately referring to beliefs about the purpose and meaning of life itself. Gerdes states that clearly defined values and beliefs act as an integrating force which help people to plan their future and to evaluate people and events.

A value (Van Niekerk 1999:2-3) is a general normative orientation of action in a social system. The word 'value' describes some general quality of life that human beings are expected to embody in their behaviour. Examples are legion and include honesty, professional conduct, moderation and temperance, self-discipline, respect for human beings and nature, tolerance for different viewpoints and punctuality. Core values are values expressed in all human interactions, while peripheral values are specific to certain conditions and interactions.

For the participants in this study, the core values have been closely linked to the Christian value system in which they were raised from childhood, including the importance of the family (cf

work ethic 5.4.2.1.b). Family values have clearly been significant in their choice and direction of career orientation, supporting Condrin's discussion (1975:51-56) of career choice and commitment being a process which takes place over eight to ten years. The undertone of the role of Christian values determining the career choices of participants could be detected and is comparable to a golden thread woven into a tapestry. It was either intuitively felt in various indirect statements and commitments or was clearly expressed in their assertions of gratitude or sense of calling, combined with a wish to "master the environment" and to serve their fellow human beings. An aim of all participants was expressed as "a desire to make a contribution towards a better world". These aspirations have all been direct outcomes to the value system in which they were raised in their homes.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990:179) cites the Roman philosopher Cicero (c 100 BC) who maintained that "to be completely free one must become a slave to a set of laws" and who further asserted that accepting one's limitations is a liberating act. By feeling free within the laws prescribed by the value system they had grown up with, the participants have experienced coherence in their attitudes towards their understanding of the Creator, their fellow human beings, nature and their understanding of a meaningful life. This includes behaviours which have not harmed their families, their careers and society in general. It does not, however, mean that they have not questioned the general concepts of values and beliefs at times. However, they have been able to clear their minds concerning the "bigger picture" in relation to the whole of creation and the histories of nature and of humankind seen through the eyes of the broader perspectives open to the informed mind of post-modern philosophical thinking.

a. Religion and awareness of blessings

Eleven of the participants acknowledged the role of religion as an enduring anchoring force in their lives, while one saw her work as a direct religious calling (cf 2.10.1 & 2). For Alette her psychotherapy practice is her ministry where she realises her vocation as a servant of Christ. This calling and innate commitment to service in one of the 'caring professions', as well as the maternal characteristic of kindness, she feels are "divine gifts and cannot be acted". She cites Jung as saying that "you can't learn to be a psychologist". She has experienced patients to be extremely sensitive to whether therapists are "genuine" or not, and especially so when there is a neurotic

tendency, such as with schizophrenics, where they react strongly to “vibrations” of genuine empathy or lack thereof. According to her own views and well grounded basic theoretical knowledge, psychotherapists cannot practise successfully without having had earnest spiritual development through which their work can be seen as authentic, permeating their whole psychological and physical being. This spiritual development affords the psychotherapist the freedom to move away from fixed theories and establish his/her own avenues of therapy in creative ways. When first starting her private practice she also experienced that “doors were opened for her”, which she could only ascribe to divine intervention.

In her desire to improve the health of mothers and babies, Lynne feels that she was an instrument in “making a mark in people’s lives, although God plays the most important role”. She experienced this most intensely in her work with infertility cases, which she has found to be highly rewarding. She fails to see how her work can be done without deep dependence on God’s guidance and she feels that she is in constant “consultancy” with Him. She acknowledges her background concerning Christian values and she consciously tries to pass this on to her own children as part of her parental duty.

For Henri his teaching of mathematics and his duties in educational management were an extension of his deep sense of commitment to Christian service. This gave him what he describes as an ‘openness’ to be of significance to others. Looking back on his own career development, he sees divine direction in what he was able to achieve in helping learners and colleagues reach their own potential, in solving their problems and rising above adverse circumstances.

Franz is deeply grateful for a life with ample emotional support, at first from his parents and then from his wife and three daughters, which he sees as divine gifts. The abilities and opportunities he has had to be of service in the course of his various careers have likewise been seen as heavenly gifts. He and his wife have tried to steer their marriage according to Christian principles and their relationship of deep mutual understanding has been divinely inspired.

Elmar, Jess and Steven see themselves as “deeply religious” in a very private way. When Jess was asked what she regards as her mother tongue, as she speaks four languages, she was thoughtful for a moment and then said that she understands that the language one prays in is one’s

actual mother tongue, which for her is German. Steven grew up in a religious family and had married a descendant of German missionaries. He feels that his religious convictions carried him through injuries sustained in an aviation accident (cf 5.4.2.3. a & 5.4.2.4).

After much doubt and inner conflict concerning science and religion, Hans found equilibrium as he matured by concluding that there are sometimes no answers to some of these problems and that the two fields are separated, as there is no way in which a human being can argue or understand science and religion in the same way. For him religion fulfils a different function to that of science, providing humans with comfort and therefore it is enough to accept this dissimilarity as such. He feels he has been blessed in many ways in his life and is deeply grateful for this grace.

As a scientist in another field, Inneke became committed to religion at a later stage in life, not having had any religious background in her home. She credits her psychology professor husband with helping her overcome her doubts. He had his own tortuous route of doubt and inability to accept religion unconditionally. Yet, through their questioning and search for answers, they were both able to find religious acceptance and church membership over time.

When Susan found the stress of legal practice and especially the rigours of litigation too strenuous, she would have a quiet time and try to find herself and peace again. Throughout all the anxieties and tensions of life, she refers to "God as her psychiatrist" and is convinced that her religious faith has been her anchor in life.

All twelve research participants have raised their own children according to their religious convictions and feel satisfied that they are comfortable with their own religious beliefs.

b. Lifestyles flowing from a value system

Eight participants stated that their parents were deeply committed Christians, while two had mothers who were religious and fathers who were rather sceptical. The parents of two were more holistic in their religious views. While the parents of these twelve people varied in the degree of their religious commitment, all showed a high sense of moral values. This is in agreement with

what Badenhorst (1994:398, original and added emphasis) states that, although certain South Africans declare that they follow Christian values, the lives they *live* are actually more of a life of Western values, than fundamentally Christian in character. This represents both the normative ('what should be') and the factual values ('what is') (cf ethics 2.10.2).

Connected to the strong work ethic of all the participants' parents (cf 5.4.2.1.b), is the **dictum of thoroughness and commitment** (cf work ethic 2.10.7). Donald was taught as a child not to be satisfied with only 50%, but that one should strive for the best marks one could possibly attain. He experienced the coming of a regular radio service during his childhood as a momentous event in the lives of people on farms, as the radio opened up an outside world that was alive with things to discover. Although his parents were not highly educated people, they gave him a set of rules to live by which were an anchor in his life.

Henri, Franz and Lynne feel intense gratitude for the strong moral support they had throughout their childhood which was closely linked to a committed religious way of life. For Elke her mother was the stabilising factor in their home. She was the one who would comfort and cheer her father when he had bouts of depression and religious scepticism. Hans grew up in a religious family. Where scientists often have conflicts with religion, he also experienced this as a young person and did a great deal of reading and studying in this regard, also discussing his questions with others. Inneke's parents had not been connected to any form of religion, but had very high moral standards and a strong sense of social duty.

Henri found that the virtual absence of money in his life as a child on their farm, and later as a student, forced him and his siblings and friends to amuse themselves. Even in their pastimes their striving was always towards excellence in their hobbies and amusements. He remembers his mother as a "champion in making plans to keep the wolf from the door"; she had a very hard-working streak of excellence as she was well-known for her ability to bake cakes for every possible occasion, especially for church fêtes, where they played a dedicated and involved role (cf 5.4.2.1.b).

**Striving for superior standards** is a value shared by all participants, learning from an early age that "one does a thing to do it well and to finish it". An aspect of Franz's early work in the

civil service which caused him endless frustration was the lethargic attitude of many colleagues. This was in direct contrast with how he had been raised by his conscientious mother for whom a promise made for delivering a product in time was a promise kept. His endeavour to treat business associates, colleagues and even political members of opposing parties respectfully and cordially, he also ascribes to his mother's approach to allcomers. The fact that he still has friends from his earliest occupations is also ascribed to this approach to good human relations.

Donald feels deeply grateful that he was guided by his parents to develop a sense of **balance between religious and secular duties**. He remembers his religious education "not from a strictly Calvinistic point of view, but with very much more of a holistic sense". Elmar and Jess come from German missionary stock. As a child Jess was taught Sunday school by her favourite aunt on the farm, with her as the only child in the class. The devotions included learning to have frequent "talks with the Lord".

Hans attributes his ability to be objective and fair to his father's legal competence in **scrutinising every question with which he came into contact from every possible angle**. He also attributes the scientist's aptitude for thorough examination and meticulous work to this ability: not just accepting anything at face value, but **seeking the essentials of the truth**. From his mother he remembers learning to be able to do anything in and about the house, even to be able to iron and mend clothes and to knit.

◆ Concluding remarks

The twelve people in this study grew up with strong value systems in what could be described as lower to upper middle class families. These value systems empowered the individuals to develop the potential to be successful in their career and family lives. They regarded the ultimate choice of what they would do with their potential as their own choice and responsibility.

5.4.1.3 ***B: Secondary thematic group in dominant key: preparing for professional career*** ■

a. Early ability

A characteristic shared by the participants is the clearly superlative abilities and talents that comprised one of the criteria for their inclusion in the 'winning team' for this research. Not only have these twelve people proven to be **highly successful in their professional fields** (cf 2.5 and 3.2), **they have also been observed to lead a life of balance between career success and success as members of a family, a circle of friends and the community.** These multifaceted capabilities and competencies were demonstrated in various ways when they were at school and were illustrated by academic ability and leadership. As the participants are people that do not boast about their accomplishments, they had to be drawn out to talk about their abilities as children.

According to Olivier (1984), a characteristic of gifted children, who in the case of this study have developed into gifted adults, is their **dissatisfaction with the *status quo* of circumstances in their lives and their conscious endeavour to change or improve these conditions or situations** and their insatiable curiosity to find out more about a given discipline or ability in the field of leadership or creativity. Another characteristic of giftedness is the **ability towards synthesis, observation, intuition and the development of new solutions to old problems.** Not only have these individuals proven to have **superior expertise in their given disciplines, but they have shown the characteristics of leadership among their peers and associates.** This includes exceptional tact and understanding of others, the ability to **communicate well** and in such a way that others listen to them. They are also able to **disperse tensions and solve problems, often in a humorous or kind way, being sensitive to the needs and feelings of fellow human beings, are independent and have the ability to persevere and to work exceptionally hard** (Olivier 1984:69-71).

Donald and Elmar viewed themselves as "above average but not exceptional at school", partly as they were in rural schools which did not have intellectual stimulus on an extremely wide front.

Franz felt that the experience he had of virtually running the household at the age of fourteen gave him an advantage at school as he was regularly chosen as leader in various school roles as well as in his defence force commitments. These leadership roles were **the result of an early conscious decision to be positive and to make a positive contribution in any of his fields of endeavour**. This is in part due to learning at an early age how to work effectively and in a short time-span. Writing homework assignments at school was a good example, as he was able to write good quality language subject essays and mathematical projects in a far shorter period than others took to do the same work. Through this he learnt at an early age what the **relationship was between effectiveness and good quality workmanship** (cf 2.12.8). He was especially comfortable in the subjects where numbers were involved.

Henri showed early promise of excellent ability in every field at school. He was most interested in mathematics and the sciences, but was talented in cultural activities as well. His primary school was a small farm school at which the standard of work was so high, that when he went to high school in a large town, there was, for three years, very little in the curriculum that he had not already learnt. In contrast Hans was bored during his farm school years and did very much **learning and reading by himself**, with the result that he never felt that he had had a primary school backlog. He remembers being an above average learner at school and **if he was not one of the best, he always tried to become the best**.

Elke was encouraged in her writing ability by her parents and by her teachers. Winning prizes for contributions to her school publications was an important step in her choice of a journalistic career. Jess and Susan were encouraged not only by their families, but by principals and teachers who had seen that they had exceptional academic and sporting ability. Inneke's parents did not want her to continue after grade 10, but the school principal persuaded them to let her stay until matriculating, as she showed good intellectual ability. Lynne did not see herself as an outstanding learner at school. Alette says she knows that she did not reach her potential by any means, as she refused to learn, in spite of being encouraged by her teachers to do so. Learning and doing well incurred rejection from her mother, so that she consciously under-achieved which caused good humoured teasing from teachers. One teacher often asked her whether she had Irish blood, as she

had Irish looks and was always rebellious. She nevertheless occupied various positions of leadership in school.

Steven sees himself as a typical teenager at high school, more interested in sport than in academic capabilities, describing himself as “very, very average”. He says with amusement that he knew exactly how much to learn to be able to reach 50% for a pass mark, not being interested in any higher marks which would have used too much of his time and energy. He was also regularly chosen for positions of leadership in many areas, which he found more enjoyable. Because of leadership ability and his enthusiasm for aviation he was promoted to the level of officer while doing his air force training. Here extremely high standards were expected of him and he had by then developed the necessary motivation through maturity. Being one of fifteen cadets chosen out of more than five hundred applicants gave him the will to do his very best.

b. Education

Educated in regular primary schools, the participants were able to climb to distinguished heights in their professions, influencing the professional paths of countless adult professionals, students and learners and the quality of life of many people. Five attended farm schools with few pupils. Five grew up in small or medium sized towns, while two grew up in outlying suburbs of a city. Seven attended public high schools in rural towns. Steven attended a technical high school and the remaining four attended suburban public high schools. Everyone remembers a few outstanding teachers who had an intense influence on them, as well as a few poor teachers. Donald is of the opinion that even bad teachers had a good influence on him, as he consciously remembers not wanting to be like them, which was a very positive learning experience. This is indicative of his very positive outlook on life (cf 5.4.1.1.b and 5.4.2).

Of the twelve participants two men hold doctorates, Donald in educational psychology and Hans in physics. The latter is also a professor and head of a university faculty. Inneke has a doctorate in palaeontology and Lynne is a specialist in gynaecology and obstetrics. Elmar has a master’s degree in agricultural chemistry, but has not yet completed the doctorate he was working on, due to adverse personal and economic business circumstances. Alette has a master’s degree in clinical psychology and Elke is busy with a master’s degree in literature. Henri has Bachelor’s degrees

in mathematics and education and Jess has a Bachelor's degree in languages; both followed their degrees with various diplomas in education. Susan has a degree in law and Steven is a qualified pilot and architect. Franz has various qualifications in business. Six of the twelve were able to obtain bursaries and or loans for undergraduate study, while six were able to finance themselves at a later stage, not allowing a lack of funds for full-time study to deter them.

Alette qualified as a clinical psychologist with her own practice, doing a master's degree in the approaches she developed. Elke became a journalist, with an honours degree in psychology, having worked, *inter alia*, for a United Nations women's organisation and at a prestige university while her husband was on a tour of duty in the diplomatic corps. At present she is busy with a master's degree in literature, concerning the feminine autobiography. Inneke started off with distance education, studying to be a librarian, later becoming interested in archeology and later more so in palaeontology, at present being on various international research committees. Jess was a high school language teacher and later became a distance education lecturer in English. At present she is involved in work with disabled people, as well as in literature, editing and linguistic projects. Lynne started off as a medical doctor and specialised in gynaecology and obstetrics, while Susan was first a bookkeeper and later qualified through after-hours study as a lawyer, presently working from her home on a freelance basis.

Donald was trained as a physical instruction and science teacher and later became passionately interested in educational psychology, eventually ending his teaching career by teaching the medical lecturers of his alma mater how to improve their own teaching skills, thereby having come full circle with his early ungratified wish to study medicine. Hans originally wanted to study medicine, but eventually did his doctorate in physics.

Henri was a mathematics teacher and later qualified in educational management, climaxing his career as a senior advisor to the National Education authorities. He remembers grabbing every opportunity available to attend courses and widen his knowledge base. Elmar was trained as an agricultural scientist and later went into the field of management in his research and development institute. Franz studied law after hours and was not able to complete his degree, but went into the field of business management and was professionally trained in various aspects in this field.

At present he has his own travel business, manages various portfolios with chambers of commerce and holds a senior management position in a large metropolitan council. When Steven's parents relocated to the coast when he was in high school, he boarded with his best friend's family. His friend was also a leader and his father was a teacher. The boys often had long discussions with him and other teachers about a wide range of school projects and about life in general:

I think with all that exposure you were actually programmed for the future. It was excellent schooling for my career, my independence, because I had my own opinion, we could express our opinions ... it was debated and usually a consensus was formed and then developed.

He is of the opinion that his technical high school education qualified him well for any natural science career, his only non-scientific subjects being English and Afrikaans. This technical background was an excellent choice and prepared him for understanding the mechanical workings of aerodynamics and of aircraft. After qualifying as an air force pilot and officer, he became an architect with his own freelance studio where he presently develops various large projects over greater Southern Africa. For this, scientific knowledge is again essential. Presently he is also in a co-ordinating position for a building consortium which he initiated.

c Reading widely

Csikszentmihalyi (1990:117) points out that some of the most exhilarating experiences humans can undergo are generated inside the mind, triggered by information that challenges one's ability to think, rather than from the use of sensory skills. He cites Sir Francis Bacon's (c. 1605) statement that wonder is the reflection of the purest form of pleasure. Just as there are flow activities as optimal experiences corresponding to every physical potential of the body, every mental operation is able to experience its own particular form of enjoyment. **As intellectual pursuit, reading is mentioned as the most often mentioned flow activity in the world.**

All participants grew up in homes where reading was a passion (cf 2.10.1 & 2.10.13). They still read as much as they possibly can, having an insatiable hunger for knowledge and being well-informed in a wide range of interests. All participants' passion for reading started as children in

their families and they do not remember any time when they were not ardent readers concerning every aspect of their lives. Having an informed opinion was part of the process of growing up and giving books as presents for special occasions was part of their normal lives. Their well-stocked bookcases are testimony to this.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990:236) tells of their research into coherent life themes, relating that people who were successful in developing purpose in life were read to often as children and were told stories by their parents. He believes that when told by a loving and trusted adult, the telling of fairy tales, biblical stories, heroic historical deeds and poignant family events are often the first intimations of meaningful order a person harvests from the collective experience of the past. Literature, music, art, philosophy and religion contain ordered information about behaviour, models of purpose, and examples of lives successfully patterned around meaningful goals, often giving people overwrought by the randomness of existence hope that others before them have had similar problems and had been able to prevail.

Henri had the example of a father who did not have the privilege of more than three months of formal education, due to the aftermath of the Boer War, as well as droughts and the depression of the 1920s and 1930s. Yet, he recalls, his father was such a voracious reader, that he had an exceptionally wide general knowledge and was able to inspire and support Henri to have the same quest for always wanting to know more. Henri also considers his father to have been a philosopher of superior ability, always being more of an academic than a farmer at heart. Elmar and Jess also consider their fathers to have been the same in this way.

Likewise, Inneke's parents made up for their lack of education by always having books available and by reading every evening of their lives. The result was her first aspirations of becoming a librarian and after that having a family who were ardent book lovers and collectors. Her eldest daughter is also a librarian at present. Donald's brother and sisters had the same appetite for reading and for gathering general knowledge as he had, approaching this quest for knowledge with a sense of adventure. He knows that he has passed this appetite for general knowledge on to his children, as his sons have been highly successful in prominent general knowledge competitions. Donald believes that books become even more important later in life and that he has grown immensely from books recommended to him by friends, a habit which he is also keen

to pass on. He ascribes this quest for knowledge partly to a childhood desire to know what “the situation looks like when you have absorbed new information and have broadened your horizons”. Having an inquiring mind is a characteristic that he and his siblings share, says Donald. During their formative years, they were raised on a farm to have a sense of adventure, with the notion that one should always want to know more: “what it looks like behind a mountain or from the top, or from the top of a tree”. **Always wanting to know more** is the quality that was engendered by this stimulus received as a child.

Having been denied the opportunity of full-time study, Franz started studying after-hours, which he found impossible to continue to completion. **He compensated by reading everything that he could lay his hands on** in the subjects he was interested in, such as law and accounting while employed in the civil service and in his own family businesses. He found this extremely helpful since he read books about exactly what he needed at the time, integrating this data with his daily work needs, as well as reading everything possible about local and international politics, combined with an acute awareness of current news. He concluded that with this wider source of awareness, he was often able to surpass some colleagues and contemporaries who had specialised in various vocations such as law or business.

Hans describes his nuclear family as “very intellectual”. In addition to being avid and enthusiastic chess players, Hans’ parents were insatiable readers since he could remember:

With a father in the legal profession we grew up in an atmosphere where one read about many subjects and aspects of life, debating every possible angle and viewpoint. These debates were regularly held at the dinner table. In the evenings our family sat reading together and if anyone one read something interesting, we would share it with the family and it would be discussed. ... As my primary school was a farm school, I was often able to read widely on my own while the teacher was busy with other classes, giving me the advantage of not only learning what the older children were busy with, but being able to do reading on my own concerning aspects which interested me.

Steven describes his love for reading as “a hunger for knowledge”, which he experienced as a lasting adventure. His wide general knowledge has opened many doors in his proficiency as a coordinator in the building industry (cf 5.4.2.1.d).

◆ Concluding remarks

Endowed with the natural ability to do well, the participants were stimulated by their home and school environments and showed early capability in handling the school situation fairly well to very well. All of them grew up in homes where education and wide reading were valued, setting the scene for developing wherever their interests would lead them.

#### 5.4.2 C: Career development (growth experiences)

In this section key thematic career development areas identified in the semi-structured interviews are discussed (cf table 2 for career development and career moves).

**The early career choice of most of the twelve participants was made out of a sense of idealism** (cf motivation 2.6.2 2.7.2). The career paths of three men and two women developed in a way which may be described as **'climbing the career ladder directly'**, while the career paths of the other seven took **lateral, pragmatic routes**. The traditional 'ladder of success' has customarily been seen as commencing in a junior position and advancing in an orderly sequence through various promotions and levels of importance and influence. 'Lateral routes' means moving to career areas which were not been foreseen when one started working, sometimes characterised as 'branching' or moving in an indirect way described as 'latticework' (cf 2.2.6 and 2.13).

While the career histories of all participants is important and captivating, **the accent of this research is on the competencies and proficiencies they consciously developed which enabled them to make the progress that they did. Woven into the abilities or life skills they either innately had or consciously learnt, were the capabilities and mastery they clearly demonstrated in walking the path of success in their careers and family life, concerning their marriages and parenting roles. Of note is the way in which they learnt from setbacks and mistakes and overcame serious occurrences and adverse circumstances in their lives.**

This section represents the core of the skills which enabled the participants to attain the professional prominence and personal esteem for which they are known and for which they were selected for this study. Four main thematic areas are identified in this section: skills development and state management; taking stock and gaining perspective; wounds as growth experiences and the concept of resilience.

#### 5.4.2.1 *Skills Development and State Management*

##### a. Career motivation and positive attitudes

The influence of the life views of the parents of eleven of the twelve participants had a marked influence on their motivation for initial career choices. For eight their career choices were dependent on what was financially possible in the line of bursaries and loans (cf 5.4.1.1.c), but for all, the basic attitudes and motivation were an extension of what they had learnt in their homes (cf background 2.10.1).

Regarding internal versus external motivation (cf 2.10.5), their responses are mixed. The general feeling is that they are motivated by both. For ten out of the twelve their original 'calling' was to render a service to society. One participant, Elmar, said he was not so altruistic, but was prompted by the availability of a bursary, while one, Hans, was driven by a quest for knowledge. Five were also driven by a desire to rise above difficult financial circumstances. All felt a deep sense of loyalty towards their families, at all times trying to balance both worlds, though they admit that this has not always been possible.

As the Latin root from which the word 'motivation' is *movere*, meaning 'to move', people are moved to act at their deepest level by fundamental values, such as the values of the parents and community in which they grew up (Badenhorst 1994:398; cf motivation 2.10.5 and 5.4.1.2)

Henri's first choice of medicine, through which he would have liked to serve the community, was not financially possible and education came next. As an all-rounder, the choice of subjects to study was difficult for him, but he decided on the sciences as there was a scarcity of teachers in these subjects. Consequently he was in demand even before he had qualified. Beside the idea of

service was the motivation to attain excellence in order to **rise above the difficult financial circumstances in which he had grown up**. Among his friends at university this was an extremely strong shared motivation. Throughout his educational career he took great pleasure **in being of help to learners to be empowered through understanding mathematics and overcoming difficulties. In helping others to grow, he felt himself grow as well and this was an ongoing motivation**. He experienced great satisfaction from inverting the notorious words of Till Eulenspiegel concerning being hated, by saying **“People love me, but I work towards being loved!”**. His abiding conviction is that **circumstances are often what one makes of both problems and of good fortune** (cf success 2.5.5-7 and resilience 5.4.2.4).

Similarly, Donald wanted to serve others by going into medicine, which was not financially possible, so the other route was through education. This he did for many years in secondary, tertiary education and in-service teacher training. He finds it most satisfactory to work with and inspire people, for which he has a special aptitude. As a physical education teacher, he experienced many doors opened through sport. He found it **especially rewarding to build the self-confidence of the high school learners, more specifically those lacking in self-confidence**. When allocating children to teams for activities he always chose the smallest, weakest ones to captain the teams and took great pleasure in watching the child's confidence develop. Consequently, parents often thanked him with tears in their eyes for what this boost of self-confidence had meant to their child. Eventually he saw how much psychology was involved and decided to study psychology. He was also motivated by his experiences when teaching science, where he saw the children's eyes shining when they understood the subject matter. These experiences of intellectual growth and **emotional enrichment made him feel part of the continuous process of creation**. When working with adults he observed the same phenomenon, leading 226 tours with the Leonardo da Vinci exhibition in his home city in 1998 as part of his present freelance work.

Regarding motivating people, Donald has experienced that people with a positive self-concept are easier to motivate (cf self talk 5.4.2.2.f). **When he went to a great deal of trouble to teach creatively, he experienced that in the learners' growth his own self-concept was also enhanced**. He remembers consciously copying the aspects of the teaching methodology of his

own respected teachers and lecturers. When he read assignments of a colleague who had done BEd, he was convinced that he needed to study that field to be able to become a more accomplished educator.

Elmar was **self-motivated** from a very early age. He was supported firmly during his school years by his parents and siblings, but his own aspirations were his strongest motivation (cf 2.10.5). Having grown up on a sheep farm, he was interested in the scientific aspects of agriculture and the bursary he obtained was a deciding factor in his career choice. In the course of his career development he was motivated by many people but cannot name any specific person or cause for his motivation in this direction. He is jokingly honest when he states that he did not entertain “high altruistic ideals” when choosing his career.

For Franz the realisation that he had the ability to do well academically and to play a leadership role were important motivators, but the strongest factor mobilising him was **the will to rise above the crippling financial circumstances in which he had grown up** (cf resilience 2.5.5). His frustration with poor work in the first state organisation he worked in and with the *laissez faire* attitude, “tomorrow is another day” led him to decide to start his own business. The lack of opportunity for full-time study was in the long run converted into satisfaction at having met many of his other objectives most effectively. **His deeply religious mother’s brave ventures to overcome their financial perils and her wide general knowledge was a strong incentive to make the best of his opportunities and innate abilities.** Franz also credits one of his high school history teachers and youth counsellors with motivating him **to be very self-disciplined.** This teacher, a university wrestling champion and highly disciplined person, taught him to be **mentally well-prepared for activities by also being physically fit.** What has been an abiding motivation for good personal relations with friends and political or business opponents, was that “every person was a neighbour” in the religious sense, as well as the concept of “turning the other cheek”. This has been one of his strengths in the political arena, giving him an advantage in negotiations of a delicate nature.

Steven’s childhood fascination with every aspect of aviation has been mentioned. As a student at a technical high school, he studied four scientific subjects for matric and had a deep interest in

the scientific aspects of the construction industry. As an architect the freedom to design a medical clinic or a private home, after analysing the client's needs as well as working with other specialists in their fields to convert an abstract idea into a concrete, working entity is

the most gratifying experience — I believe that is the same feeling when a mother holds a baby for the first time ... it's all yours!

Hans was motivated to choose a scientific career by two factors: firstly, his father's encouragement to develop **a wide and well-informed general knowledge and quest to know the very essence of every matter**; secondly, by **his own questioning mind, which led him to relish advanced research** (cf 2.10.1 & 2.6.2). Having chosen physics as his field, he was further inspired by one of the heads of their physics department to do work worthy of world recognition. An older colleague encouraged him to arrange conferences. This and the desire for greater knowledge of human nature, led him to improve the working environment of his staff. Another motivation for excellence was the experience of missing promotions once or twice, which spurred him to overtake senior colleagues eventually. This ties in with his competitive bent at school where he strove to be the best in his class (cf 5.4.2.3).

For Elke the choice of journalism emanated from early recognition at high school of her language and writing abilities. For her it was a challenge and delight to research a topic and to provide a verbal account. Marriage to a fellow journalist, also her mentor and role model in her early career assisted her. Later, she was to feel at her happiest and most creative when she could write at home, fulfilling the role of journalist simultaneously with that of wife and mother (cf 2.9). Overseas duty in the diplomatic corps provided opportunities for gaining a broader idea of world trends in human development and literature.

Inneke grew up in a home where everything was done painstakingly well by her parents of Dutch origin. She had no knowledge of the world of palaeontology when she started out working in a university library and studying librarianship. As has been mentioned, her choice of archeology was almost accidental. While doing post graduate work, she was appointed research assistant at a nearby university. The study of prehistory from the bones she was analysing was so exciting that she was motivated to go further into this specialised field. When she had to do research at

a nearby museum, she was so **enthusiastic and able**, that she was appointed permanently at the museum, eventually becoming the deputy director. Inneke describes the basis for her thoroughness by her personal motto: **“If one does anything one might as well do it well”** (cf work ethic 2.10.7). With her husband sharing in the enthusiasm for her research, she had every possible backing for reaching greater heights, even when her field research took her away from home and two small daughters at times. Two of her study supervisors were world renowned authorities in the field, one having been associated with internationally famous historical anthropological research.

Jess also shares the conviction of **doing things as well as possible**, having been encouraged by her family from her earliest years to strive for high ideals in school and music and athletics. During her career in tertiary education, she recalls “always having sympathy with the underdog” and **not only walking the road with those who are successful**. Throughout her career she tried to extend her warm, sympathetic educational style to the people behind the subject matter and **to empower her pupils and students by enabling them to experience success**. Through this approach she was also able to motivate and inspire colleagues working under her guidance, encouraging them to “get into somebody’s shoes and walk around in them to really understand them”.

Susan, like Elmar, did not choose her later legal career with any ideals in mind. She landed in law classes more or less “by accident” as has been mentioned. She was also motivated by the status of the legal profession. For a woman it was rather unusual to be a lawyer at that time and she saw that wearing the professional attire and representing a client in court would be **an enjoyable challenge**. Her father, who was in the police service, actually tried to steer his daughters away from the legal profession as he did not like all aspects of the work, but both Susan and one of her sisters eventually qualified in this direction.

Alette states that as a clinical psychologist, she has no other explanation for being drawn to this profession but intuition and religious calling (cf 2.10.2 & 5). A divorce and the responsibility of small children spurred her to qualify in a direction where she could support herself and her children. At school she was drawn to poetry and deeper philosophical and psychological matters.

In post-graduate studies she was complimented by her professor as “having an exceptional ability towards the synthesis of all the available facts”. She finds it particularly rewarding to help people suffering from depression and to help engaged couples with antenuptial guidance courses, as she herself had gone through these difficulties and had learnt to overcome them (cf resilience 2.5.5, 2.10.2, 5.4.2.3 & 5.5).

Lynne found her motivation to study medicine linked to her father’s own general medical practice (cf 2.10.1). As a result of great admiration, almost hero-worship, for him, she had and her four sisters wanted to enter the medical field from early childhood. Lynne found the work most interesting and especially likes surgery. Consulting with patients is a pleasant challenge and she has always been **motivated by the will to help other people and to improve their quality of life.**

b. Work ethic, ‘walking the extra mile’ and perseverance

Goleman (1995:79-93) states unequivocally that high achievers work harder than their second-rate peers (cf 2.5.2). The act of disciplined hard work in turn produces feelings of enjoyment and success, resulting in even more motivation towards still greater achievement, which Goleman (1995:91) calls “a feedback loop”. He refers to Csikszentmihalyi’s (cf 1990) longitudinal research on ‘flow’ which has corroborated this observation. This concept is corroborated by the interviews conducted for this research.

All participants are characterised by **the ability to work exceptionally hard, to keep working at problems and to take pride in these facets of their personalities** (cf work ethic 2.10.7). As mentioned earlier, all participants enjoyed the example of conscientious parents, who had set high standards and consistently ‘walked the extra mile’ in whatever they did. With the exception of two participants, all could not remember any time when they had not tried to surpass most of their peers and contemporaries at school. The two exceptions, Alette and Steven, however, did later experience the will to excel. They were all later able to look back on a work ethic of integrity and a “streak of excellence” in their dealings with people and with their own job. Those

who had come from difficult circumstances felt they had been **empowered by their parents' ideals and the appreciation of their parents for their efforts.**

All the men have been married with children and have been deeply involved with maintaining their homes and active in the activities of their children and the community. One man's wife worked full-time in education; the wives of two were involved in part-time work and one left her paramedical occupation to raise four children, while two were highly active in community work and with earning money through their creative hobbies. For the women in the study, the concept of "hard work" has been influenced by various other facets of their lives — hard work at the work place has been one facet, but since they have all been married with children and homes to run, **their work responsibilities have been spread over both their career and personal commitments** to a greater degree than in the case of the men (cf 2.9). All the women stayed at home for a few years during family formation. The gynaecologist, Lynne, took maternity leave with the birth of her children. Five of the women had either full-time or part-time domestic help.

Elke qualifies the involvement of **the working woman, who is also a wife and a mother, as "the eternal triangle", which is not for the timid.** She has had the experience of first working hard when repaying a Civil Service bursary obtained through the Defence Force. In her first assignment she had to prove herself in order to find out how she could possibly be of use before moving on to the information department, where she wanted to work as a journalist. Thus she learnt the practicalities of a formerly exclusive male world in the hard way. When she did eventually find herself in the department where she could work as a journalist, she was the only woman and had to travel at a moment's notice, also equipped with a camera "to be able to get the whole picture". Opportunities in the Defence Force were, at that stage, opening up for women and Elke experienced it as a very challenging time in her life, learning from a very strict senior officer that "you graduates need to know you can't only develop in one way: **you should be like a tree, branching in all directions**". Her future husband was a more senior journalist in the department and she found herself having to "work smartly" to keep up with the pace.

When they were married, they worked at a daily newspaper together and this pattern of being ready to move quickly and effectively was continued until they took up their first post outside

South Africa, when their first child was born. She tried to keep up her journalistic pursuits, but spent most of her time enjoying motherhood, which she approached with the same complete commitment as her career. Today she realises that with the modern electronic media she could have had greater success as a part-time journalist during this period, although she realises that, at that stage, she did not have the emotional maturity which was needed for good writing. With all their overseas postings in the UK, USA and in Europe with the Diplomatic Corps, with another two children and no domestic help, she was still able to keep her connections in journalism, writing about their interesting experiences.

Elke describes her continued difficulties with working outside the home when they came back to South Africa. She was extremely well-informed concerning child rearing and aware of how much her children needed her in the everyday running of their lives. **Being a committed mother was more important than a career for quite a few years.** Nevertheless, the realities of affirmative action which negatively affected her husband, a serious financial setback and changed economic circumstances made her decide to go back to full-time journalistic posts for a few trial periods, with **considerable inner conflict for her children's welfare.** Eventually she concluded that to be the wife and mother she wanted to be, she would have to make her financial contribution as co-breadwinner by working from home at night or while the children were at school or engaged in extra-mural activities. This also means that she is never away from her office. There are many interruptions and she feels herself "spread rather thin over many responsibilities". She is continuously torn between her conscience and her physical energy. She has found herself spending many unproductive hours in front of the computer as a result of exhaustion. Sometimes she has feverishly "slogged it out" and at other times had to motivate herself to work.

Inneke has always been able to concentrate very well and to work fast and effectively, not wasting any time or energy with frivolities (cf key skills 2.10.13). She and her husband have always finished what they set themselves to do. Her archeological work has been very detailed and always needs to be done with painstaking exactitude. She writes papers for international magazines or conferences with the same application and concentration that she embroiders, paints watercolours or does house or garden work, with a friendly smile and without any outside help. Her multifaceted general knowledge about anything from music to history and literature is astounding. This comes from an ability to read widely and with intense concentration.

With Jess one hardly notices that **she works extremely hard, as she is a model of composure and order at all times. Her approach may be defined as being “user friendly and easy on the eye and the ear”**. She states that she has often become anxious and stressed in the past, but this has not been evident to those working with her or under her gentle and inspiring guidance. This has possibly been the key to her success with school learners, students and junior colleagues. The standards in the subjects she has taught have been very high, but **more important than good examination results has been her philosophy that one tries to educate and enrich the human being as a whole through the subject matter**. She has consciously tried, when teaching German, to show her learners something of the refinements and “*Gemütlichkeit*” of the German culture, its music, songs and folk dances. When she was teaching English at a distance education university, she tried to be “a human being in the book” when writing study manuals, so that the students were able to get the feeling of being in a class with a warm, friendly and helpful teacher nearby. Her ability to explain the inner workings of the bigger picture is remarkable. This was illustrated in the interview by an anecdote she used comparing the veins of a leaf as analogy to the structure of the veins of a human being, which she recalls using to explain the concept to her small granddaughter. She always saw it as most important to

let the learners experience the ‘*AHA- Erlebnis*’, with the sudden ‘lighting up’ of understanding when they understood the learning material.

Her enthusiastic involvement did not end with the classroom, but was extended to various sport and cultural activities as visible proof of her lifelong motto of “**if one does anything, one does it as well as is possible**”, **persisting until one reaches one’s goal**. Her husband, Elmar, actually tried at times to persuade her not to be too friendly and patient, believing that she should be more of a “slavedriver” in her classes. When she apologised to some of her black university colleagues, with whom she spoke Zulu, for the less than perfect language she was speaking, she was told that “a good teacher never laughs at a student”. She felt that this aptly summarised her own teaching approach. A possible explanation for her patient and tolerant approach is that she always feels intense empathy with less privileged people, consciously trying to “pick such people up out of their doldrums”.

Susan undertakes whatever she does **with enthusiasm** (cf key skills 2.10.13). With a busy competitive tennis and social programme after school, she was not keen to study at the time and only started her part-time legal studies seven years later. Her personal maxim of “**if you start with something you finish it**” also inspired her to work very effectively and to complete her studies, although she got married halfway into her degree. Although the legal work was highly demanding, she enjoyed the challenges of the field and especially the litigation, even though it often demanded working until late in the evening to prepare cases. She found some parts of the work tough for a woman, as it often had to do with the darker side of life. This very thorough preparation had its advantages, as opposing lawyers sometimes gave the impression that, because they saw a woman as defence council, it would be easy to win the case, not always expecting her to be so well-equipped for her task. **Her maturity and versatility were added advantages and her male colleagues respected her for being prepared to work somewhat harder than they did.**

Alette’s individualistic approach to psycho-therapy is due to **an intense commitment to make a difference in the lives of people with problems.** After thorough training in the basics, she was aware that she could improve on what she had learnt at university through, what she calls “a very feminine and intuitive strategy”. Having been through a painful divorce and with hindsight into what could have been done to save her marriage, or in fact any marriage (cf dual career marriage 5.5), she worked with an added incentive. **Her integrity and commitment do not know any time-limits and she is prepared to work for long and uncomfortable hours to help a patient.** She recalls her father’s aptitude as a farmer to do things needed on the farm, even if he had to make a study of a new problem. This example inspires her not to give up on dilemmas, but solve them effectively and in a short time. She says that she even had obsessive-compulsive characteristics in this direction at times, taking the shortest and most dynamic routes to help patients who had had protracted therapy which had not been useful. Her therapy, she says, is “bone honest” and very much to the point, although done with great empathy and tact. She has caused lawyers to lose their cases in court when her testimony has been to “tell it as it is”, and not what they want her to say. **This honesty, focus and directness has had excellent results with many patients.** Her energy and intensity have moved seemingly unsolvable cases, although there have been some that could not handle it. The feeling of triumph when people are cured of

problematic issues makes all the hard work a sustaining inspiration, with people sometimes contacting her after many years to thank her again for being able to live meaningful lives once more. Her philosophy of life includes “**doing a thing well or not doing it at all**”. She believes that every patient has the right to her very best and most cost-effective therapy. Even when patients say they can’t do things, she advises “There is no such thing as that one cannot do anything to improve the stressful situation”.

As a gynaecologist, Lynne has had ample opportunity to work long hours and “walk the extra mile” with patients. Having grown up with a doctor father, she never had any illusions about this commitment. Where other people had a problem when they saw blood, she had always seen this as a challenge and she enjoys operating, adding with a smile that she can’t do needlework at all. She says, with humour,

that people are much easier to sew up, as the skin folds naturally and heals itself!  
 ... **My greatest commitment is to improving the quality of life of women and especially that of mothers and babies.** ... I believe that if one did not find the work highly satisfying, one could not work day and night at it during the study period or when one is needed.

Lynne has the blessing of being married to a most supportive man who does freelance scientific work under contract and is at home most of the time to be with the children after school. She also has a good housekeeper and a receptionist who is willing to be a taxi when needed. She is one of a team of four gynaecologists working in association, so that for a number of years she has been able to consult or operate before 15h00 hours, except for unexpected deliveries and she has most weekends free. The timetable for weekend and holiday duty is planned a year in advance. She has found a definite advantage in being a woman gynaecologist, as she understands the problems of the feminine psyche. Moreover, women relate to her very easily, especially because she is feminine and a wife and mother. Having a strong build from swimming competitively at school has been an advantage in doing work that needs muscle power, such as lifting patients. **For medical studies, she believes, one does not necessarily have to be outstandingly clever, but one must be prepared to work exceptionally hard,** studying while other students are enjoying themselves socially. She definitely enjoys being a doctor more than she enjoyed studying to be one.

Donald firmly believes that the example of a work ethic is set by the parents (cf 2.10.1). Asked what his perception is of himself, Donald states jokingly that he is “above average”; but he is quick to add that he has actually **always just “worked exceptionally hard” throughout his whole life** (cf work ethic 5.4.2.1.b, responsibility and self talk 5.4.2.2.b). As a psychologist he now realises, decades later, that one is then entitled to think of oneself as “above average” and that one is used to aim for excellence. He believes that if a person hears often enough that s/he has special capabilities, it becomes part of oneself. **Not only should one “try to do things right, but one should try to do the right things”, implying that there should always be a value judgement in one’s priority list** (cf time management 5.4.2.1.c). One should also develop the ability to say “don’t sweat the small stuff”, but to **keep one’s eyes on the bigger picture**.

For Steven efficiency is foremost in his mind:

It’s the only way I can operate, I cannot tolerate a non-100% performance. ... I believe that determination is the drive — I cannot even consider defeat. I believe nothing is impossible in life, it’s a mind set ... if you are focussed to achieve and to provide, in my profession, a service, there’s no other consideration, there’s no other alternative.

Henri had an ideal ever since he could remember: to try to **lift people up onto “an emotionally and intellectually higher plateau”** (cf motivation 2.6.2 and 2.10.5). Because of this, he tried to please everyone in his work as an educator and often “bent over backwards” to do this. He experienced special joy as a mathematics teacher, principal and inspector, by motivating and helping learners to overcome academic and personal problems. In the process he **empowered them and set them free from inhibitions through hard work until they saw the light**. His philosophy as an educator was that many learners might actually be far more intelligent than he and they should be given optimal opportunity for development. By utilising peer tutoring at a stage when it was unrecognised, he was able to reach mathematical heights with learners which were almost unheard of in his province. Later he perceived the same reaction from colleagues and parents as an educational manager. He also believes that this hard work needs to be done with honesty and integrity, otherwise there is no possibility of getting learners, members of staff and parents to believe in what one tries to achieve (cf key skills 2.10.13). When he was promoted to more senior positions, people lavished praise on him for these characteristics and for “walking the

extra mile”, but he was not aware of doing anything other than his utmost best for individuals or institutions.

In the same vein, Elmar believes that this characteristic of hard work and dedication has contributed to many highly educated South Africans obtaining employment in the USA and Europe. **He ascribes his professional success to hard work, competence and good personal relationships, without the benefit of any “luck”.** He believes that people hoping to reach success in the scientific or management fields should have **a highly developed sense of duty**, so that one “leads from the front, rather than pushes from the rear”, at all times being a fundamentally trustworthy, appreciative and dependable person (cf work ethic 2.10.7). Developing an ability to analyse the essentials of a task and then to meet the challenges head-on with back-bracingly hard work, not only solves problems, but is most rewarding in attaining job-satisfaction in the end. The discipline needed for the writing of scientific articles has ultimately been most important for gaining the insight needed for the management of a scientific research and development agency. Another contributory factor was **the knowledge and experience of various lateral moves he had made within his professional field.**

Franz is convinced that without a will to survive, the ability to set goals and to work exceptionally hard to reach them, he would not have had any career successes whatsoever, as there was no “steppingstone” to progress in his case. **Being disciplined, helpful, positive and doing more that was expected, were skills he had already learnt during his school years, which opened many doors for him.** He recalls an early aversion to being lazy. During his entire working life there was no period in which he did not have at least two occupations at the same time, one by day and one after hours and at weekends. When he started working in the Civil Service after matric, he enrolled for evening classes in law and started his own business at the same time. His personal motto of **“doing a thing effectively, to the very best of one’s ability and getting it over and done with”** was already formed when, as a child, he helped his mother and family administer various extra lines of income until the early hours of the morning. The knowledge and skills he gathered in this way were instrumental in his being able to start his own travel business, eventually climbing to senior positions in the world of chambers of commerce, international travel and provincial politics. **Being goal-orientated, disciplined, willing to serve**

**and creating one's own opportunities were essentials** in reaching many of the targets he would otherwise have thought were impossible.

Hans found that at some stage in his life he had looked back and realised that **he had been doing much more work than most of his contemporaries**. This, he recalls, was second nature and related to his childhood home, where his parents had placed **great emphasis on perseverance and doing things thoroughly**. With the research he did in physics, the long hours and nights he worked were extremely challenging and satisfying, underlining the **emphasis he placed on task completion**. **The standards of excellence required, the ability to focus and the highly accurate measurements** he had to make regarding the improvement of the quality of metals, gave him much satisfaction as well as international recognition in physics, resulting in opportunities for post doctoral research in countries such as Germany and Denmark. His aptitude for hard work has given him a good reputation in this regard as present head of his faculty.

c. Time management

To obtain professional and personal success is to a great extent indicative of an ability to deal effectively with time and to take the right steps towards qualifying for **career and personal state management** at the right stage in life (cf key skills 2.10.13). Covey (1992:149-150, 170, emphasis added) views 'time management' as a misnomer, as **the challenge is actually not to manage time, but to manage oneself**, setting priorities regarding one's mission, values and high priority and long-term goals and remembering that people are more important than things. The participants have all clearly been able to manage their time well, although a few still complain about not being able to do as well in this regard as they would like to.

Inneke's time management is admirable and she rarely feels pressed for time. She **works fast and effectively and is focussed, always creating the impression that she is in complete control of her actions**. She is quick to add that she is very blessed for having had a smooth career path and a most supportive husband who has helped immensely to run the home run smoothly, as well as a work milieu where there was no gender discrimination. Her strategy for time management may be summarised by her conviction that:

one should plan one's actions to do things needing the same group of motions at the same time in order to avoid repetition, as well as developing the ability to judge the duration of projects accurately and then keeping to a time schedule.

Like Inneke, Susan also has the ability to control a **full work schedule at all times, but this has been the result of definite planning and conscious effort.** When she was studying, she was also working a full day as an accountant and learnt to manage many things simultaneously. In order to make time for her children she only did legal work from her home after they were born, also training as professional tennis instructor so that they could be with her during the afternoons. Jess felt that her personal timing was not in line with the thinking of the education department at the stage of the time of her marriage and she was severely penalised (cf obstacles 5.4.2.3.a). She and her husband, Elmar, were advised to get married in a magistrate's court three weeks before the holidays when the formal church wedding was to take place. She would have forfeited her annual salary increment, her holiday salary as well as the bonus at the end of the year. At the time there was official discrimination against women.. What made her exceptional as an educator, however, was that **she never seemed in too much of a hurry to help a learner, student or colleague and nothing was too much trouble.** In spite of a busy schedule, she always managed to serve delicious breakfasts and suppers to her family at table before school and work, enabling them to communicate as a family at the beginning and end of a day. **They also made time for family meetings with an agenda** as well as regular brisk walks and trips on a bicycle as exercise.

As gynaecologist and obstetrician, Lynne has to make sure that she manages her time well, as there are always obstetrical surprises to contend with. The problem, under normal circumstances, is that **there is hardly time for a normal marriage and for raising children.** Her eldest daughter finds it very frustrating that she is not able to make a late afternoon commitment to a regular gym session with her, as she finds this too binding with possible births and urgent consultations. Her younger daughter is frustrated when she is not able to go to a movie when she has weekend duty. She feels exceptionally fortunate to have married a man who is willing and able to place his career second to hers. However, he was aware of what he was in for, as they had known each other for eight years before marriage. Lynne **feels strongly about her priorities in having chosen to marry and have children, otherwise she should not have had them** (cf

gender roles 2.7.3). Having come from a family who enjoyed spending time together, she also takes great pleasure in doing things with her husband and children, regularly scheduling weekends away in their caravan or with family. Among her three associates is a male gynaecologist whom the women have delegated to attend all evening hospital meetings, freeing the three mothers to have time with their own children.

Elke has found that the long hours a full-time journalist has to work cause her much **conflict with her roles as wife and mother**, as working for a newspaper is very stressful. The answer has been freelance work for magazines or the new media. The latter is not easy financially, as payments are often tardy, which aggravates her time-management problems. The concept of flexi-time has been a compromise in which both career and home duties may be fulfilled. She is convinced that she is not being the mother she wants to be when she works very hard, with less time for her children. This makes her feel guilty. **“Her self-concept is deeply bound to her motherhood role”**, as is the social concept that one is only of worth as a mother when one’s children receive very much support for attaining their best. This concept of time slots accentuates her feeling of “having an overdeveloped guilt-gland” as she believes a woman does not have quite the same ability as a man has “to compartmentalise his work and home duties”, leaving the office behind to a certain extent when he goes home. This difficulty with time management is part of a **modern mother’s dilemma, as “you are never off-duty”**. Yet she **wants to be involved with her children’s activities, necessitating many compromises** (cf dual career 5.5). She wishes she had had the knowledge of the world of work twenty years ago to have been able to make better adjustments.

Having spent all his school years in a hostel, Donald learnt from an early age that there is an organised time for things to happen. He makes a distinction between “concepts of Western time and Africa time”, saying that one’s actions would have to coincide with the cultural situation. If the event or organisation operates within the first framework, one would have to conform to that. He also believes that a parent should try not to take work home too often, as this causes confusion for a child with the perception of time management.

Henri, who is also an educator, states that “in education people’s time is actually organised for them”, with pre-arranged times when things are designated to happen act as a framework for one’s involvement.

Elmar has always tried to keep **a balance between hard work at the office and time spent with his family, convinced that the two have to be compatible; if this is not the case, it is a path of self-destruction**. He found it easier to handle this balance when their family was young than in the later “*Sturm und Drang*” years. Then he was about 35 to 45 years of age and moving to top executive positions, when there were weighty economic questions to be dealt with. Making time to spend with the family has also been a greater priority than visiting with friends, although he and his wife, Jess, have many friends in their lives.

For Franz learning to manage time began when helping his mother get through her responsibilities and he freely admits he has still not learnt to manage it as he would like to (cf weaknesses 5.4.2.3.c). Learning at a young age to “deliver the goods”, he still tries to live up to his own aims, even if it means foregoing sleep and comfort. He even “got a foot in the door of tourism” when he had scarcely finished school (cf 5.4.1.1.a). Thus he learnt to deal with many layers of society through their family’s private hotel connections and to show empathy in helping people through a variety of crises. He also learnt to observe in great detail how successful people acted in various circumstances, among others, managing their time schedules. He still believes in “managing his diary” himself, making sure that particulars are noted exactly and then keeping to appointments in a disciplined way. Failure to do this has a negative domino-effect. Thus **the key to a busy time schedule is planning ahead, including time for relaxation and recreation**, which has a healing effect.

Hans rates his ability to manage his time as “very poor indeed”, although he has been observed to be very disciplined in this aspect. He sees himself as a typical male in this regard: he is able to focus well on one thing at a time, but when he needs to do many things at the same time he tends to get agitated. **He wants to do things very thoroughly and then spends too much time on certain aspects**, causing him to have a problem with all the administrative tasks he has to perform

in his faculty (cf perfectionism 2.11.4 and weaknesses 5.4.2.3.c). His lack of time to pursue his wide range of interests is at present a problem to him.

In keeping with her nonconformist life style, Alette sees herself as very imprecise in certain aspects of her time management. She will often schedule appointments to accommodate patients to such an extent that she does not have a lunch or tea break. While she is punctual with her appointments, she likes her free time to such an extent that she labels herself as **“hedonistic” to a degree and “rewards herself” by not regulating herself in her free time**. She was very precise with being at home when her children were small and only started studying full-time when they were in nursery school and when her ex-husband could be with them when she was at evening classes.

Steven says with laughter that his idea of time management is simple and straightforward: “Keep a filofax!”. Learning to manage himself from an early age with the example of disciplined parents was definitely the skill that kept him on track in trying times (cf balance 5.4.2.1.e).

d. Relationships with mentors and colleagues

The participants in this research may be classified as **highly successful in their relationships with their seniors, peers and subordinates** (cf key skills 2.10.13). Liking to work with people and being able to communicate well is an attribute that has stood all twelve in good stead, making them congenial, helpful and generous. They all had **mentors** in one form or another, who meant a great deal to them, guiding and inspiring them to deliver their very best and “to reach for the stars”, often far above what they themselves had thought possible (cf mentors 2.10.6 and 5.4.1.1.b). This had in turn enabled them to **help empower other people** and to get on well with the vast majority of people with whom they had worked. They all mentored and helped train various juniors in their respective fields, underlining the following statement: “Success is also measured in terms of having trained successors” (Impact Radio Sept 1994). Included in their co-operative, helpful and inspiring style was their willingness to participate in this study, all going out of their way to collaborate and spend time with the researcher.

Elke's friendly and co-operative disposition immediately endears her to people. Her gentle manner and kindness have a down-side though. She admits that she is hyper-sensitive to "vibrations of tension" in any situation and this causes her to be inhibited to the point of being non-assertive in situations where she would have otherwise benefited financially. At the moment she finds that she can write more creatively when she works on her own at her home. Others with similar problems are Inneke and Jess. Inneke sums herself up as "timid" at times, with the result that people sometimes got the better of her at work, but this did not change her positive and "user-friendly" manner, dealing with colleagues and members of the research fraternity or public in the same good-natured and positive manner. Where Jess was a popular and strong leader in her younger days, she now feels herself to be shy due to her hearing disability, although she has always been a warm and hospitable hostess and outstanding cook (cf 5.4.2.3.a).

Susan has the advantage of having had competitive amateur tennis as a sport for many years, as well as being in a leadership position at school, which gave her plenty of self-confidence in her later legal and courtroom work. **Her comfortable and congenial personality is most endearing and was also to her advantage, as these traits were deceptive to opposing lawyers.** Another source of emotional confidence was her work as an accountant for a fashion house, which gave her the opportunity to buy fashionable clothes and to do modelling courses, giving her added confidence in her appearance. Her **empathy and warmth** are clear to see, being a winning combination for getting on well with seniors, colleagues and business associates. She found the latter sociable and easy to communicate with, except when she intuitively felt "here is an enemy". Yet here she was nevertheless professionally correct in her conduct.

Alette has had excellent relationships with most of her patients. Her femininity, empathy and caring attitude make her patients feel at ease and comfortable. These characteristics are nevertheless deceptive, as she **can be extremely assertive when she believes her opinion to be right.** She has taken her professors, co-psychologists and patients, lawyers and even a judge in court to task when differing strongly from their opinions, even on a discussion on television. She believes she has a divine task and is bluntly honest when she feels someone is being manipulative or dishonest. This ability has been to her advantage and was learnt as an "ugly duckling" child who had felt rejected and had to "survive between two brothers in a large family".

She often refuses to continue with patients who do not co-operate or who simply want to be pampered. She is highly respected by her former professors and with patients with whom she has had marked success in improving their quality of life. She does not advertise in any way and her patients are all referred by former associates and patients who believe in her strong and dynamic therapy.

Lynne's empathy for women is clear in her professional approach. While she is **warm and friendly in her ability to communicate**, putting her patients at ease, she is effective and competent in her conduct, reassuring her patients with her wide experience. Her personal interest in each patient conveys the sense that she takes each case seriously. She is very close to her immediate family, with a medical father who is very proud of his daughter following in his footsteps. She has excellent relationships with her former mentor and other members of the medical fraternity, and especially with her associates. Occasionally there are doctors with whom she does not feel comfortable, but what is common practice in their field is that if one does not like a person's professional approach, one simply does not refer patients to him/her. She finds that being a female gynaecologist no longer has the early type of stigma of being unfeminine or of not being respected by female hospital staff. These days they respect each other's roles and capabilities.

Elmar's approach towards colleagues is what he had grown up with: with friendly support and encouragement from his family. He has, throughout his career, been **courteous and congenial with all he has come into contact with**. He has treated subordinates as equals and with his seniors he has done his work conscientiously in order to establish a comfortable relationship. Even in situations where juniors have angered him, he has tried to calm down before addressing the situation and trying to see their side of the story. However, he feels sorry that he did lose his cool on occasion. When in conflict with seniors he has tried to stay as positive as was possible. He feels comfortable about being described as "a very stable and dependable person" in his relationships with colleagues.

An important thing that Franz discovered early in his career life was never to "burn your bridges behind you", meaning that **one always has to keep good relationships with all people, as one**

**does not know when and where one would come across that person again or need someone's help.** He still has good relationships with people that he started working with as a young person. Another point he has been specific about has been to be very tactful with people, which has also been a strong point in his political career. The result has been that, although he may sit in opposition to persons in the metropolitan council on which he serves, they are still friends when they meet socially, even with people who have been “political enemies” or have been less than tactful with him. With the present political situation this characteristic, as well as the ability to be very patient, has been most rewarding as there are people with whom he works that have no experience of the complicated matters to be dealt with. His tact with less experienced co-counsellors has been such that his seniority has not been in the way. Since his early contacts with the travel world, he still has good relationships with prominent people with whom he has come a long way and whose friendship has meant a lot to him. **He has made a point of consciously learning from successful people and of teaching the skills he has learnt to junior people working with him.** His philosophy of doing things effectively and successfully he has used to good effect since his school days. When there have been disagreements and conflicts, he has found that **sitting down and discussing problems and reaching compromises or clearing the air have been most important for ironing out differences.**

Steven has also stated that one should “**never burn your bridges behind you**”, always keeping relationships with colleagues and working acquaintances congenial. Even when there are disputes in the boardroom, when associates walk out of the meeting, they are on friendly terms, similar to what is the case in the legal profession, as they are bound to come face-to-face again and work on projects as a team:

Architecture is not a profession that stands alone. It is not an independent profession, but one of the most disciplined multidisciplinary professions — you are involved from engineering to lighting, from structural to acoustic. It includes the whole spectrum. ... We are now in the stage where you do skill-sourcing. If I have a commission, then I ... go to a person who is better with a certain design, draw him in, bring my engineers in to form a team, a consortium where the necessary services can be rendered, because previously we all lived in our small worlds. ... We have now formed a company ... where we pool our resources for construction projects. When I get a beach resort to design and I know that a certain person is the best to conceptualise and another is best for ... water purification, we draw them into a team working together. They do the work and

I am the agent ... acting as co-ordinator and developer. But you must have 'mileage' and a good reputation to be able to speak with authority — you must have the knowledge and experience and this only comes with years of experience.

Donald remembers consciously imitating his mentor with his **enjoyable sense of humour and supportive demeanour**, which gave him a lot of courage in his early teaching days. His encouragement to other teachers, later university lecturers and parents through radio, television and freelance lecturing has become legendary. This has made him a popular, witty and inspiring speaker at functions and enrichment courses, making both learner and adult education an adventure. Hans has had good relationships with his colleagues since he can remember. He likes the type of person he works with on the whole and experiences good co-operation with his colleagues. Where there have been disagreements he has found that discussing the situation calmly has not been difficult, as scientists on the whole are not very emotional about matters, although he concedes that some scientists are rather eccentric and introverted. In addition to serving for many years on the staff organisation of the university, where he has had the opportunity to have had incisive influence in adapting working conditions to present circumstances, he is at present head of the faculty, which he regards as a privilege. His decisions are not always popular with all his colleagues, but he feels "that goes with the territory". Not being intimidated easily when he believes he has an argument is an advantage. He is on a good footing with all levels of people in their department as he treats them all with respect, which has definite dividends. He does not see himself as a brilliant lecturer, but says that "the students don't have too many complaints about (him)". **He feels strongly about demonstrating good manners towards people one works with, having positive relationships at the office and a positive attitude towards probable future developments.** This strong point he again attributes *inter alia* to what his parents taught him about human relationships.

In Henri's good-natured ability to lead others, whether in a sports team or in an educational situation, he acknowledges his own mentor's style. He has always been a strong, warm and inspiring pacesetter, getting even the most unwilling mathematics learner to become enthusiastic about the subject and gaining immense respect from the members of the staff he was leading. His success in this field he concedes humbly, not really being able to believe all the praise heaped on him by ex-pupils, ex-members-of-staff and former colleagues. Having been promoted early in his

career because of his obvious leadership abilities, he was, on a number of occasions, promoted above people who were formerly his peers and seniors. However, he eventually succeeded in gaining their enthusiastic backing by **enlisting their help and loyalty. He was able to do this by drawing on their apparent strengths for the good of the school or institution.**

e. Sense of responsibility, locus of control and balance

The word '**responsibility**' was frequently used by all twelve research participants. Their **conscientiousness and sense of duty is highly evident in their commitment to their vocations, families and social obligations.** In no respect could they be criticised for being less than worthy of the respect they have clearly earned, both in their chosen careers and towards their families. This formed a criterion for inclusion in the research (cf key skills 2.10.13).

Henri feels that his great sense of responsibility towards his learners and colleagues is at the root of his **undivided dedication towards his ideal of making a contribution to society by helping others to reach their ultimate best.** Elmar sees career success as being **inextricably interwoven with a high sense of responsibility** towards one's duties, which becomes weightier as one climbs in seniority. This is an added challenge. Apart from financial responsibilities towards his organisation, he has felt the responsibility of many jobs at stake.

Franz states that in business and politics there is a high degree of responsibility to "**deliver the goods**". If one undertakes to do a thing or deliver a product, one should bend over backwards in order to keep to an obligation to a citizen or a client. His good relationships with people he also ascribes in part to this approach. Hans believes that his acute sense of responsibility stems in part from his position as the eldest of three sons. He had to **shoulder extra responsibilities early in his life.** He feels a responsibility towards his colleagues and the university to make the science faculty even more successful, as he believes that highly trained South African scientists are on par with the best in the world.

For Elke there is no question that if women want to be regarded as on an equal footing with men, they should be willing to shoulder the same responsibilities. She is joined in this observation by Franz (cf changing scenes 2.9.5). However, she feels strongly about

**the responsibilities of society towards the child-bearing role of women and that it is unfair for society to penalise women for fulfilling this biological role, as a woman is very often ridden with guilt when she tries to be loyal to both motherhood and to her career. (Cf obstacles 5.4.2.3.a)**

Having had complete support with the home and care of the children, Inneke has not felt at all that she has defaulted on any of her responsibilities. She feels a **committed** sense of responsibility towards students working on research under her guidance. These include students in the RSA as well as from other far-off African countries, as she knows there is a great deal of work to be done in uncovering the archeological past locally and the training is not what it should be (cf 5.4.2.3 a).

Jess learnt the weight of added responsibility early on, as she was leader of her university hostel, on the university fund raising committee and had to take responsibility for a whole school fête in her first year of teaching. These duties stood her in good stead later on with responsible roles she had to perform in education, fulfilling them with an **observable ease, effectiveness and contagious enthusiasm**.

Susan saw **the world of litigation as a weighty responsibility, as she felt one was working with other people's interests. This is also evident when working with contracts**, as small loopholes can cause big problems. Her feeling of responsibility towards her children has been a watershed in the decision to learn an alternative part-time job as tennis coach for a number of years, moving her hard-earned legal career to a part-time occupation. For Alette the feeling of responsibility towards her children was instrumental in her undertaking to qualify as clinical psychologist after her children were old enough to be less dependent on her only during the day. Her sense of responsibility towards her patients is admirable. She feels **morally co-responsible for their improved quality of life**, especially for the marriage therapy she is able to give after her unsatisfactory marriage and with her insight into the world of the dual career couple (cf 5.5).

For Lynne the responsibility of a gynaecologist is **often a matter of life-and-death, but more often a question of the quality of life and life expectancy of her patients.** Her family is equally important to her, as she is intensely committed to her role as wife and mother as well, not willing to compromise any significant aspect of either world. She believes that:

in the field of medicine, there is no room for anyone who is not dedicated to helping others. I am extremely sceptical of some medics who are in the job for the money.

Steven is of the opinion that his sense of responsibility started early in his life with his parents' attitude towards the care of pets:

I was pet-crazy — I had fish, pigeons, chickens and that was my discipline ... and the condition: if I brought a pet home, I must maintain that animal ... it was part of the development of my responsibility that there's a dependent component in your life, that you can't say 'no more, I don't want to' — that something that you start you must finish.

Donald makes a statement of weighty importance regarding responsibility. He has heard talk about the charter of human rights *ad nauseam* and feels very strongly that it is high time people should start speaking about **A CHARTER OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES.** He sees responsibilities as a route towards human growth and feels that teaching children responsibilities is **THE LIFE SKILL** parents can teach their children. Citing longitudinal psychological research done over 40 years with a group of people in the USA it was found that **persons who had responsibilities in their homes during childhood were the group that had the best education, more satisfying careers and made more money.** Of interest was the **observation that they were also healthier and had happier marriages.** He feels that a sense of responsibility, the motivation to succeed and the locus of control in children is intimately tied up with a positive self-image of parents.

◆ Concluding remarks

From the interviews conducted it is clear that career success for the twelve people involved has not been a haphazard train of events, but a well-contemplated approach combined with thorough

training and exceptionally hard work. To have combined this with balancing the responsibilities to family and community has been the result of careful planning and commitment.

#### 5.4.2.2 *Taking stock and gaining perspective*

The participants were all carefully selected from a wide range of career types and types of temperament. These represented various facets of personal traits believed to account for reaching success, both in their professional and private lives (cf aspects of life skills 3.4). The following sub-headings represent some of the main characteristics observed in the interviews. **Determining positive and negative influences as part of their 'state management'** is a shared characteristic of the participants. Part of their judgement of their self-worth has been their 'self talk' concerning what they have perceived as direct influences on their circumstances.

##### a. Physical health and health management

Health management programmes of the participants have included administering their state of health or, in cases of health setbacks to have made the best of the circumstances they found themselves in (cf growth experiences 5.4.2.3). **They have a positive outlook towards leading a lifestyle of choice which would protect their health** (cf 2.10.11). Only one man, Franz, smokes, having tried in vain to quit the habit, which he knows is unhealthy. Three men, Henri, Franz and Steven, and one woman, Jess, have had very serious health setbacks. One man, Elmar and four women, Alette, Inneke, Lynne and Susan have exceptionally good health, apart from smaller problems, being grateful for having come from European stock that were very hardy people. Three men, Donald, Elmar and Henri, and three women, Elke, Jess and Susan exercise on a regular basis and two women, Alette and Inneke, find that they get enough exercise through gardening and house work.

Elmar is passionate about his golf, even going to live in a golf estate to be able to play more regularly. He also goes to the gym regularly when possible and rides his bicycle in the golfing estate where they live, which he says is "a habit left over from childhood". Before climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania Elmar took part in a thorough fitness programme as preparation.

He is proud of having given up heavy smoking twenty years ago. What he found interesting was that **when he gave up smoking, he had a greatly increased need for physical exercise.** He firmly believes in **making rational decisions concerning health issues, preferring moderation at all times,** also with regard to medication:

I do not hesitate to get medical attention when I feel ill, as harbouring little illnesses, like little grudges, is not worth it.

Henri took part in rugby and tennis most of his life, often as captain and organiser. At the time of his retirement a bad cold turned out to be a potential heart problem, which was alleviated by a heart bypass. Another low point was a recent knee replacement, from which he has recovered well and has resumed playing bowls. Franz also had a heart bypass operation, which he does not see as a “setback” as it was done to prevent future health problems. He was fortunately so quick to recover, that he was having meetings with people around his hospital bed two days later. He deeply regrets not being able to give up smoking, as he is unable to work until late at night without it. Hans was an enthusiastic rugby, cricket and tennis player throughout his life and regrets not getting enough exercise with his busy schedule at present. As they have a tennis court at home, he is determined to start playing again soon. Three years ago he had a corrective eye operation and is able to be without contact lenses now, so for him that was an advantage and not a setback. Elke sets an example with the management of her diabetes and her positive attitude towards it:

**I manage it and then ignore it, not giving it an opportunity to rob me of life chances as far as possible, being greedy for life ... and not wanting my family to miss anything.**

As her diabetes, an auto immune disease, may be due to weak stress management, Elke has made a study of this and general health management in her journalistic career (cf obstacles 5.4.2.3.a). What she does experience is that she sometimes does not have the energy to do what she wants to or that she is not able to sleep as well as she would like to, often “writing articles in her mind at night”. Even so, she makes time to go to the gym if possible and finds walking with one or more of her family a good opportunity to communicate. Because of earlier long distance running

her lung capacity was well developed and this has been much to her advantage in coping with a stressful life style.

Two who enjoy excellent health are Alette and Inneke. Alette says she does not even think about any health or exercise issues, conceding that her good health may be due to good mental health as well as to many blessings. Inneke has mild but controlled high blood pressure. She and her husband do their own home and garden work and undertake regular walks as “plenty of exercise”. Having come from versatile and hard working farming stock, she believes she probably has exceptionally strong genes. Jess has had serious physical setbacks (cf obstacles 5.4.2.3), but manages her health at present with healthy living and her regular brisk walks, which she describes as an “addiction”. Susan cannot coach tennis at present due to a knee injury, but has been very well and healthy all her life, except for occasional ‘flu:

(then) I disconnect the phone when the children are in school and sleep it off with no bad conscience. I believe that (if one works hard) ... one should switch off from time-to-time in order to find oneself again ... and that it is sometimes just pleasant to sit with a cup of tea and do nothing at all.

This ability to sit and meditate has strengthened Susan’s facility for self-acceptance, although she knows she is not perfect. She adds laughingly that “I actually like myself as I am, although my children would probably differ!”

Lynne is grateful for her strong constitution, which she also ascribes to strong genes from her forefathers. She would, however, like to be able to get more exercise, especially as she could then share this time with her two daughters. Donald contracted a viral infection from bats during mountain climbing and cave exploration in his youth, which harmed his lungs to a certain extent. This has made him **careful to protect himself from exposure to unhealthy conditions**. He has done skydiving and is proud to take part in veteran athletics, keeping fit by exercise at home.

b. Mental health and emotional intelligence

Goleman (1995, emphasis added) believes **a synthesis of cognitive well-being and emotional intelligence to be the cornerstone of optimum mental health**. Given that certain aspects of

human life are genetically determined and therefore cannot be altered at will, he ponders the question of what can be changed that will help children and adults fare better in life, or what factors are at play when highly intelligent people flounder and some with modest intelligence do surprisingly well. He argues that **the concept of *emotional intelligence* consists of the skills of self-control, zeal, persistence and social intelligence, with empathy and the ability to resolve conflicts having a special place** (Goleman 1995:xi-xiv, 96-110 and 286-297, added emphasis). Collins (1998, personal development course) concludes that mental health and emotional intelligence are the essence of what he terms '**state management**'. With a distinct advantage in these domains the research participants have clearly excelled in maintaining their own standing both as individuals and as members of their social circles at work and at home. Positive judgement of self-worth and 'self-talk' is clearly part of their 'coping style' of sound mental health. Their homes were the main base for learning these skills. A few experienced their parents as somewhat emotionally detached, possibly necessitating more of the skill of positive 'self-talk'. All participants were able to motivate themselves to adopt better alternatives when in difficulties and make more rational choices throughout their working life.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990:192-240) states that **being satisfied with what one experiences in life does not necessarily depend on circumstances one has 'been dealt with'. Optimal experience in life, or flow, does not depend on being healthy, rich and handsome. Some people who have been severely traumatised in life have been able to experience flow within their circumstances, finding joy in overcoming impairments** (cf resilience 2.10.9 and 5.4.2.4). Coping, healing, peace and perspective have been seen to depend on the mental well-being and emotional intelligence of the person involved. The ability for this often depends on the home background of the person. Harrington and Boardman (1997) found that some of the people in their longitudinal research were able to generate this "Pathmaker personality" on their own (cf 2.5.6, resilience 2.10.9 and 5.4.2.4).

**The ability to cope with life in various circumstances is often a conscious choice** and is a clear character trait of the twelve participants. The men have all had supportive wives, without whom they feel they could not have coped as well as they did. Among the women there has been the clear understanding that they could cope very well with the vicissitudes of motherhood and

housekeeping if they had the loving support of their husbands, especially as far as child care was concerned. Domestic help was a bonus if available. The six women all had husbands who were willing to share the concerns of looking after the small children or simply to be at home when they were bigger. When the women had other duties, they could also rely on family or trustworthy domestic helpers to keep an eye. Even Alette, who was divorced, was assisted by her ex-husband when she wanted to further her studies after hours when her children were small.

Elke found her husband's supportiveness and willingness to share housekeeping duties a key aspect of coping when they were on overseas postings and throughout their marriage, which often had complicated concerns with a very full schedule and a wide range of commitments. Her coping strategies were simplified by the fact that they were both journalists and understood each other's life worlds. Yet various factors concerning her health caused her not to always cope as she would have wanted to (cf obstacles 5.4.2.3.a).

Like Elke, Ineke, Jess, Susan and Lynne all found that in their given circumstances, with loving and supportive husbands, they were able to face whatever obstacles came over their paths (cf marriage partners 2.10.8). Not only were they positive and motivated to cope with their professional and private duties, but were also able to manage situations with emotional strength, feeling "able and satisfied" in what was expected of them most of the time. With positive feedback concerning their endeavours, they were able to accept themselves as good wives, mothers, housekeepers and professional women who were willing to do their utmost at home and at work.

Alette describes her coping strategy as "emotionally atypical". For her it was a very intense learning experience to have had the incentive to go her own way after a difficult marriage and to choose a divorce and survival as a single mother and breadwinner. **She was keenly aware of which competencies needed to be improved and went to great pains to learn the coping skills for emotional survival, making a conscious effort to teach these skills in her personal and marriage therapy practice** (cf key skills 2.10.13 and 5.5). Her emotional strength often provides the will for her patients to overcome their distressing circumstances. She does not allow them accept adverse situations, but helps them to develop a functional coping style of their own. She also has the inner strength to refuse therapy to patients whom she experiences as unwilling

to co-operate. Her speciality is the treatment of depression, which she finds immensely challenging.

Some people have a desire to help others develop their maximum potential or to help “the underdog”, as Jess experienced. Donald attributes his own predisposition for wanting to work with people towards this positive coping style originating in his parents’ caring involvement with farm neighbours. This was echoed by other participants who grew up on farms: Elmar, Hans, Henri, Alette, Jess and, for a while, Franz. A caring attitude probably provided a connection to neighbours for both emotional and physical security.

Steven views his most important coping strategy as the determination to succeed. Being able to manage himself by self-encouragement and careful planning

gave me an independence at a very early age and that made me more mature to handle the pushes and bumps and bashes of life.

Another coping strategy he uses for relaxation is to enjoy the environment where he is working. He loves the bush, especially during weekend breaks. Now that he cannot use aviation as a leisure activity after his accident, he concentrates on water sports such as scuba diving, fly-fishing and sailing. After the aviation accident he has made an effort to develop his good relationships with other people. His conviction is that friendliness, humour and relating to people in a warmhearted empathetic way contributes to the well-being of all concerned (cf healthy relationships 2.10.13).

Donald’s propensity for ‘self-talk’ is well-known. As an educational psychologist he concludes that

if you grow up feeling you’re OK with fellow human beings you can handle life’s problems with fortitude, extending this attitude to other people you come into contact with. ... Furthermore, if you then realise you have imperfections, you are able to say, ‘So what? — other people have other faults’. You are then also able to start from the inside, work to the outside concerning your weaker areas, saying ‘I make mistakes, but I am not a mistake’. Take Edison who, after trying many times to make a light bulb, was told by co-workers that he had failed 1000 times and had better give up. His answer then was that he now knew of 1000 things that would not work. Other

people like being associated with a person who is able to say 'I am not afraid to learn and to take decisions. I am also allowed to make mistakes..... I am part of the bigger picture and this thing is small'. You have to love yourself so as to cope with the challenges of existence, in this way taking responsibility for a positive outlook on life. **This means being able to say 'this too shall pass' when faced with negative circumstances.**

Henri recalls telling himself from childhood that, as youngest child of a very loving family, he would like to strive towards a good education and career on behalf of his parents and siblings who had never had these opportunities. Whenever he had problems, he would 'retreat' and do earnest introspection about the situation. He believes that coping strategies include the ability to be assertive, as life poses many complexities that need to be dealt with confidence in one's own convictions. Likewise, Elmar, from an early age, developed the ability **to move his weaker points aside and to concentrate on his stronger ones**. Constantly thinking about all one's weaker points is also counterproductive.

Franz was able to motivate himself ever since he could remember, especially as a young adult, when he had to strive to fulfil his ambitions without the help of a fulltime university education. He learnt to develop the skill of "**coping by managing the situation**" especially so when he experienced discrimination because of his lack of tertiary certification. The greatest advantage in this regard was the capacities he consciously developed as a result of intense observation of the habits and strategies of successful people (cf coping strategies 2.10.4). He observed the training of young people at the Toastmasters organisation where he enrolled to become a better public speaker, closely scrutinising what good orators did and what they avoided. By self-motivation and an understanding of the importance of initiative, he was able to create many opportunities for his own growth.

For Hans

there were many opportunities of **talking myself through difficulties and changing these to challenges, consciously making a choice in the situation, setting goals for myself to improve my own thoroughness and to excel academically and in research.**

This ability to 'hold rational discussions with himself' were also reflected in his stance as a scientist towards religion (cf balance 5.4.2.1.e, growth experiences 5.4.2.3).

c. Ideals and long-term goals

One of the most striking character traits to have emerged from people involved in this research is the vibrant *joi de vivre* they radiate. Two women have experienced periods of depression due to circumstances beyond their control, but have managed to develop coping strategies to overcome this (cf obstacles 5.4.2.3.a). During the period encompassing this research they have all been known to the researcher as people with **an idealistic philosophy of life. All have future plans which they look forward to. Even retirement is anticipated as a period of doing some of their most important life's work, strongly connected to life-long learning** (cf 5.4.4.3).

Steven hopes to continue working for a long time to come, not even considering the idea of eventual retirement (cf retirement 5.4.4.2). He has many ideals he would still like to achieve in his full maturity, which he believes he has only attained now at middle age. Elmar has promised his wife a few times that "he would retire next year". But when the time arrives he postpones it again. He does not yet have any definite plans for retirement, but **cannot imagine not being involved in constructive work activities, such as an agricultural consultancy for a few years after formal retirement**. He would also like to improve his game of golf considerably if his health allows.

Henri has now officially retired for the second time. Making the decision to retire the first time was very difficult for him as the mere thought of not having the office and a work routine was unacceptable. It seemed to him "like an inevitable collapse". When invited to serve as senior educational advisor to National Education for two months, he gladly accepted and the two months became two years. After that retirement was a pleasure, as he was emotionally ready for the change. His present schedule is very full. He helps administer an investment concern, serves on church and parent committees and helps look after and transport his active grandchildren. **He feels that the time with family and to share in family and community responsibilities is a remarkable privilege** (cf family and community 5.4.3.1).

Franz also does not want to consider retiring completely, but prefers to think of scaling down his business ventures as one's levels of energy diminish with the passing years (cf 5.4.4.2). He might retire from politics in a few years' time, but feels that **it is a tragedy that so much expertise is lost when experienced people withdraw completely from an active community life** and would therefore like to be involved as long as his health allows. One of his immediate aims is to make time to acquire computer skills as he does not want to be dependent on others to find the information which he needs to update continuously in his travel business and national tourism involvement.

Hans has a few years before he would retire, but envisages a number of projects with which he would like to be involved when he does eventually retire. **He hopes to be doing further physics research then** as he will be entitled to use the university facilities as an emeritus professor (cf 5.4.4.3). He finds that the best way to keep up with scientific advances and contact with researchers and colleagues in the field is by attending international conferences regularly, often as speaker. **He looks forward to having time for his many hobbies and interests such as stamp collecting, reading and tennis when he eventually does retire.**

Donald does not believe he will be able to retire completely. He would like to continue his work which deals with motivation, improve his communication techniques and continue with guiding tourists around his province. Although he has retired from his official university post, he has become deeply involved in a freelance career as an adult educational speaker, doing television, radio and journalistic work on the topic of better parenting. With learners and students he presents, *inter alia*, study skills courses. **With these activities in mind he feels that there is a great deal of emotional and intellectual growth ahead for him, which he sees as "a lot of fun"** (cf lifelong learning 5.4.4.3). **Being able to discover these facets of growing older is astonishing and exhilarating and he tries to share this with adults at schools, churches and retirement villages. He feels that in many ways the millennium period in which contemporary sixty-pluses are living is a pleasant and enriched era because of the concept of lifelong learning.**

With a highly involved schedule with her three children's university and high school activities Elke finds too little time for friends and reading and is looking forward to the future where she might have more time. Having lost her father recently, she feels that

**when one day one looks back at life, the most important things would be to look back to good relationships and to work satisfaction. The most important relationship would be that with the Creator and with one's family and close friends. If these things are not at acceptable levels, looking back over one's life is going to be most unsatisfactory and one's death bed an unhappy place.**

She feels a rush to do many things in the years ahead, "God willing", such as reading the Western canon of 'great literature' and creative writing. She feels better prepared for the latter now in midlife and has matured much through the various vicissitudes of life (cf resilience 2.10.9, 5.4.2.4 and ideals 5.4.4.3).

Jess found retirement a disturbing situation at first. It left her feeling depressed with a long day ahead and no pressure to do specific things. She has now adapted well and is involved with remedial work with Down's syndrome adults, Bible study and gardening. She looks forward to being very much involved with family, reading, community service, keeping fit and travelling. She also has the memoirs of her German missionary aunt which she would like to translate and publish and is still involved with editing academic work (cf involvement 5.4.3.1 and ideals 5.4.4.3).

Susan looks forward to doing part-time legal work and playing tennis actively again once her children are grown up. Alette would like to scale down in future and start a coffee shop, but she knows she would want to be able to counsel clients whom she sees need a sympathetic ear. So laughingly, she comments that she doesn't know whether she would ever be able to leave psychotherapy. Visiting her medical specialist daughter and grandchildren in Australia would be high on her list of plans as well. Lynne would like to continue gynaecology and obstetrics for a long time, although she might like to scale down to consultancy at a later stage. In the meantime she is **kept up to date with the latest medical developments by attending regular conferences and seminars** (cf lifelong learning 2.12.14 and 5.4.4.3). She finds this essential as her patients

are becoming well-informed through the Internet and she does not want them to ask questions she cannot answer.

◆ Concluding remarks

Living a balanced and healthy life has been a life style choice for the people involved in this study. They have made conscious choices concerning the management of their lives, making well-informed decisions regarding the directions they have taken and working through the consequences responsibly. They also plan to empower themselves for their own future development by setting new goals worth reaching for.

5.4.2.3 *Wounds as growth experiences*

“In each person’s life the chances of only good things happening are extremely slim. The chances that all our desires will be always fulfilled is so minute as to be negligible” (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:200-213). He continues, saying that the integrity of the self depends on the ability to take negative or even destructive events and turn them into positive experiences. The research done by Csikszentmihalyi and his team in the USA and associates in Milan, Professor Massimini and his team (concerning extreme cases) has shown that para- or quadriplegics, blinded people and homeless vagrants are at times able to experience optimal experience (or flow) in accepting and overcoming traumatic events such as these **through learning to control psychic energy as a coping style. This ability to take misfortune and make something good come of it is a very rare gift.** Those who possess it are called “survivors” and are said to have courage or resilience (cf 2.10.4, 2.10.9 and 5.4.2.4). They are exceptional people who have overcome obstacles that would daunt most men and women and are admired by many. **A major catastrophe that frustrates a central goal of life will either destroy the self or it will provide a new, more clear and more urgent goal: to overcome the challenges created by the defeat. Of all the virtues and survival skills that can be learnt, say these researchers (emphasis added), no trait is more useful or essential for survival or more likely to improve the quality of life than the ability to transform adversity into an enjoyable challenge.** According to this research, outside forces do therefore not determine ultimately whether someone sees challenges as threats or as

opportunities for action — **a person who is healthy, wealthy, attractive, strong and powerful has no greater chance of being in control of this conscious ability than people who are in the opposite situation.**

The participants in this research have not been exposed to such extremes as referred to by Massimini but **each one has had problems of varying intensities which could have broken the courage of less emotionally strong people. All mention the appreciation they had for the moral support they have received from their spouses, family and friends. Most feel that without this they would have fared less well.** Three men and one woman experienced serious health setbacks, while two women had health problems of a less serious, but more chronic nature. The men experienced frustration in having to work long hours robbing the family of time together, while the general problems of motherhood and of running a home together with a career were the most mentioned by the women.

a. Obstacles experienced

Alette experienced severe emotional rejection by her parents, even more so from her mother. She was the third child of seven and the second daughter. Her parents were exemplary and “clean” in all their social actions and demonstrated this rejection “in a most civilised” way, which she could never understand. In particular, her mother consistently communicated a lack of acceptance, even more so when she had something to feel proud about, when the rejection was felt more intensely. The result was that she stopped making any effort to study or to please them. She still continued to be a favourite and leader at school and ascribes her ability to pass fairly well to a well-honed memory. She describes herself as “emotionally mixed up and a loner” when she left home to study medicine. This was probably a type of survival skill acquired as a result of this rejection. Her “atypical approach to life” in general, her too early marriage and her rebellious nature she also ascribes to the emotional anxiety she grew up with (cf resilience 5.4.2.4).

Elke feels that her present journalistic experience and with the emotional maturity needed to do work of real importance was needed twenty years ago. **She feels that she neglected her career for a number of years thinking she would not need to return to it and instead threw herself**

**into long awaited motherhood with complete dedication.** The intricacies of a later full-time job with long hours with a newspaper, combined with worries about children's transport and activities, was not a pleasant experience. This was necessitated by a serious financial setback with a business venture that did not succeed. Another problem was her diagnosis with diabetes with concomitant difficulties with diet, medication and low energy levels. She has learnt **to live with a compromise situation in many ways, often feeling guilty for not doing what she would have liked to have done to satisfy all parties, including herself.** The world of freelance journalism is not without its perils and frustrations. She feels that she might have given too much time to being with her children with their many interests, in the process placing a great strain on herself. **The myth of the "superwoman" has been replaced in her mind with a compromise, that is, accepting that one cannot be "all things to all people all the time".** Other occupational hazards are that a woman who is not on the permanent payroll is often "left out in the cold". Yet if one works full-time, much time and energy is wasted in "office politics" of a frequently cold and hard career world. **The social lack of understanding towards a working mother needs to be seriously addressed, as a woman's role in child bearing and raising is inevitable.**

Jess speaks for many educators when she refers to **the "absolute discrimination" she experienced as a woman when she started teaching, as during her later career.** She remembers that **there was no security for a woman in education in the early day of her teaching career.** She lost her teaching post at a well-known girls' high school when she got married and was even fined for "breaking her educational contract", which caused financial problems for their early married years. If the headmistress had not advised her to get married earlier by a magistrate a few weeks before the church wedding, she would even have lost her holiday salary and annual increase. This led to other financial losses as there was no pension accrual system for her until she was able to obtain a permanent teaching post. Later, when she was appointed at a distance education university, she was also unable to obtain a permanent post and join the pension fund, being 'temporary' for fourteen years. Only when affirmative action was instituted was she appointed in a 'permanent' position for her last three years of work. The most serious setback Jess experienced was, however, being diagnosed with a brain tumour twenty years

ago, which fortunately proved to be benign, recurring again a few years later and again being successfully removed.

**When first diagnosed, I was most distressed, asking ‘Why me?’. With my husband and family’s strong support, this changed to the more positive question of ‘Why not me?’. ... The fact that my husband (Elmar) had said with the second diagnosis, ‘WE will overcome this’, gave me the courage to beat the setback again.**

**This statement also underlined a strong commitment to team work in their marriage and family.** Another inhibiting factor is the deterioration of her hearing, contributing to her present reserved demeanour. When she was young and a strong leader, she says: “I believed I was the conductor, but now I am satisfied to play the piccolo”. Helping at a home for disabled adults twice a week, where her kind and gentle approach is valued highly, has been a therapeutic experience for her (cf involvement 5.4.3.1).

Lynne is most grateful for very few serious problems. She originally thought her greatest drawback was the fact that she was not outstanding academically, although she was willing to work hard. The long hours were nevertheless a problem when she had children. During her gynaecological and obstetrical practice she has been

shocked to find that people are sometimes very quick to find fault with the doctor if anything goes wrong. This vulnerability was not even in the picture when I considered studying medicine. ... I think the patients want the doctor to be perfect at all times, which is not humanly possible. (Cf risks 5.4.2.3.b)

While she was specialising and had two small children at home, it was extremely difficult to sleep at the hospital for fifteen nights a month. She feels that this circumstance causes many clinical assistants to drop courses because they cannot handle the pressure. She feels most grateful that she was able to finish her specialisation with the support of her family. She also experienced discrimination against women when she had three months’ maternity leave during her term in the military hospital. Women had to work to make up for this time, but men going on military duty at the time were paid in full. In addition, when she wanted to start her gynaecological practice, the bank manager was unwilling to give her a loan without her husband or father signing

consent. Asked whether male gynaecologists had to get their wives to sign, she was told that it was not so. She retorted that the bank manager was “now talking nonsense”.

Susan feels that she has been greatly blessed, although she has also experienced grief. She was married a long time before falling pregnant and then lost this baby, possibly due to her husband’s research in physics and possible radiation. She had accepted that they probably would not have children when she fell pregnant again, having just received an appointment in the legal firm where she had worked as an article clerk. Blessed with another baby, she resigned from a full-time post. **The couple eventually had three children fairly close together for whose welfare they decided that she should not work at the legal practice, but only from home.**

Franz, Donald and Henri experienced a lack of finance as a problem for studying. Donald feels that **lack of money is not insurmountable**. Where Henri and Donald were able to obtain a bursary for studies in education, Franz still feels regret that his family who could have advised him failed to do so. Henri feels that a lack of money was advantageous to a certain extent, as he and his friends had to learn to entertain themselves with the barest of essentials.

Early in his career Donald experienced discouragement from a self-interested school principal but realised that **such people are inevitable. People with a healthy self-concept are able to overcome discouraging circumstances**. Few people were able to really discourage him as he had developed the art of positive self-talk to encourage himself. **To venture into unknown territory is to risk being hurt**. With a negative self-concept, people talk themselves into losing courage and hope by damaging self-talk.

Having had very few serious personal problems in adulthood, Henri, Hans and Inneke felt frustrated when **they reached managerial level since they were then considerably less involved with their primary career goals. They also disliked the administration they had to do.**

Henri felt an initial lack of self-confidence in various posts he occupied, but was able to overcome this with time. His learners and staff appreciated his friendly and unpretentious enthusiasm as a

clear advantage. He felt that by learning a few educational skills he was able to hide his uncertainties and conscious weaknesses. He is convinced that

**working on improving deficiencies is compulsory for attaining success in any field of endeavour as well as doing more than one's share for the institution one works for.**

Obvious problems were heart bypass surgery a few years ago and a recent knee replacement, but he has been able to overcome these problems. His wife, a one-time radiographer was a major component of these recoveries. Elmar had a speech problem in his youth and overcame his stutter with speech therapy. Today he is able to address an international conference in a positive and confident way. Having to do certain unpleasant things in the line of duty was a drawback which he learnt to come to terms with, as well as

**avoiding conflict and confrontations with diplomacy, tact and in a constructive way was a strength I learnt along the way, as well as learning to control my anger for a day or two before discussing problems, trying to see the other person's point of view. Where problems could not be solved through negotiation, I feel one has to learn to live with them acceptingly.**

Franz was able to turn a clear disadvantage into a learning opportunity: he was called up for military duty just before his final exams after a year of part-time study (cf resilience 2.10.9). **He used the situation to learn everything possible about leadership and administration.** At present he is frustrated by perceived double standards for promotion and for senior positions in the political arena where criteria have sometimes been a person's role in political upheaval. He is also frustrated by the reluctance of certain colleagues to stand together for the common good instead of promoting their own individual concerns above all else. A drawback that he feels that career women create for themselves is

**that they want equal opportunities and senior posts like men, but fall back on so-called feminine problems and characteristics when it suits them. This really creates friction with some men.**

Hans feels extremely grateful for having had very few serious problems. He has learned to solve problems by **persevering in the direction he has decided upon.** An example of this was a

study supervisor for his PhD who could not make up his mind what he should do (cf coping strategies 2.10.4). He learnt to decide on his own strategies and complete his research, using the time 'wasted' as a lesson not to repeat these mistakes. **He always tried to resolve conflicts at work through tactful communication. Where problems could not be thus solved, he avoided these areas and later found that there was no longer any conflict** (cf key skills 2.10.13). A present irritation he finds is that the inevitable administration of his job robs him of time for more constructive accomplishments. He regrets that the pure sciences have taken second place to electronics and informatics, which, coupled with changes in the nature of the functions of universities, has caused some difficulties to his faculty. He feels that research in the pure sciences cannot be run on a business basis and therefore the most talented students are opting for lucrative careers and are subsequently leaving the country.

Steven experienced a major setback six years ago when he was in an aircraft accident due to mechanical failure after more than thirty years' flying experience. Breaking his back in the process could have been the end of, not only his flying as a hobby, but also of his career as a self-employed architect. His setback was the most severe of any experienced by the group of participants (cf resilience 2.10.9 and 5.4.2.4). This accident might have ended his working ability or his life, but he was left with only a minor limp. He comments good-naturedly:

It's a handicap — artificially inflicted! I was in an aircraft accident, I had an unstable spinal fracture that was fused. I spent three-and-a-half months in hospital, months in a wheelchair — let's say the total period of recuperation close to a year. I started walking about six, seven months into that year — its been a long process, it's now six years ... and the worst aspect of the side-effects, are the dreams that I have that I can run and jump. I was a very physical, athletic person — I participated, I cycled, I climbed mountains, I did a lot of hiking and ... thank God for small mercies that it happened in my later years ... that I can say, I've been, I've seen, I've tasted and I've done ... And I have the T-shirt and I'm writing the film script as well! ... yes, it is a handicap, but not to the extent that it handicaps my daily life. ... obviously I can't perform the way I used to, but for me it's not a major handicap. It's an attitude, it's what you ... how you handle it, and your attitude towards it ... it does get to me, and I do ... dream of myself running and when you don't immediately realise why you can't run, because there's no pain, nothing, it's normal.

b. Risks

**A problem experienced by all participants was the possible negative effect on their family life if their careers were to be their primary concern at all times.** Donald points out that **if a person is prepared to take risks there is always the danger of making mistakes.** One should therefore be willing to discuss any risks with the other people affected by one's actions. He believes that one should not only think about "doing things right in life", but even more about whether one is "doing the right things". **A balance is at stake when one has made the decision to have a family. One should always make time to read about development as a parent and attend courses where one's parenting skills could grow. He feels strongly about setting priorities for the really important matters and not jeopardising family happiness by spending too much time at work or bringing work home too often.** Where working mothers are concerned, he maintains that **the reason why they often work full-time, is sometimes to be able to buy luxuries which are not really important.** He maintains that acquiring these things may be postponed until later. If one analyses why women work, then **eight out of ten working mothers could actually manage with part-time work, especially while their children are small** (cf dual career couples 5.5). Mothers who are prepared to be creative can offer their children as much if not more than a good nursery school.

Elmar, Franz, Hans and Henri were all **concerned about a balance between work and being with their families. They all experienced the lack of time for their various duties as problematic.** All found that there were times when they had problems at work or with overseas conferences or business trips when they had to devote less time to their families. They tried to balance these busy times with time set aside for communicating and sharing activities with their spouses and children. Elmar aimed from his earliest days for a close and stable family to ensure that his career and private life were compatible to avert problems with relationships. A strategy he used was **scheduled family meetings with an agenda where every member had a free say.**

Hans experienced the **problems of time for the family as a challenge to be overcome. His wife, Susan, feels strongly that they are entitled to a share of his time and they lay claim to it at times.** Hans made time for family matters by spending less time with a hobby such as stamp

collection. Instead, he set aside time for in-depth discussions at table with their children and friends and for attending concerts and stage productions as a family. He believes that **life is to a great extent about choices**. He and Susan believe that differences of opinion between marriage partners should not be hidden but aired openly, so that the children can see “that marriage is not all moonshine and roses and that one can solve differences in a civilised way” (cf key skills 2.10.13). When he is obliged to take work home, he first makes sure that the children don’t need his advice with homework. Susan firmly believes that he does not get enough sleep and he regrets not having time for enough exercise.

Henri regrets having placed his family second at times when he was a principal, feeling that the school was a great priority. He is most grateful for having a wife who was always willing to assume the domestic responsibilities and who took pride in his growth and success. **With excellent communication between them, they were able to discuss all aspects of their lives amicably. Thus they were able to iron out difficulties as they arose.** He also avoided being dictatorial in his dealings with all-comers at work. He went out of his way to admit differences and discuss them in a friendly manner, trying to focus on positive aspects and to circumvent major disagreements. Similarly Franz believes that, **as problems are unavoidable, they should be ‘managed’ and dealt with in a calm and rational way** (cf key skills 2.10.13). When their three children were small, Jess was often unable to do what she needed to do for them, because of sport coaching and transport associated with her later teaching posts during the week and on Saturdays.

Lynne experienced **the risks surrounding legal issues as daunting** (cf risks 5.4.2.3.b). The possibility of people suing a doctor if there is the slightest possibility of malpractice, never allowing for natural complications which do arise from time to time or for possible human error is a dreaded aspect of her work. As doctors sometimes work very long hours, this possibility is always present because of fatigue. This is the negative side of medical practice today and the insurance against this is prohibitive. Moreover, a person is entitled to sue the obstetrician for up to twenty-one years of age for defects dating back to birth complications. Another problematic area is the question of **insufficient time for doctors to spend with their spouses and children, so that there is no possibility of an uncomplicated marriage or a large family**. Women

doctors need to be extra cautious in this respect. A marriage between two medical practitioners or between any two professionals, has the potential for major problems if there is not sound teamwork and mutual acceptance of each other's work. Discussions beforehand are crucial (cf dual career couples 2.9 and 5.5). Another area of risk is that **women are more emotionally involved with their patients than men**. While many patients regard this as a considerable advantage, Lynne has often been taken to task for this by male colleagues. Losing a patient or a baby is a major emotional blow and her family suffers because of her anguish in coping with such a setback. The intense remorse she and other women suffer is not easily described. Consequently, she wrestles for a long time with the question of whether there was anything more she could have done. She even regarded this emotional concern as a strength until a patient's family blamed her for being too emotional with a patient's complication. Fortunately at the large hospital near her practice, there is now a procedure for stopping uncontrollable bleeding which may save many lives.

This hazard of emotional involvement was also experienced by Susan. She found the perpetual challenge of winning court cases problematic at times (cf relationships 5.4.2.1.d). Her husband Hans, with an understanding of this background, was able to give her emotional support when she had to prepare for a case until late at night. Another type of danger she observed was that men easily felt threatened by a woman of the same age or even younger (cf 2.7.3). The partners of her legal firm were well-known for eagerly appointing women as article clerks as

**they firmly believed that women work harder and more thoroughly, throwing them in at the deep end from the start. Their intuition is also useful in digging deeply for uncovering the truth of a matter. ... I observed this as probably being the reason that highly successful women lawyers were mostly divorced, as their marriages could not handle the pressure. ... There were also the problems of sexual harassment and attempts toward intimidation by clients or by flirting at the many social gatherings or trips away from home for investigations. The stigma of women lawyers becoming hard and cynical, as they often work with the seamy side of human beings, is another danger in this field.**

There are many risks associated with 'going solo', as Steven describes his freelance status. The administrative side of the profession is extremely time-consuming, and, when converted to money, very costly. Part of the problem is that an architect is never sure who is going to be able

to pay their dues by the end of the month, especially under present economic circumstances. Another very expensive part of an architectural studio is the computer software which is needed. With the drawing board now outmoded, plans are drawn by computer aided design (CAD), which is so refined that supporting staff is not only difficult to find, but very expensive. Consequently, he does this work himself, as using out sourcing is highly stressful to co-ordinate, reducing his own production time:

Leisure time is no more. ... If you are self-employed you are driven to the extreme (both in flying and in architecture), there are no half-measures. Due to financial or contractual commitments ... you have certain deadlines to meet and you have only one opportunity to make a first good impression on a client to ensure future commissions, so it makes you a perfectionist in what you do ... there's no room for error or for disputes or to blemish your name. The condition of my first career is that minor error could mean your life ... and not only your life, your aircrew, your passengers. And my second career is exactly the same, but in fiscal measures.

Another problem that Steven experiences is that

with the independence of going solo, you 'lick your own stamps' (and are the teaboy) and the following day you make decisions on major projects that cost millions ... so you become multidisciplinary.

c. Weaknesses, failures and mistakes

In keeping with the 'open-minded' attitude towards life that the participants have, they are also completely honest with themselves regarding their 'less than successful characteristics'. They have a **candid self-acceptance regarding their perceived weaknesses. They are not bogged down by them or even bothered too much. They sometimes shrug them off laconically and take themselves with a pinch of salt, even saying 'so what?'** An example of what they regard as a weakness is a tendency to **be rather impatient with people who deliver poor work, are dishonest, waste time or are lazy. Frequently this ability towards self-criticism has led them to use their observed weaknesses and mistakes as learning opportunities.** The common denominator for when they have made a particular mistake has been to say 'never again!' and to be much more alert to the specific issue in future.

### Steven regards mistakes

as part of the school fees. You only make a mistake once — if you make it the second time, it's your own problem. It's a learning curve, you can only learn from your mistakes and ... you must accept it. Nobody's perfect ... if a mistake has been made, an error, you will have to make good and sacrifice the status.

Overcoming his speech problem has been part of an emotional strength learning curve for Elmar. When his wife Jess had the traumatic experience with brain tumours, he was a pillar of strength, stability and calm. **But these characteristics, he says, have not come without conscious working on 'keeping his cool' and trying to work things through sensibly.** When he was younger he did regrettably lose his temper at work a few times. He has since learnt to 'sleep over a matter' and to address the offending party in a dignified way within the next day or two, consistently trying to harmonise differing viewpoints. **When he has made a mistake and has acknowledged it, even towards juniors, he has found it a great stress reliever.** This plan of action has actually improved his self-image and he has grown emotionally stronger in the process.

With his financial and academic handicap at the beginning of his career, Franz was compelled to learn to adapt to the harsh realities of life through practical experience, particularly hard work and very good human relations. **He believes that there is virtually no area where one does not make some mistakes.** An extremely difficult occurrence in his life was when he discovered employees in his travel business whom he had trusted completely had been committing fraud over years. Consequently he lost a great deal of money and was not able to convict them in court. Apart from the financial loss it had nearly cost him his business licence and it took years to recover. This experience has made him much more wary and has also taught him not to trust employees implicitly, but **to manage certain business with much greater personal attention.** His years of involvement in local and provincial politics have also taught him to understand the varying points of view of other people. **When there are differences of opinion, he "takes the bull by the horns", sits down and negotiates a settlement to the greater satisfaction of all concerned.** He has empathy with even acclaimed leaders who sometimes make mistakes and demonstrate "feet of clay". A danger of his present lack of time is that, with his leaning towards perfectionism, he delegates tasks and is not always satisfied with the end product. However he has been learning quickly that in present-day politics one has to have **plenty of empathy,**

**humility, patience and the willingness to acknowledge past mistakes. This has even earned him considerable appreciation from political opponents.**

Donald states that having grown up with a positive self-concept he was even able to **learn techniques and strategies for coping with his own imperfections, seeing these as challenges.** This helped him to teach effectively, with a sense of humour and for the mutual enjoyment for himself and his learners. When he was later in a position to offer in-service training to teachers these strengths were greatly in his favour. They learnt a great deal about offering their own subjects in a more easily acceptable and digestible way. Learning from pain and mistakes can be converted to the challenge of remaining alert and always trying to improve. He remarks succinctly: **"I make mistakes, but I am not a mistake"** (cf coping strategies 2.10.4).

A mistake which cost Hans a year of PhD study was when he worked in a completely wrong direction. In the end he learnt from the mistake, eventually knowing a great deal more about what not to do in his research in physics. What he experiences as a problem for him in a managerial and supervising position and where he struggles to stay patient, is when people are unreasonable and deliver poor work. Because he **tends towards the perfectionism needed in scientific research, he works rather slowly at times and takes too long with certain administrative tasks,** causing him anxiety and lack of sleep. Another personal characteristic he experiences as a weakness at times, is that he has a wide variety of interests, which he sees as a definite drawback in physics research of a world standard. He would also have liked to have been more able to motivate people, but this he thinks might be a weakness of scientists in general.

Henri found that because he was rather reserved and soft-spoken, he did not always make an immediate impression on people, which he sometimes felt to be a disadvantage, such as when he became principal of schools or in large meetings. This was, however, observed by others as a most endearing characteristic, which had a substantial momentum in the long run. He experienced that: **"I have quite a few weaknesses, but that I work on them all the time"**. **Hard work, sincerity and enthusiasm were what were needed in education and of that he had much to share.**

Alette has experienced ambivalence between a concentrated intellectual ability with tough situations and an emotional leaning towards a feeling of inferiority, stemming from her rejection as a child. **This understanding of inner conflict has been a decided advantage in her professional therapy though, with which she has been able to reach many patients** (cf dual careers 2.9 and 5.5, coping 2.10.4). She experiences that with hindsight she would have made many other choices in life, but this is characteristic of being human and that life never works that way. From these experiences she has been able to **teach both young people and older patients in a short while, what took her a long time and much pain to learn**. This background has also given her immense insight into the treatment of depression, which she sees as her speciality. The break-up of her marriage was a bitter pill, but: “this was a trauma I had to go through with in order to save my innermost self, otherwise I would have placed myself on the altar”. During the interview there was much laughter, as well as some tears, as the researcher herself had many experiences in common with Alette. It was enlightening and a relief for both to share the emotions generated by these reminiscences, such as being rather individualistic. This Alette characterises as simply being ‘a little different’.

Elke, Inneke and Jess felt that their tendency to be non-assertive, hyper-sensitive, timid and inhibited has been a definite drawback (cf key skills 2.10.13). Elke has often worked hard on an article concerning a social problem, only to have to stand back, as the article was not “hard news” and was then not published. Or people would: “walk all over me and I would look up and be surprised”. She would tire herself endlessly to give others, and especially her children, more opportunities in life. She has often been exhausted, but driven by an ‘adrenaline flow’ to finish an article for a deadline. Had she been a little more ‘hard-line’, she feels she would have made more of a mark in journalism. Also in her personal life she has regularly stood back, having learnt from a very patient mother that she should.

always be nice. The result was that never learnt to handle conflict well and, being slow to react, needed to have a tornado in my inside before I would respond in a more assertive way. ... The result was that I am very familiar with depression.

Jess sees her shyness as a recent development because of her hearing problem, but was a soft-spoken and friendly leader in the years gone by: “**never having been someone who was inclined**

to 'bulldoze' other people, but rather to entice them". Her proficiency in languages gave her "a lot of confidence", especially when she started teaching. When she was a lecturer in English, she sometimes felt a lack of confidence because she was not as well-qualified academically as she would have liked to have been, but ultimately she was much respected for her insight and her excellent ability to work with people. She smilingly refers to her 'lost' youthful confidence and that she thought she was quite a special person, in spite of being a sort of 'outcast' with some children during her school years in the Second World War because of her German background.

Susan says an example of learning from mistakes is when she won a case which set a young man free after committing a serious offence. As a habitual criminal he then went out and committed a worse crime. Her legal father-in-law had warned her about this possibility beforehand and she found this to be a very expensive lesson in life. After this she had asked more of her father-in-law's advice in handling cases and has tried not to be so emotionally involved and not so naively willing to give someone another chance. Another area of vigilance is with the compiling of contracts, as a small slip may be a loophole in case of future difficulties.

Inneke observed that she had been an only child and did not have a sibling situation in which she could have learnt to be more self-assertive and that it is very difficult to learn this later in life. Having had 'a very difficult boss' for the last few years, she often needed to be a mediator between him and the staff, a 'lightning conductor' as she described it. This she found most unpleasant and not always successful. Her psychologist husband was her 'live-in counsellor' and helped her through these crises with an 'understanding ear' and more insight into the situation (cf partners 2.10.8). With only a handful of experts in palaeontology in the country and very scarce financial resources, she has had to cope with a great deal of work with little help and equipment and not always able to fight for more. Her feeling of being timid was never evident when addressing an audience. She did this with cordial confidence, relying on her expertise and not on any "power dressing and power play". She laughingly refers to a gathering of archaeo-zoologists as a rather unrefined group of people in any case, who are rather brash because of the type of work they do.

Lynne sees her greatest weakness as an often typically feminine one, that of "talking too much". She tries to explain a problem in detail to a patient, especially with a complication and this

sometimes confuses them. For this reason she says she wishes she were more clever. She believes that

one cannot practice any career without pain and mistakes, but that one learns from every single mistake. An example is that one might miss a small symptom with a complication or a rare indication of an illness and this would then have a lesson for when this occurs again, so that it has made me more alert for such a possibility. (Cf key skills 2.10.13)

This has also been the case with problematic births. She has found great relief in discussing the question with other doctors, the sisters at the hospital or with her family to get it off her shoulders, believing that: **“If I bury the distress in myself, it is a time bomb waiting to go off”**.

d. Critique of own education

The participants have clearly benefited from the richly varied education they received either at home, school, during tertiary education, while working or by conscious efforts of their own. Yet there was some speculation as to whether their formal schooling was what was needed for building successful careers and for conducting their personal lives well (cf lack of key skills 2.11).

As a mathematics teacher in the first years of his education career Henri sometimes felt exasperated by finding certain sections of the syllabus counterproductive and saw learners wrestle with these. Later in a senior advisory position he was able to help reform the syllabi so that

**the seemingly unnecessary sections would just be worked over superficially so that learners are aware of the existence of these sections for future reference; in this way more time could be spent on the really important components of the work.**

Learning basic facts and skills is not counterproductive in the long run. He had also felt intuitively that the social graces were of immense importance and that one should consistently refrain from being crude or pulling other people down. This, he feels, was never taught directly at school and it is necessary, as many parents do not have the ability to teach these basics to their children.

Donald, as an educational psychologist, believes firmly that **no education is ever wasted**. A distinct lifeskill is to learn to distinguish positive knowledge used directly from what will be “put on the back burner” as knowledge which may be drawn upon later when needed. For him the greatest example of counterproductive education is rote learning (studying without insight), disconnected from real life. From study methods courses he has taught, as well as while scrutinising his own children’s homework while they were at school, he has come to the firm conclusion that homework consists of rote learning in many ways. Jess corroborates this. She saw the negative results of rote learning all too often while teaching English at a distance education university. Rural students would sometimes come to her office for help and she was alarmed when she realised that they did not even know how to start reading a prescribed book or even to look up the meaning of words. These were frequently the students who would qualify as teachers in rural areas, thus continuing this vicious circle. Donald also wishes that people could receive education that would make them more emotionally mature at an earlier age, “without having to reinvent the wheel for themselves all the time”:

**The teaching of life skills should be integrated with every subject by every teacher in stead of presenting the bare facts.** For this teachers would need continuous in-service training, such as is done regularly by private enterprise in the economic sector. **‘Breakaway weekends’ or ‘bosberade’ for the teaching staff should be a regular occurrence at every school,** consisting not only of team building projects, but by courses in life skills, where they would learn more about teaching emotional competence within the paradigms of their own disciplines. Such weekends should ideally be sponsored by the school fund, so as to rebound to the children of the school in the form of life skills such as stress control, but initiative for private enterprise/corporate sponsorship would be even better.

**Teachers are often too busy with sport and extramural activities over weekends to have time to keep growing emotionally themselves.** ... One of the areas most neglected is the area of **listening skills**, which could be integrated with every lesson. Teachers, and especially parents, could benefit endlessly by learning how to boost their children’s confidence by learning to listen to what they say. **Being taught what ‘the greater picture’ is and how every fact and every person fits into the whole, is of more importance than learning a few facts; concentrating on ‘doing things right’ is not as important as ‘doing the right things’.** ... Having a wide basis of knowledge and being able to link this knowledge to realise that everything touches everything else is the bottom line, making for more personal happiness and greater general competence. (Cf key skills 2.10.13 and 2.13).

Elmar and Franz regard the observation of the behaviour of **prominent people who employ effective management strategies and 'the social graces'** as immensely important. **Knowing how to 'walk and talk in the upper social echelons' is critical since without these skills people would not be able to conduct themselves in a suitable way. Courtesy, tact, empathy, techniques for public speaking, the writing (and understanding) of scientific or political reports in good language and a knowledge of the arts may be regarded as crucial skills for career success. How to communicate with people** of all walks of life, especially with one's family members, colleagues, seniors and juniors, is of fundamental importance, yet they received little or no direct and conscious education to facilitate these proficiencies at school. They regard themselves as most fortunate to have learnt these competencies at home or coincidentally in their youth and career circles. Franz has seen numerous bright people "come and go" because of a lack of these personal skills and a lack of understanding of the customs of other cultures (cf key skills 2.10.13).

Donald and Alette also refer to **whole brain development in this regard, stressing that it is essential to develop both the so-called 'male and female' characteristics of one's personality** (cf androgeny 2.6.3). Donald is adamant that

not allowing children, especially boys, to cry and to be tearful with the loss of a loved one is negating a basic aspect of being human and is highly counterproductive, as they then also do not learn empathy and tenderness. Human beings are going to be more balanced and happy if they are not afraid of handling their emotions. Being very sad when necessary is a coping strategy of immense importance. Dealing with anger and sorrow in a constructive way is one of the most underdeveloped life skills in present society where people want to take a little pill instead of working through their sadness.

(Cf Goleman 1995, Covey 1992. Developing these characteristics is also deeply significant for marriages to have a greater chance of success in the future: cf 2.9, 2.10.8, 5.4.3.1.a and 5.5).

Regarding communication skills, Susan believes law students were not taught enough professional day-to-day 'know how' in order to conduct themselves with comfort in a court of law, as well as with some aspects of client contact. She had to acquire these skills by herself during her articles. While she had worked as an accountant, she had no problems with passing

the exams in the financial subjects, but many of her classmates had great difficulties passing. Lynne felt they had studied hard studying medicine, but that it was still up to them to develop their own personal style of contact with patients, which most medical practitioners were able to do.

Some professional people in the medical world, however, even though they might have been brilliant students, were not able to learn how to handle themselves comfortably in private practice and were then only able to live out their ideals behind the scenes in research. An introverted person who cannot communicate well and who has a problem with human relationships will not be a success in a private practice and would need more educational help with these aspects.

She felt that her educational preparation for her career had been adequate, but the study of German at school was a waste of time. However, now that her eldest daughter is going to work in Switzerland, she feels differently about it as they are now practising speaking German.

Steven felt adequately prepared for both his careers, but not for the financial management and administration of his own architectural practice, which he experiences as a major weakness on his part. He would have preferred to have had more training in this regard, as employing someone to do this is expensive and he prefers being self-sufficient. He also feels inadequately prepared for adapting to the stressful economics of the country at present.

For Hans the ability to read widely and in great depth since fairly early childhood stood him in good stead since his primary school days at a small school (cf reading 5.4.1.3.c). He repeatedly found that

when teachers might explain something that was not quite in line with what I had read about the subject, I could simply ignore it and quietly go my own way because I had absorbed facts from other sources. ... **At times I had also differed from them in a non-aggressive way, having learnt from my father to debate any issue.** This ability has had an incisive influence in my ability to do well with university studies, later research and success in an academic career.

The converse was experienced by Henri as he had had the experience of knowing much of what they were learning at high school, as he had learnt a great deal and had read widely in the small farm primary school where he had been (cf 5.4.1.3.c).

When Alette was at high school she associated a subject with whether the teacher was kind and effective in her eyes. She refused to continue with German at one stage, because of the teacher's approach and negative personal comments.

At university at times I again felt extremely frustrated with certain aspects of my graduate subjects, such as statistics, with the result that I refused to do this again for the honours degree, getting into hot water for that. Eventually my argument won, as I had debated the matter with my professor, saying that if I needed to have statistics I would pay somebody to do it for me. ... This had repercussions when I had to appear as a candidate for acceptance for clinical psychology, where only about 10% of the applicants were selected. Some people on the selection committee saw me as too rebellious and individualistic. My application was eventually successful and I believe it to be **only because of a strong intuition and an exceptional ability towards holistic synthesis.**

Elke endured much frustration with subject choices in high school, such as biology:

**What I would preferred to have done as preparation for a writing career, was to have learnt about the histories of art and music, concentrating on the realism, modernism and other important streams and eras in literature, learning about mythology, knowing about archetypes and prototypes among humankind and primitive themes occurring in all the literatures of the world. In history there was a great deal of rote learning about the causes of long-forgotten wars and because of this I remember nothing at all, as the facts were 'disjointed'. I would have found the causes of the World Wars more appropriate for general knowledge. What I would have found more useful, was if we could have had better and more up-to-date information about possible careers. I also recall that, having had a titanic struggle with mathematics, I did have a feeling of satisfaction in overcoming this fear for the subject, using the 'will to overcome' to my advantage in other areas." (Cf lack of key skills 2.11.2, resilience 5.4.2.4)**

Elke also feels that schools should be much more aware of social interaction among learners, such as the negative impact of low self-esteem on learning and of bullying on the playground. **Curriculum reform should provide learners with a broad knowledge of many subjects before they choose their main subjects. School subjects do not keep up with the developments in the world of work and the expansion of knowledge.** Basic and practical knowledge should include considerations such as learning to change electrical plugs, how to balance a budget, plan a diet or an overseas trip, how to do in-depth research for an assignment, how to be a good

parent and how insurance works. Working with a few shares over a period of a year would be excellent for learning the basics, instead of having theory and few practical skills. Educators should know how learners' classes are affected by their personal circumstances especially those that cause low self-esteem. Inneke did not enjoy her school years, but found certain aspects very interesting which stimulated her interest in studying through tertiary education. Today she considers

**any acquired skill as useful for the future, but I condemn rote learning instead of the development of an inquiring mind.** (Cf lack of key skills 2.11.2).

#### ◆ Concluding Remarks

The lives of the research participants have not been without the pain and stress of normal human existence. They have made conscious choices concerning their reactions to setbacks, obstacles and weaknesses, converting these to opportunities for development.

#### 5.4.2.4 *Resilience*

**Setbacks and distress are a normal part of life** (cf 5.4.2.3.a). **Many people cannot handle their misfortunes positively and suffer excessively because they have not learnt skills and techniques for overcoming difficulties and even trauma.** People who are able to overcome even severe problems of depression become emotionally stronger than before. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 193-213), the ability to confront misfortune and make something good of it is a very rare gift indeed. He calls people who are able to survive and thrive "survivors". They possess resilience and courage, being admired by others. He states that of all the virtues, **a person can learn no trait that is more useful, more essential for survival and more likely to improve the quality of life than the ability to transform adversity into an enjoyable challenge, emerging stronger from the stressful events** (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:200). Goleman (1995:45) equates this with **emotional intelligence** which includes "far more of the qualities that make us more fully human" than mere intelligence.

Observations by the researcher, also among the participants in this research, have identified two main factors concerned: that the person involved in a resilient lifestyle makes **a rational choice to have a positive outlook on life**. They are aided by **an emotionally strengthening support system found in loving family and friends**. The first is often connected to a religious perspective and then both of these factors are seen as being gifts of grace. **Learning to compensate and overcome difficulties keeping a positive stance is closely connected to eliminating or managing negative factors as far as is possible by an act of will**. A caring support system may possibly not always be available. According to Harrington and Boardman (1997) those with the ability to choose how external elements influence them and still make a success of their lives are 'Pathmakers' (cf 2.5.6).

The inner strength of the participants was a reason for inclusion in the study. Their will to survive difficult personal, financial and health circumstances and go on to be respected, admired and successful people, both in their professional and personal lives, is a source of inspiration to acquaintances and colleagues. As Csikszentmihalyi (1990:180, emphasis added) states, **the conscious choice of a certain lifestyle, such as in a monogamous marriage, with an optimistic perspective on life, frees "a great deal of energy for living, instead of being spent on wondering how to live"**. This is possibly the 'secret formula' of this group of people who have optimised their circumstances, which have been fortunate in many ways, but not without difficulties of varying degrees.

Alette is a typical example of Harrington and Boardman's concept of a 'Pathmaker' (cf 2.5.6). She has survived difficult financial and emotional circumstances, such as her problematic marriage. **She has been able to extend her resilience and 'survival skills' to others in a professional capacity.** She sees her ability to

think laterally and creatively to have been what has enabled me to develop my own innovative line of psychotherapy, in many ways in disagreement with what I was taught at university.... **I feel that I had to go through extreme emotional pain to know what it takes to survive.**

Her refusal to cosset people with depression with hospitalisation, sympathy and medication has caused conflict with conventional approaches of many other psychotherapists. Nevertheless, she

believes in strong, direct and honest treatment, with a will to win. Her strong approach is belied by her dainty build, her soft-spokenness and tasteful, feminine attire. Although there is money to be made in assisting in legal defence work, she refuses to say what some lawyers want her to say to win a case if it is not the whole truth, consequently losing their support. This affords a feeling of triumph to be free of what she sees as unethical and corrupt and is therefore not a loss. She also refuses to treat people for problems relating to nicotine, alcohol and drug dependency as, she believes these are too clear a sign of character weakness, believing such problems to be part of an oral phase out of which no growth has taken place. This also includes overeating and verbal aggression. Her approach to psychotherapy is not acceptable to people lacking in ego-strength and especially to men who feel threatened, even in the psychotherapy fraternity.

Elke grew up in a home where her mother was very self-effacing and gentle and a father who was a good provider, but who was "emotionally uninvolved and distant". She remembers herself as a middle child who was non-assertive, hypersensitive and inhibited, "not really worth paying attention to". Home movies taken during her childhood show her as highly protective of her dolls and keeping others away from them. Writing has been her forte and with this she was able to be in the limelight at times. When she experienced success as a journalist, she bloomed. As mentioned, combining the roles of mother and journalist have been a most arduous life-task about which she has written several articles.

Inneke's rise from being a fairly obscure suburban girl from a somewhat under-educated home to being a leading authority in the world of archaeo-zoology has been rather exceptional, making her another 'Pathmaker' in her own right. She ascribes this

to many things falling into place for me in a pattern which I see as being a series of blessings combined with hard work. The leading figure in my life has been my caring and stable academic husband and fortuitous meeting with leading local and international figures in the field.

**The pillar of her marriage has been teamwork and mutual acceptance of interests and commitments, making it easy for partners to deliver their very best in a wide range of activities (cf marriage partners 2.10.8):**

Working in a calm and loving atmosphere conducive to both contentment and achievement has been a life-style to us and I can't remember any conflict we have had. ... When I felt depressed or stressed, which has not happened very often, I found listening to a good piece of music, walking in the garden or reading an interesting book most helpful to regain equilibrium."

Hans, Susan and Lynne, were the only participants to have experienced few serious problems for which they are grateful. Yet **they developed resilience by weathering the strenuous developmental tasks they set themselves, never losing a sense of humility in the process.** As mentioned, Hans struggled to find direction in his PhD research. Nevertheless, **he learnt to take responsibility for work and the concomitant skills acquired most advantageous later.** Susan's miscarriage and her resignation from legal practice after falling pregnant, presented difficulties. Lynne was able to **prove herself tough enough for gynaecological specialisation by support from her family, especially her husband, and through sheer hard work.** Eventually surpassing many more brilliant students gave her a feeling of accomplishment which she found very satisfying (cf work ethic 2.10.7). Donald learnt

**at an early age to focus on what I was able to do within certain circumstances, overcoming the obstacles in my way by finding creative ways around them.**  
(Cf 5.4.1.1.c)

This ability is ascribed to a positive self-image and conscious effort to develop positive 'self-talk' when confronted with dilemmas. He boosted his morale with positive slogans and goals and grasped opportunities. Sometimes he has created the latter by a sensitivity to gaps which he could fill with his expertise as an educational psychologist. His most distinct area of success in his profession has been when he could **help others to grow and to be growing himself through life-long learning** (cf 5.4.3.3.a).

Elmar has **worked with his perceived weaknesses or moved them "out of his field of vision" if he could not improve them.** He supported his wife Jess after surgery for benign brain tumours, helping her to overcome these traumatic threats to life and health (cf partners 2.10.8). He made specific efforts to keep their family emotionally close together during this trying period, as well as by later being instrumental in his institute's survival of a financial crisis and by keeping the morale of his staff high. Jess is convinced that without his support she would not have

managed to recover as well as she did, being able to live a normal and active life again. **She has probably been even more sympathetic to the needs of others since having been very ill herself. As mentioned , her enthusiastic learners and students testify to her most striking quality, the warmth with which she approaches others both when teaching or managing.** Her present involvement with disabled adults, she regards as actually being therapy for herself.

Franz's will to overcome many social and occupational drawbacks has been a conscious decision in many ways. However, he also acknowledges grace without which his human efforts would have been worthless:

Three plans of action are what I ascribe my own success to: an ability to work extremely hard in a disciplined way, to 'tackle and manage' problems as they come along and to have had excellent relationships with the people I have worked with during my whole career.

The moral support of wife and three daughters and other family and friends gave him the courage to stay optimistic under difficult circumstances (cf coping skills 2.10.4).

Henri learnt resilience from an early age as the youngest of seven children. Farm life in difficult times taught the family to optimise circumstances by **amusing and satisfying themselves in place of material benefits** (cf background 2.10.1):

My parents had an ethic of conscientious hard work and my mother was an expert plan maker to keep the wolf from the door, always striving to improve our circumstances. By cultivating all the foods we needed we were able to live like royalty from our own produce. Playing exciting games with my best friends, the children of the farm workers, we didn't even realise that we were actually financially needy.

Asked whether he had made a conscious decision to be positive after breaking his back in the aircraft accident, Steven stated:

I had no choice — if you have no support system and you're self-employed, there's no other option but to make it work, in your interest, in your favour, to survive — it was a matter of survival. I had no infrastructure or any support that I could say I would be taken there or I would do this or they would do that for

me, I had to do it myself. And that was the major decision — I think it was after about one-and-a-half months in hospital, I said to the physiotherapist that I'm going to walk and she said, 'When are we starting?', and she showed me how to manoeuvre from the bed to a wheelchair and (how to do) exercises. I can't tell you how many buckets of tears were shed in the passage, because it was painful and it was ... stressing. ... it's so difficult to express ... Yes, it was distressing. Emotionally I was moved, but it was not a pain. It's something that I could resolve, that I could adapt to. Emotional pain in when you lose ... a child ... that's pain. It's something that's lost forever. It's gone forever. In my instance it was a current status, I was immobilised ... I can live with it, it was temporary. ... that was how I saw it. I can overcome. (Cf resilience 2.10.9 and 5.4.2.4).

#### ◆ Concluding remarks

Although the twelve people involved in this study may be seen as fortunate in their professional careers and family life, their paths have not been without misfortune and even trauma in some cases. They have nevertheless been able to overcome their problems in an exemplary manner for which they are grateful and for which they are respected and admired by others.

#### 5.4.3 Recapitulation and fruition: culminating success experiences

Returning to the musical metaphor of sonata form, the research participants' lives often appear to have come full circle. This study commenced with a consideration of the family of origin as the **A group** or main theme of the lives of the participants. It closes with a consideration of their own family and other relationships as a main theme representing the dimension of **personal success**. Between personal and public success is a **bridge**, which is seen as their value system. The **B group** of themes, the participants' careers as **public success**, represents the second main theme of their lives. The study has contemplated, as **redevelopment**, the backgrounds of the participants; how they have developed; their advantages and disadvantages, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; how they managed life; and their journey along highways and byways. As the "bottom line" of this study, the life skills recommended for the individual and for dual career couples are presented as distilled essence of the participants' experiences.

**5.4.3.1 A: Primary thematic group in home key: personal success through healthy relationships**

Goleman (1995:33-129) sees the fine art of relationships and “people skills” as crucial to emotional intelligence and a life skill any human is able to learn. In keeping with this, the participants demonstrated that they have been able to develop these abilities to a high degree. These skills are evident in their personal, social and professional lives (cf key skills 2.10.13).

a. Present family

Where their parental families were a springboard for their development as children, their own nuclear families have been their anchors and the *raison d'être* for their adult lives, forming the ‘safe haven’ from which they were able to operate their successful careers. **For ten of the twelve the quality of their marriages has been vital to the emotional health of their nuclear families. A golden thread running through their interviews has been how they have concentrated on forming a strong team with their families, nuclear, immediate and extended** (cf dual career 2.9, 2.10.8 and 5.5). Their families, in which every member is regarded as most important, have given them the emotional and moral support they needed. In addition, participants were also instrumental in ensuring that they **played their part in being stable, responsible and trustworthy family members**. Where the participants still had their own parents, the parents were part of their own family activities whenever possible. When care in their parents’ old age was needed, the participants were not lacking in their affectionate support in health and illness.

Of the twelve participants, four men and two women are grandparents, playing a caring, supportive and important role in the lives of their own children as parents, as well as being close and meaningful people in the lives of their grandchildren, looking after them whenever they could to be of help. This includes looking after grandchildren when they come home from school, so that their parents are able to pursue their own careers. Six participants either have children who are young professional adults, as students or still at school.

**All twelve participants have been observed to be idealistic and responsible parents (cf 2.9.5.1 and 5.4.1.1). The welfare and happiness of their children has been central to any plans made regarding their careers.** They all feel they have been blessed with children who are very special in their own way. These children have had their share of illnesses, one or two have had less serious learning or emotional problems requiring professional help. There have been personal, financial and career setbacks for some adult children, but the participants were at all times supportive and this strengthened their relationships.

Susan is satisfied that, although she did not work full-time in her legal career for a long time, she made the correct choice by staying at home with her children. With hindsight, she would make the same choice again. She feels that others who chose to go back to work full-time, leaving their children to aftercare centres or with domestic help, have had many problems. Thus she feels content with sacrificing her career to a certain extent. She does have a longing to be involved in the legal world again and would have worked part-time if she could have. She also feels grateful that she did have a term of duty in the business world before studying law, as this gave her more maturity, excellent insight into different types of people, cultures and kinds of business. It also made her more aware of some dishonest practices in the business world. She did not experience in any way that she was discriminated against and would not have achieved what a man could had she worked for a longer period of time.

**The participants are proud of and grateful for their ongoing involvement in the lives of their families.** Jess calls her one young granddaughter “her therapy” and Alette visits Australia once a year to enjoy her two small grandchildren, who can’t understand why she doesn’t visit more often. All participants have regular e-mail correspondence with children not living closely, keeping in touch with the joys and sorrows of their lives. When asked about having a very good relationship with the women in his life, and especially his daughters, Steven replied:

**We tried to give them the best of both worlds ...** and are extremely close — to the extent that when H. and I separated, U. was nine months old, that’s the youngest, that from day one I had them every alternate weekend. I would prepare baby food, I would wash the nappies, I had ... a special bed made, extra width, to accommodate myself and one on each side in the mornings — they were disciplined to the extent that they would sleep in their own beds, but when you

hear them start gurgling in the mornings, you would go and pick them up and they would come to bed with you ... and we are very close. When N. had to buy her first bra, her support underwear, I was asked to go with her, not the mother, and I was called into the cubicle to advise on the red one with white hearts or the white one with red hearts — that was the extent. We are extremely close. N. was a caesarian baby — I was the first to hold her. ... I was in theatre, two of the medical team ... were close friends of ours and I was given N. to hold and H. believes that is why we are so close. We had an excellent relationship, we speak to each other daily, its an open relationship and their friends cannot believe that the kids come from a broken home, because the mother and I, plus the friends, we would go out dining and wining and we would have wonderful evenings and I think ... it's a sound platform for the kids to start their basic personal lives on.

b. Friends, colleagues and the community

**The participants are popular and respected people, involved in a wide variety of activities. Their relationships in their circle of friends, at work and in their communities are congenial and contribute to the quality of their lives (cf key skills 2.10.13). Regular visits with friends keep their lives full of meaningful recreational activities.** Time for appointments to relax with friends are scheduled into their diaries, as these social connections are most important, although most would have liked to have had more time with friends, having meals together, playing games or going away for weekends or trips. Elmar and Lynne say that, as their children and their families play such an important role in their lives, their need for social involvement with friends is possibly less than what they observe with other people.

**The relationships with their past and present colleagues have ranged from courteous to excellent. It was evident that they have all gone out of their way to be on good terms with colleagues.** As Franz has stated, he has tried “never to burn any bridges behind him” in his career. This has paid off with the excellent network of business associates he has built up locally and abroad. The maintenance of congenial relationships in the world of work has been **another golden thread** running through lives of all participants. Where there have been differences of opinion, the general approach has been to sit down and discuss discord in a way that does the relationships no harm. Disagreements have been worked on in a constructive and harmonious way.

The participants are all **intensely involved in their communities**, either through the work they do or with voluntary work for the less fortunate, with their sports clubs or with their children's schools and affiliations. Apart from a firm belief in congenial relationships in his world of work, Steven has many friends and has been a member of charitable social organisations for many years. Through this membership he has been committed to helping institutions for street children with their building programmes, giving technical advice and support for hostels and schools. Donald and Alette have come full circle from their initial desire to study medicine to that of now working with something possibly more fragile, the human psyche, affecting both people's mental and physical well-being. It was very pleasant for Donald to have had an appointment training medical lecturers how to improve their teaching skills. As retired educators Jess and Henri have become involved with improving the quality of the lives of people in their own families, as well as on the periphery of their immediate circles of involvement through their churches and welfare work. Hans, Inneke and Elmar are involved with local and international research and are study supervisors or external examiners for universities. Elmar and Franz are busy with management and creative functions which provide work for many people in agriculture, tourism and metropolitan areas. Elke's writing career has been fruitful in keeping people informed about matters pertaining to their daily lives, as well as with the world of literature as enrichment. Lynne strives to improve the quality of the lives of women through better health for themselves and for their babies. Her pinnacle is the role played with infertility and helping childless people become parents. Susan plays a role in helping people with legal work and has played a meaningful role in education through sports coaching.

#### ◆ Concluding Remarks

The people in this study regard their families as the anchors and most meaningful group relationships in their lives. They have treated family members as worthy of their time and energy. Relationships with colleagues and their communities have been healthy and congenial and even where there have been differences of opinion these have been handled with dignity. The conclusion may be made that they have made conscious efforts to keep these relationships sound and where there have been disagreements these have been dealt with in a responsible and cordial way.

#### 5.4.3.2 *Bridge to B: Endorsement of value system through own conviction*

**Through their life experience, the research participants have validated the set of values they were brought up with** (cf facilitating environments 2.10.2, 5.4.1.1, 5.4.1.2). This is clear, not only from their life styles, but from conclusions drawn from their life-long search for meaning. All participants are of the Christian faith and endorse the values honoured by a Western Christian heritage. These values include concepts such as honesty, diligence, respect for others and law-abiding citizenship. Before the interviews, the researcher anticipated that most participants subscribed to these values. Subsequently, it was confirmed by interview narratives. Two participants are not regular churchgoers as they feel somewhat constricted by the approaches of the churches they belong to, preferring to have a more holistic view of the Christian religion.

In keeping with Gerdes' (1998:xiii and 34, emphasis added) viewpoint, the participants have abided by **“certain principles and skills which can make it more rewarding to be a parent”**. They have succeeded in **making it more exciting for their children to be children and helped to make the family a safe haven in an uncertain world. This implies a work ethic and sound concepts of basic good human relationships at work** (*interpersonal intelligence*, cf Goleman 1995:39, original emphasis), pointing to an intuitive understanding of what it takes to experience inner peace (*intrapersonal intelligence*).

Through conscious choice as adults to opt for the value systems they were brought up with, the participants have validated these by their own life styles.

#### 5.4.3.3 *B: Secondary thematic group in home key: public and career success delineated*

**A sense of having made a contribution to society and job satisfaction are shared by all participants. They feel that they have contributed to society by positively impacting the people with whom they have lived and worked. They share a sense of achievement in their careers, which forms an integral part of their feeling socially worthwhile and useful. They enjoy good family relationships and the satisfaction of raising children who are balanced and valuable citizens.** The twelve people all expressed satisfaction with what they have achieved

in their lives so far. With hindsight, there have been areas where they would have liked to have done things differently, but they generally feel that they have **made the best of what opportunities and circumstances they encountered with the innate talents they had. The recognition they enjoy for their valuable contributions is not something they brandish about, but accept with gratitude and humility as blessings.** This humility and the reluctance to boast about their achievements comprised a meaningful element in the interviews. In more than one case the researcher had to obtain information about their accomplishments from their spouses, who were more open about their achievements and accolades.

Five men, Donald, Elmar, Hans, Franz and Steven, and two women, Inneke and Elke have been active in the international arena of their fields. This is significant, as the tendency among the women was that they all made career breaks for family formation, staying at home while their children were small, with exception of the gynaecologist, Lynne, who had only maternity leave for three months. Five went back to their careers when their children were at nursery or day school, or made a change of direction, but there were at all times adjustments to their work schedule to accommodate their children. One woman, Inneke, gained international recognition due to exceptional innate ability combined with a situation where she was able to work longer hours than the others, as her husband, a professor at a distance education university, was able to work at home most afternoons and could therefore be with the children.

Both Alette and Donald feel that they have helped improve the lives of many people through their adult education and therapeutic programmes. They expressed joy in this regard when asked what they saw as their greatest personal achievements in life. Donald adjusts Peck's 1990 summary of this approach by saying that

**a person's crowning achievement in life is 'Love is when one lets oneself AND others grow'.**

Donald is grateful for his upbringing and feels that he has been able to make a mark on many people's attitudes towards their responsibilities both at home and with contacts outside home, such as with their children's schools:

I feel **enriched by initiatives I have taken to disseminate information and expertise at schools, churches and other social institutions with regard to the bringing up of children and in finding life more meaningful.** I believe that people are happier if they know more about the dynamics of these matters and what leading researchers have pointed out in this regard. One can use the analogy of enjoying a piece of music more if one has a broader general knowledge and knows the background of the music, such as the country of origin, what atmosphere and season is involved and knowing what the emotions involved were when it was composed. **The reason for this greater understanding is that when one links things together, seeing the 'bigger picture', one realises that everything touches everything else in life.**

These approaches Donald has tried to pass on to the many people for whom he has been a mentor. Elmar feels content that he has been able to guide his organisation through difficult times and to manage it productively and responsibly. He has been in contact with similar agricultural institutions in Africa and Europe, the USA and China, participating in conferences and networking with agronomists concerned with food production. His management function has been instrumental in ongoing job-creation and he has

**found great satisfaction in completing specific tasks successfully, especially when they have been very challenging. ... Enjoying the work and feeling that I am socially still useful may be one of the reasons I have been postponing retirement to 'possibly next year' for a number of years.**

He feels comfortable with the possibility that his expertise may still be used in a consultancy after retirement. When asked whether he felt satisfied that his amicable demeanor had contributed to his career success and with being described as **an example of stability at home and at work**, he felt that this description was acceptable. He is as comfortable at his office as he is at home with his family, for whom he is a most important and appreciated person.

Franz's approach to his whole career has been **an enjoyment of service and the training of people working for and with him.** **Beside his aspiration to be financially comfortable has been his desire to improve the lives of those around him.** These two aspirations have been satisfied in his tourism business and chambers of commerce connections, his youth work and his provincial and local political involvement. He finds

**managing the various interests and seeing business and social organisations running smoothly and in harmony with each other highly satisfying.** Having been one of the youngest mayors in office and to have been chosen to an eminent metropolitan management position by both my own and opposition parties, has certainly been ample recognition of a few management and social abilities.

Hans has made steady progress in his advancement in the science faculty of the university he has worked for since his student days, serving not only as a respected lecturer, but also making better employment conditions for university staff. **He has enjoyed international recognition of his research model and is a frequent speaker at international conferences. He is highly respected and well-liked by associates in his field, yet not too important to help with household tasks at home. He is at all times willing to go to much trouble for students, colleagues, family and friends, and being a devoted husband and father.** What he is respected for academically, apart from his contributions to research, is his

aim to make physics accessible for students and teach students of the department to think logically and to solve problems creatively, making them highly employable.

As an educator Henri can look back on a career where his learners have found joy in his approach to mathematics, sport and social activities and his colleagues and staff have found him an admirable leader-of-the-team. **From his kindness and patience with explaining mathematical problems to high school learners to helping formulate strategies for national curriculum reform, his human warmth and concern for the welfare of other people has made him a popular and respected person.** When he left posts as a principal, having been promoted to a bigger school or to a more senior advisory position, there was a feeling of sadness and loss and he was showered with tokens of appreciation and esteem. Nevertheless, his home and family were ultimately the centrepiece of his commitment, with an exceptionally warm and close relationship with his wife and children. **His most intense feeling of achievement is that**

**I could be available to people, to help them grow and reach their potential. In helping others rise above their problems, I was able to grow with them and to reach greater heights as a human being in the service of the Creator.**

Developing from a poor farm boy to a national education advisor makes Henri fit the definition of a 'Pathmaker'(cf 2.5.6).

Elke's career in both part time and full time journalism abroad and in South Africa has been satisfying. Part time work has allowed her to work on a master's degree. She has contributed successful articles to newspapers, magazines and assignments for companies on specific topics, enjoying the necessary research. **Two areas of specific interest have been new expectations in career development for the 21st century and the adaptations needed by dual career families.** She experiences her creative writing as the most satisfactory genre she is connected with, with many ideas and ideals for publishing "her master works" in the years to come.

Inneke found immense satisfaction in

being involved in many research projects concerning the pre-history of this country, as well as training and mentoring numerous colleagues and students from as far afield as Denmark, gaining international recognition and publishing research articles regularly. I feel very satisfied that I have been able to go much further than what I had ever dreamt of (as someone from a difficult childhood background. (Cf 2.5.6)

**When complimented on her many abilities, such as doing art needlework and painting with watercolours, she is as smilingly modest and unassuming as she is about her scientific work.** This work she feels most pleased with, especially as she has been able to draw a number of disadvantaged students who have worked on sites with her as volunteers. If they are able to promote the importance and conservation of African fossil sites, she would be delighted.

Having seen many successful deliveries and healthy patients is seen as Lynne's crowning career achievement. If patients remember her personal care and involvement with their pregnancies and confinements with gratitude and appreciation, she has realised her dearest ambition. She has received much affection from patients and feels satisfied that the feeling is mutual, having been involved in the most intimate aspects of women and families' lives. As she has had three babies herself, she has

**a deep understanding of what joy and pain is involved in women's lives** in this regard, also wanting to improve the quality of life for all my patients, from young mothers to menopausal women. ... My own children are what I regard as my greatest contribution to humankind.

This view is shared by Susan, who feels that her children are more important to her than her success in a legal career. A happy family and warm, affectionate home is what has been her ultimate aim. The fact that she knows that she was able to be successful as a lawyer and had some years of experience in various aspects of legal practice was most satisfying. **The closeness they learnt while her husband, Hans, was doing research work in Europe, has been a major factor in their marriage and family life. This "sharing and caring as a team" is the most prominent characteristic of their everyday lives** (cf partners 2.10.8 and dual career 5.5). Apart from her part-time legal work at home, she is convinced that no education and training is ever in vain and her knowledge of how the legal system works has been invaluable to their family.

Susan also believes that, **apart from coaching tennis as a healthy physical activity, it has given her many pupils social advantages** they did not have when starting their tennis training. This has given her great job-satisfaction. She has seen undisciplined children with bad manners and little consideration for others change radically by what she has been able to teach them concerning good sportsmanship. Coaching tennis, she feels, is an educational opportunity which she relishes, as it is 'a gentleman's sport' by which self-control and general discipline is learnt, as well as the fact that tennis improves a person's concentration and mathematical ability.

Steven experiences his career success as having many facets:

I see architecture as very much part of the creative arts ... what I achieved in my profession, milestones, a building, as far as I'm concerned, **I can refer to an aesthetically satisfying building as 'Frozen Music'**. Somebody had to compose it, and that is, if it's composed, it's there — it's tangible, it's there, hopefully for many generations to see ... it works! And so often it happens that I drive past with my family or with A., and you drive past a building and you say, 'By the way, that building I did, but that's twenty years ago'. And that is like a child that grew up and that you can see and you still admire the detail — I attended a church that I designed nineteen years ago ... with their confirmation, to sit there and you realise, 'But this is my church!' and you walk out and on the cornerstone is your name... and you're so proud! And banks that I was involved in ... and hospitals,

the (West Rand) hospital, that you can walk in and say 'This is the hospital I did!'. And that's achievement, the fulfilment of my own being. So it's an extension — my personal fulfilment comes through my profession. It's like other people paint. They're artists or sculptors, that's their field, but mine is just more tangible, more exposed: thousands of people go through it, they see it ... and I'm not being blasé, but it is, it's me, that is me, it's very much part of my life, that's my character.

Jess has been an educator of note, touching the lives of innumerable learners, students and colleagues. She describes her greatest achievement and thus echoes the ideals and experiences of countless women:

**There are no great things, like climbing mountains, writing books or obtaining academic qualifications, but I managed to maintain a happy marriage of forty years, leading a meaningful life and to rear well-balanced, happy and motivated children.**

◆ Concluding remarks

The general experience of success in their chosen careers has given the participants great satisfaction. They are able to feel they have achieved much in their work and do not regret having chosen these professional careers.

#### **5.4.4 Coda and closing section, using elements of thematic material: last period and later life-work**

##### **5.4.4.1 *Enjoyment of success and life satisfaction***

The participants represent a body of people who have done very well in their careers and feel fortunate and blessed with their present family life. They are financially comfortable, live in good neighbourhoods and enjoy good health apart from minor to less serious irritations. They are respected and well-liked in their communities and in the social circles with whom they associate. The eight who are still working full-time or part-time are enjoying the degree of success they are presently experiencing, as well as the ability to work with well-matured knowledge of their disciplines. **Their circumstances are the result of exceptionally hard and dedicated work, done with whole-hearted enthusiasm and commitment, both in career and in family life.**

Their success has not made them swollen-headed, but grateful for the opportunities they have had for success and for overcoming obstacles.

The responses of these exceptional people may be reduced to the following essentials, expressed by Henri in a retrospective view of his own personal and career success:

- ◆ The circumstances they have experienced have been **the opportunity to work enthusiastically within the blessings they have been given**. If he looks at a beggar, he thinks "There, but for the grace of God, go I". Becoming haughty, self-satisfied and nonchalant would be extremely inappropriate. He has observed friends and colleagues that have been successful and has come to the conclusion that they have **exceptional talent for balancing the important aspects of their lives**.
- ◆ He has also observed those who have been devastated by want and unsuccessful relationships and has come to the conclusion that this is due to **poor and inappropriate life management**.
- ◆ His attitude towards accomplishment and having an honourable reputation is that this is **the result of having worked with commitment towards these goals**.

According to Steven the achievement in any creative profession is the attainment of a vision, that of fulfilling the depth of one's initiative:

My achievement is to be adaptable, to be moulded in the client's brief, to live the dream with the client and to fulfil the need of the dormus or the environment of the occupation ... to reach that level where I'm plastic. (Cf adaptability 2.11.6)

#### **5.4.4.2 *Tapering off, scaling down and retirement***

Eight of the twelve participants who are **still very active in their fields of expertise hope to continue for years to come as this affords them a sense of still being needed**. They hope to taper off somewhat as they get older, but intend to be involved with their fields of expertise in

advisory or consultancy capacities when the time comes to think of retirement. The four who have retired are **actively involved with their families, community service and with projects related to their careers. They are so busy “that they don’t know where they ever found time to go to work”**. Jess does freelance editing work, goes to Bible study and spends time at a home for disabled adults, feeling that one has to stay busy otherwise one would get depressed and lonely. Henri manages a holiday time-share, apart from involvement with church committees and his grandchildren’s schools. Although Donald is officially retired, his time is extremely well-occupied with freelance work, doing enrichment courses and occasional radio work on education. Inneke has retired, enjoying more time for her research, mentoring and writing scientific articles. A major project, writing a guide for the identification of the mammals of Africa for the last 30 000 years, is an exciting prospect.

Once more Steven is somewhat lateral in his approach. Asked about future plans for retirement, he commented:

Retirement is not ... an option. It’s a dirty word created by the Americans post Second World War, that they had to employ veterans returning from the war. That’s where it originated and they had to lay off work force over 55 to accommodate the returning veterans and that started spreading from America and it’s totally against my grain, due to the fact that only at the age of 55, 60 you have attained a level of expertise that is not achievable prior to that age. I believe, that’s my opinion, that you are only growing, that you can talk and speak with authority.... That is my attitude — I think I’ll die on the job!

#### **5.4.4.3      *Continued striving for ideals and lifelong learning***

**Keeping up with developments in their fields and life-long learning is a part of what the participants feel keeps their minds alert. They are all very much involved with reading, either in connection with their disciplines, enjoying good literature or expanding their general knowledge.** Travel has been important to each and they are able to converse in a well-informed way about a wide variety of topics, yet never imparting the idea “that they know it all”. They are good listeners, enjoying accounts of the experiences and opinions of others and are always willing to learn from someone else. Their interest in and co-operation with this study has been remarkable.

Continued growth is the general experience of the participants. What they experience is gladness in being more able to choose in which directions they want to use their time and energy. Although four have officially retired from their chosen professions, they are now able to use their experience and knowledge in other directions where they feel needed and are also able to be managers regarding areas where they have perceived a need for their services.

## 5.5 LIFE SKILLS FOR DUAL CAREER COUPLES

The dual career couple is a prominent feature of contemporary work life, as was extensively discussed in chapter 2. Few families can afford to live on the salary of a husband only and secondly, the adult of today has realised that women are willing and able to be counted as intellectually competent in the professional career domain (cf women and work 2.7). **A stable home is in most instances a prerequisite for maximum success and productivity at work. Interestingly, the fact that life skills needed to cope with dual career development emerged strongly from this study (cf 2.9).** Unless there is consultation about the logistics of long-term management and everyday coping, the pressures and intricacies involved will take their toll on work productivity and on the family.

**The family and career scene has changed in many ways (cf emerging life patterns 2.8.5), but the need for affiliation and of belonging to a family has not.** The children are not the only victims of a broken marriage; the husband and wife, the immediate and the extended family all lose a major part of what makes living worthwhile if circumstances are not conducive to a sense of harmony and unity, imparting the experience of belonging and caring to the daily activities of all concerned. Csikszentmihalyi (1990:179) states that, apart from religious and psychological recommendations, **monogamous marriages have taken on new meaning in technological societies: that of being a financially more stable, viable and convenient arrangement in a money-based economy.** Nevertheless, people enter into relationships without the maturity and strength to maintain them. The most constant relationships require the most constant emotional and effective management deposits, with clearly stated and communicated expectations regarding goals (Covey 1992:185-189).

“If one decides to accept the traditional form of the family, complete with a monogamous marriage, and with a close involvement, with children, with relatives, and with the community, it is important to consider beforehand how family life can be turned into a flow activity” (optimal experience). When this is not done, “boredom and frustration will inevitably set in and then the relationship is likely to break up unless there are strong external factors keeping it together”. This would include deciding on long-term goals and short-term objective. The family should be differentiated (where each person is encouraged to develop his/her own traits and skills) and integrated (where what happens to each person will affect all the others). “Unless there are goals that the whole family is willing to share, it is almost impossible for its members to be physically together, let alone involved in an enjoyable joint activity”. For this, feedback and the balancing of challenges and skills are necessary for enjoying social relationships in general and family life in particular (Csikszentmihalyi 1990:180-181; cf dual career family 2.9)

Creating an equal and viable partnership today needs **coping and negotiating ‘couple and team skills’** which have not been an instituted feature of education curricula on a regular basis. Couples need to relearn old patterns of behaviour to be able to build a lasting relationship (Tessina & Smith 1993:vii -1, emphasis added). Peck (1990:108-109) is convinced that there needs to be differentiation in normal domestic roles of spouses, with an efficient division of labour between them. When roles are switched at times, it adds spice and variety to their marriage, but also has a far more important function: that of diminishing their mutual dependency, which he sees as ‘anti-love’. In a sense, each spouse is then training him-/herself for survival in the event of the loss of the other. If this is not done, the marriage actually becomes more of a trap than a viable team. **It has been repeatedly proven in the field of mental health, that “a good marriage can exist only between two strong and independent people”** (Peck 1990:110). Covey (1992) emphasises repeatedly that **interdependence as a team** is a far superior value than dependence, with self-control being a prerequisite for being able to work with others: **“You can’t be successful with other people if you haven’t paid the price of success with yourself”** (Covey 1992:185, emphasis added).

A number of themes emerged clearly from the interviews regarding life skills for dual career development. **The first main theme is that the family should function as a team in general,**

**and in particular with husband and wife, the father and mother, the main players in this team.** Possibly it could be stated that the husband and wife are the manager and captain of the team, functioning together in different roles to enable the whole team to play their own necessary and unique positions in the game, everyone being as important as everyone else.

The **second main theme** that has emerged is that **role boundaries have become more diffuse, divided and shared more equally between partners and team members.** Even small children have a function, being that they create the need for ‘togetherness’ and team work from the day of conception. Bigger children are able to assist with household duties, but their role as creators of this need of belonging is never lost, even when they in turn are parents and have their own children.

**The participants have been through the ‘cultural revolution’ of a dual career marriage in the second half of the twentieth century: as young adults with their own professional careers, then as married couples with children, and then as older couples having to cope with the new roles which have appeared for the majority of families today.** The marriages of ten of the twelve participants have not only survived, but have thrived, bringing a sense of stability, continuation and unity to all concerned. The two participants who were divorced were included for many reasons, one being that they are able to look back and to say what they “should rather have done” to save their marriages and to have saved all concerned a great deal of pain. They are both hoping to get married to other spouses again in the near future..

The belief that different points of view may be discussed democratically and a compromise reached is the opinion of Elmar, Franz and Hans. This is as important in the home as it is in the office, with no one person being right all the time. Marriage partners should try to understand each other’s aspirations and strive to accommodate them by tactful open discussion. Home tasks need re-division when the wife works in a career and a husband can share in home duties. Likewise, Elke feels that a woman also wants to contribute financially to the viability and opportunities for both the parents and for the children. Sharing some of the duties could lead to a greater sharing of the pleasures of life.

Franz has experienced that he and his wife share many open-hearted discussions while preparing for their frequent guests and while cleaning up afterwards. He has demonstrated that he 'walks his talk' when his wife wanted to complete a management course and was a student again for three years after their children had completed their studies. Again his motto of doing a thing well and completing it was needed for this period where extra pressure was placed on their relationship as partners in marriage, feeling that it was now her turn to be supported fully. Their teamwork as partners has been a guiding force to their family and he advises all husbands to learn to be able to do many things in the kitchen, as this is a place for very open and honest communication. He believes that making time for marriage partners to be alone for 'dates with each other' is also important and therefore they often look after their two grandsons at present, to enable their daughters to enjoy relaxed times alone with their husbands.

Hans and Susan found that they learnt to work as a team when they were living in Germany for the first time with Hans' research. The three children were small and they had only each other to talk to. This brought them very much closer together and taught them much more about team work, which is still a binding force in their relationship. Hans had learnt this from his father, who did not have the opinion that certain tasks were 'masculine' and others were 'feminine' and who regularly helped with household chores in spite of a busy legal career. Hans could actually iron clothes as well as his mother could. The sorting out of these roles needs to be discussed in great detail, as he and Susan had done before the decision for her to stop working full-time when their first son was on the way. Susan believes, however, that she should have kept her contacts with her former office going more actively, which would have meant more for her part-time practice at home. She feels it is important for a professional woman with a career to have continued contact with her field of expertise, as losing this know-how would lead to frustration and a sense of having wasted one's training.

For Henri the question of working as a family team has no workable alternative. As the only family in this study with four children, his opinion has been put to the test in many ways. His wife gave up her vocation as a radiologist, but this background helped her to manage a busy schedule in a disciplined way and to help the children with doing well at school, as well as fulfilling many duties at one stage as a school principal's wife. Today these four children all have professional careers in their own right. Marriage partners need to complement each other's roles, discussing

every aspect of their lives. The emotional health of the marriage and of the family should be placed above all else. No one should dominate the scene or could possibly have all the answers and the chances of being right as a team are much greater than when one is alone. A balanced couple is much more able to support one another in “dark times and when the river is at a low level” — careerwise and emotionally. No matter how busy each one is, the home and the family are always the core of personal relationships and a safe haven for everyone.

Both Franz and Elmar mentioned that their families held very open family discussions from time to time. As mentioned, Elmar had stipulated times and agendas for discussions of topics. Hans and Franz feel that their children learnt to formulate opinions and ask questions when they did not agree with their parents’ ideas, teaching them to argue a point and to think independently and contemplate various angles of a matter.

Elke has studied and written about dual career marriage extensively. **She feels that women have fought to be co-breadwinner and now that they have equal rights in many ways, they are unsure of how to handle all situations. The family of the working woman, according to Elke, should either accept lowered standards in some respects, such as the luxury of meals when they walk in or a spotless house, they also needs to pitch in and help.** This compromise of making meals together and sharing responsibilities for the cleanliness of the house can be a binding factor as a team effort. What has been an unexpected advantage of the family with a working mother, is that fathers have found that they reap rich rewards by being much more involved with their children’s activities (literally from seeing the first sonar of the baby, according to Alette). Time spent fetching children from extra-mural activities has proven to be extra time for communication, according to Hans and Susan.

According to Elke, a woman choosing to work from home on a freelance basis when her children are small, can have the best of both worlds, even if she would possibly earn less. A separate office is essential for maintaining privacy and working hours. This also applies to the man who would like his office at home and who wants to run his career on his own, as many professionals are doing at present. **Women also need to let go of the ‘superwoman ideal’, as a working mother cannot be excellent in all aspects of her home duties. Perhaps four of her five roles in this regard will be good, but compromises will have to be made. Young people, such as**

her own, need to be and are more aware of the realities of their futures as marriage partners. They may not have the insight and emotional maturity before they get married, but would do well to communicate with others who have been through the process already.

According to Elke, what families need to do urgently is that women need to pool their resources, skills and capabilities on a much more organised basis. Women who are good with children may start a play group and lift clubs could be useful. **The lack of working together has been a weakness with groups of women since the industrial revolution and if the women of an area were able to work on a more united front, there could be greater team work by the women of a residential area or a church.** Possibly the most striking statement Elke makes in reference to the new career expectations, is that **employers will have to rethink their approach to the role of mothers in the work place. Women have been given a biological role to play in bearing children and this fact cannot be changed. That children need to grow up in a caring and nurtured home, can also not be altered. Society should stop saying to a working woman that “she wanted to have children, now she has to pay the price for ever for caring for them in the years they take to grow up”.** **Employers need to take the ‘soft-line personal facts’ into consideration when making appointments and giving support to employees with their roles as parents.**

Greater attention needs to be paid to how mothers with small and school-going children can be helped to fulfil the vital role that nature has given them, without being penalised entirely for times when they need to be with them, such as when they are ill. The electronic media have a substantial role to play in developments for working at home at times. The ‘multi-tasking’ roles of both parents needs to be accommodated fully by modern society. Women should stand together to let employers know more of their need in this regard. A useful development in this direction is to be seen in a European country such as the Netherlands, where the father has paternity leave and where he has the choice of working a four-day week, enabling him to spend more time with his children and empowering his wife to work part-time as well. This has heightened productivity for the working days without taking too much of a toll on the family’s income. It also has the added benefit of creating more part-time jobs in the community, spreading the available money in circulation more evenly.

Another matter Elke would like to see improved is in connection with the status of teachers. While society does not even hold the teaching profession in very high esteem, it is still expected that teachers should fulfil many educational roles at the same time as doing their basic work. Their remuneration is also not in line with what society expects from them. The question of reaching more young people with the ideals of society may best be done by **well-qualified, well-paid and highly motivated teachers** who teach not only subject matter, but ensure that vital life skills are brought to the attention of every child. Parents have a deeply responsible role to play in creating the circumstances for this to happen and this should be part of what needs to be considered before couples make a commitment towards a marriage with children.

**Inneke's husband has a calm, friendly, helpful manner which has made many things possible for them both — to excel in their careers, as well as being able to cope with housework and a spacious garden without outside help. Inneke feels most indebted to her mother-in-law for having taught her sons to help with housework.** They share many duties and things needing to be done are done by whoever is available. Her husband would start vacuum-cleaning and dusting in the front of the house and she at the back, and when they get together she does the kitchen and he does the verandas. Their attitude towards their marriage is, among other things, that the more one allows the other one freedom to develop their aspirations and potential, the closer they become as partners.

According to Jess's experience **marriage partners should be interested in, involved with and supportive of each other's career** as far as is possible. While each one has his/her own career path, you cannot have two completely separate agendas and expect the other one to understand the dedicated work in his/her own career world. **Discussing their various expectations of the day at breakfast and the ensuing experiences at the supper table has proven very constructive to their family.** They have become so skilled at this form of communication that their grown-up children are now more like best friends, with the grandchildren now joining in the conversation. Another binding factor is that she and her husband, Elmar, have often taken part in sport together. Elmar has found that, while there are not many women in the chemical scientific field he works in, he has observed that women are as able as men to occupy managerial positions.

Steven found that marriage partners both having their own professions is an advantage. His wife, presently his ex-wife and best friend, who was in the travel industry and self-employed, also felt that this made her more understanding of his problems and he of hers. Steven states that

this just makes you more dedicated and supporting to the spouse, because you know ... you have the advantage that you can share and consult on a leisure basis, where you can actually just by-the-way mention and support would be given. It was excellent ... I think it does work extremely well, because you have the same attitude to life. It's not only 'I need this, I need that', both parents know where it comes from and that rubbed off on the children as well. They realise in life you must work for what you have and from a very early age they were convinced that was the only way to survive in life, because that's how the parents lived and it's very, very important — I believe it was definitely an advantage.

Lynne advises **young people in a dual career marriage to get their priorities in order**. She can't imagine that many marriages between two professionals can work if the one does not stand back for the other. With two doctors or gynaecologists being married, the one standing back would normally be the woman. She sees herself as being most fortunate with a husband who is willing to take second place with his career and allow her to develop hers more fully. His freelance contract work in scientific research enables him to spend more time with their three children, to work in their attractive garden and to spend time with his interest in cooking. If the woman of a dual career marriage is willing to have a smaller or part-time medical practice, for instance, it could work well, otherwise the marriage partners would become estranged. Their team work has made it possible for her to specialise and to have a fairly large and successful practice. The fact that she has associates in her practice and that they go away in their caravan for weekends, gives them more time to spend with each other and their families.

As Hans had his own career and research work when they were first married, he supported Susan very well with completing her legal studies, understanding her involvement and not feeling threatened by her career aspirations. She recommends developing the ability to argue constructively and this they often do over meals. She might be too emotionally involved when there are serious differences of opinion, to be completely objective, but they make a point of "airing their differences in a civil way". The conversation at supper is a high point in their day With their children growing up in a highly competitive and unsympathetic world, they should also learn to be a bit more "streetwise" than what she and her siblings had been, allowing the two high

school boys some freedom to test their skills. They also feel they should learn to be able to assert themselves in a composed way. She recommends that her grade eight daughter should one day choose a profession which she could do part-time at home if at all possible and speaks to her sons about thinking of this when they choose wives somewhere in the future. If not, their children would have to be in day care or, if they live nearby, she could look after them.

Having been through the mill of an unsuccessful marriage herself, Alette has made a study of **what it takes to succeed in this most important human relationship and is highly successful in changing people's perceptions of the basics of marital happiness. Many people, and especially men, have been surprised at how simple it could actually be.** She cites Chapman (1995) whose advice on how to express heartfelt commitment to a partner has been an eye-opener for many unhappy couples. This approach can be summed up in what Chapman calls the five languages of love, being **basic needs for effective communication in a marriage.** Alette stresses that these aspects are needed to be fine-tuned where there is the added complication of a dual career marriage:

The 'languages' are:

- ① Service: doing things for each other.
- ② Quality time: doing things together.
- ③ Words of recognition: saying thank you, giving compliments and using terms of endearment.
- ④ Affection, physical touching.
- ⑤ Gifts: any surprises, small tokens, cards.

**In a good relationship all five are present, regularly and from both sides.** Not one of the five can be left out; but the most important thing is that every human being has a primary and a secondary need, which have to be fulfilled every day. Couples wishing to have a happy marriage should learn what each other's primary needs are and set themselves the task of fulfilling these. **In this way marriage partners give each other emotional nourishment and there is no sense of emotional hunger and a feeling of deprivation. This approach also effectively closes the communication gap and there is no need for overreaction when people feel denied any one**

**of these basic needs.** The needs may differ from one person to another and normally differ for men and for women, but these strategies are also the basis of other relationships, such as with children and with friends. These 'rules' for living together in harmony are good for psychological and spiritual well-being and then physical health normally follows. In a dual career marriage a great deal of emotional maturity and cognitive understanding of the five principles mentioned is needed to help with a smoothly running daily life-style. Giving each other room for their own development and understanding each other's ideals is what makes marriage and family obligations easier to live with.

Alette has learnt a great deal of how a contemporary marriage can work from her medical specialist daughter and engineer son-in-law who are living in Australia. **She summarises her observations of their successful approach as following:**

**Both have an easy-going method of dealing with whatever has to be done and the first one home does what is needed in the line of caring for the children and with household tasks, whether it be doing the washing, cooking or cleaning, giving medicine and making do with very little outside help.**

Donald has made specific **suggestions for married couples** based on his training in educational psychology and experience in his work:

- ◆ His idea of "**A charter of human responsibilities**" (cf 5.4.2.1.e) could be put to use in many ways to help heal a society with many adaptational problems with the economical pressure on families to have a double income. His suggestion may be taken a step further to be developed into **a charter of responsibilities towards a marriage and a family, where both partners need to survive and thrive, also in order to give their children a greater chance of reaching their own potential best.** **The concept of antenuptial counselling to decide before marriage what their responsibilities and viewpoints are, is a need that is growing more important from day to day.**
- ◆ When he refers to the longitudinal research done with people who had had responsibilities as children, he stresses again that the people who had had more successful careers and

marriages and were more healthy in later life had been the children with more responsibilities at home (cf 5.4.2.1.e)

- ◆ He also stresses that children should learn whole-brain development, incorporating their male and female characteristics in order to be creative, functional, as well as both strong and tender when needed. His family's strength of listening to each other has been a life-long support mechanism.
- ◆ Disciplined boundaries, concerning time and activities, are essential for children to know that they are loved and that parents want them to function safely and in an orderly fashion in society. Rules such as time for study and sleeping will be tested from time to time, but in a loving home this will also be handled with respect for each other.
- ◆ Husbands and wives who can do each other's home duties find this a creative way of functioning, also learning to function when one partner is ill or away, even if one partner should fall away.
- ◆ Deciding on the financial aspects of what is really needed and what are luxuries when children are small, should be done very honestly, with the mother preferably doing a part-time work if really necessary.
- ◆ Discussing disobedience and problems of behaviour with children when they are old enough to understand, is superior to a spanking, but should be done in a democratic way. A smack when they are too small to understand, is still within reasonable limits of discipline.
- ◆ If children only get love and attention when they are ill, this bodes trouble. Love and attention should be a part of their daily life.
- ◆ Young adults need to know that no education is ever wasted and especially so for tertiary education.

## 5.6 GENERAL LIFE SKILLS

It might seem that the participants' success came naturally. However, the data revealed that **they did have a definite 'plan of action' and thoughtfully and carefully co-ordinated their personal and professional ideals**. A concise overview of the key elements of life skills this group of participants has revealed, is deduced as the following clusters of pointers:

### Religion

- ◆ A sense of purpose and continuity in the whole of creation is the most powerful spiritual empowerment (cf 5.4.1.2, 5.4.3.2).

### Emotional self-care

- ◆ Having a positive self-concept is important in forming good relationships with other people (cf background 5.4.1.1). 'Self talk' is an effective way of being one's own best friend and is part of a human being's responsibility towards him/herself, just as important as accepting one's weaknesses and celebrating one's strengths (cf 5.4.2.2).
- ◆ Self-assertiveness without damaging relationships is important.
- ◆ Letting emotions flow at times is an important safety valve, as well as being tender when needed. These are not signs of weakness in a man. Being able to do so-called masculine tasks is often needed if a woman is to function well in a career as well as at home.
- ◆ Being humble and trustworthy are generally characteristics of people who have made a mark in life.
- ◆ Being able to discuss family and work matters in a composed way and from various informed angles is a key skill.

- ◆ Being successful is often dependent on inner motivation to succeed against the odds. The will to succeed is fundamental, as is the ability towards self-discipline.

### **Emotional care of others**

- ◆ Building the confidence of other people and helping them grow is a highly creative and very challenging action and is as important as striving towards one's own growth. Words of encouragement are life-lines.
- ◆ Treating others tactfully and as if they are going to be important in future is vital. Juniors may be future leaders. People who have different ideas may be the innovators of the years to come.
- ◆ Human warmth is often regarded more highly than professional expertise. Certainly a combination of the two is a winning formula (cf empowering 5.4.2.1.a & b).
- ◆ Learning to listen to what people say is a key skill. Solving differences through diplomacy and tact and in a constructive manner is a win-win situation (cf 2.10.13).
- ◆ Acknowledging mistakes in a gracious manner builds good relationships as well as self-esteem.
- ◆ Having empathy with others and being kind, gentle, tactful and perceptive are powerful tools for all-round growth in a world where there is far too little of these characteristics. This also goes for criticism.
- ◆ Allowing others freedom to follow their dreams and to have their own opinions, adults as well as children, may be difficult, but rewarding in the long run.
- ◆ Voicing their opinions in a self-controlled manner within the sheltered atmosphere of home discussions may be a very important empowerment for children to be self-assertive in their future highly competitive career situations.

## **Family and marriage**

- ◆ The family is the most important relationship for all concerned over the lifespan — an earthly anchor in life and a microcosm of the rest of the world (cf 5.4.1.1 and 5.4.3.1.a).
- ◆ The ability to work as a team of equal partners is essential to the success of a contemporary marriage, each contributing various strengths to the team (cf 5.6).
- ◆ In-depth discussions of expectancies is vital before marriage and parenthood. This would include discussing the pros and cons of the careers of the marriage partners and anticipating how to deal with them if and when they occur.
- ◆ Learning the ‘languages of love’ is fundamental to a happy and enduring marriage partnership.
- ◆ Parenting skills are of foremost importance in raising children to be able to cope with life which has become highly competitive and stressful. Including the immediate family in these shared obligations is empowering to all concerned and strengthens ties between people.
- ◆ Joining in and switching duties by marriage partners is fun and makes life more interesting. These abilities may also be needed when there is illness, absence or even death.
- ◆ Accepting that most families need a dual career income is a reality of modern life. Not only does this promote financial survival, but has the additional advantage of enabling the wife to share in the responsibilities of the family’s financial obligations and contributes to her self-esteem.
- ◆ Most contemporary men enjoy being more involved with their children.
- ◆ Families may have to join in and help more if they would like to share in the advantages of a second income or a mother who follows her career ideals.

- ◆ It needs to be accepted that both men and women/boys and girls do have career aspirations and ideals; also that they may have excellent potential in an area which might be out of the ordinary.
- ◆ Men with a positive self-image need not feel threatened by the career success of their wives. This attitude can contribute extensively to strengthened feelings of team durability. It also gives the family additional freedom to enjoy the privileges of the woman's success and allows the husband to enjoy greater freedom to be creative.

### **Education**

- ◆ Getting the best formal education one can afford is a good starting point for any career (cf 5.4.1.3b).
- ◆ When educating or training others, remember that the human being behind the subject matter is more important than content.
- ◆ There are many ways of overcoming problems such as not having money for full-time study (cf 5.4.1.1.c). By careful observation of what prominent or exemplary people do, many useful habits can be learnt.
- ◆ Being well-read is virtually as important as having excellent opportunities for education. A wide general knowledge is often vital for linking the detail to the bigger picture (cf 5.4.1.3.c).
- ◆ No education is ever wasted, even useful in lateral career moves and 'branching out' or for changes of direction which may not be envisaged at the start of a career.
- ◆ Many of the most important life skills can be taught free-of-charge by parents (cf 5.4.1.1.a).

- ◆ One can learn useful information and skills from every person, old and young, and every subject — even from mistakes of other people and subjects seemingly unimportant.
- ◆ School subjects taken should provide a wide range of basic skills. Being multifaceted in one's development (multitasking) offers many unexpected routes for extending one's career possibilities. Knowing a few languages is a decided advantage, as well as being able to communicate well.
- ◆ Learning perseverance through studies, sport and hobbies will be a fundamental personality enrichment and essential tool for career success.

### **Responsibility**

- ◆ Working on having a sense of responsibility is a most meaningful life skill. Success in all domains is dependent on this characteristic (cf 5.4.2.1.e).
- ◆ Time management, order and self-discipline can be learnt from childhood and gives people more of a sense of control over their lives.
- ◆ It is essential for children to learn small responsibilities at an early age. This should be seen as building character strength for indispensable future use.
- ◆ Working with well-defined aims, goals and objectives in mind may be guiding forces to progress (cf motivation 5.4.2.1 a).
- ◆ Society needs to be more aware of the essential role of motherhood/family responsibilities. An employee worried about children or parents who are ill is not optimally productive. Biologically women make a large contribution towards building a nation and should not be penalised for this.
- ◆ While men are able to focus very well on a task at hand, employers should also accept that most women are more likely to work harder and more conscientiously than some of their

male colleagues, in spite of being seemingly most involved with their children's well-being. They are also emotionally more involved in their dealings with people and are more able to deal with many things at the same time. This sense of responsibility and human connectedness should be accepted, appreciated and acknowledged as a superior team strength.

### **Work ethic**

- ◆ Being successful in a career normally means being willing to work extremely hard and thoroughly (cf 5.4.2.1.b). There are many opportunities for people willing to do so. Extraordinary success most often correlates with extra-ordinary input.
- ◆ Competence, diligence, enthusiasm, trustworthiness and stability may sometimes be found between the lines in educational situations, such as observing people who have these characteristics (cf 5.4.2.1.a & b).
- ◆ Doing far more than one's basic duty pays long-term dividends. Doing things as well as one possibly can should be the criterium/rule of thumb (cf hard work 5.4.2.1.b).
- ◆ Attention to detail is most important (cf thoroughness 5.4.2.1.b).
- ◆ Being able to focus well is of cardinal importance. This is easier for men, but the ability of women to do many things at the same time is also an advantage. A team built of both these varying strengths has a head start.
- ◆ Make sure that one knows, as far as is possible, all there is to know about a profession/career/job before compromising oneself.
- ◆ Career choices should correspond to realities (cf 5.4.2.1.a).
- ◆ Duties that need to be done, should be done by whoever is available. If one doesn't know how, one finds out.

- ◆ Opportunities for real progress do not come by themselves; one has to work for them and sometimes create them.
- ◆ Experience obtained in part-time work at school, during university holidays or when starting out in the career world may often be invaluable with later professional careers, as knowledge gained is frequently transferable to seemingly unrelated areas of work (cf 5.4.1.3.b & c). Knowledge of the world of business is needed for most professions .
- ◆ One needs to be able to work in a team. In the 21st century staying completely on one's own throughout one's career will not be a viable option.
- ◆ A masculine work ethic tends to be "Work is of critical importance and the family is most important as well". Women tend to have a work ethic of "The family is of supreme importance and work is extremely important as well".

### **Balance**

- ◆ Balance between private and public success is what makes both worthwhile. Time invested in both in equal measure is the best investment one can make (cf 5.4.1.3.a).
- ◆ Scheduling time for leisure is similar to reloading a battery (cf 5.4.2.1.c).
- ◆ Willingness to let differences be, is sometimes wiser than insisting on immediate solutions or compromise.
- ◆ Thorough work is effective; perfectionism may be counterproductive.
- ◆ Working for an institution or freelance both have advantages and disadvantages: one should make sure to know what the facts are. The corporate world has certain forms of security, but freelance working has more flexible time.
- ◆ Good ability to work with other people is most often just as important as being skilful in one's professional abilities (cf 5.4.3.1.b).

**Health**

- ◆ Mental and physical health are most often related to a lifestyle choice.
- ◆ Lifestyle choices need to be informed choices. Knowing what is healthy, such as eating habits and what is detrimental are of crucial importance. The use of medication and alcohol may be good in moderation, while there is no advantage to smoking and there are many dangers.
- ◆ Knowing stress-relieving skills is vital for good health.
- ◆ Being fit and taking part in exercise is most important and is an investment.
- ◆ Learning teamwork strategies for marriage and career strengths may be one of the biggest advantages of sport.
- ◆ Doing life-activities in moderation allows one freedom to partake in many activities without excesses.

**Dealing with crises and setbacks**

- ◆ Coming from a 'difficult' home background is not a life sentence, but can be used as an excellent motivator for developing superior skills. Even being fairly average as a learner or student does not mean that career excellence may not be achieved through sheer dedication and diligence.
- ◆ Overcoming difficulties has been an adventurous and challenging experience for many successful people. The resultant resilience is a characteristic which bodes well for added inner strength and confidence.

- ◆ Having parents who are not well-educated need not be a setback for success in any career. There may be many excellent skills to be learnt from so-called 'less-educated' parents, family and friends.
- ◆ Crises and setbacks are normal occurrences in life and should be 'managed' and dealt with constructively, not treated as out of the ordinary. Tackling problems head-on and with a positive frame of mind is emotionally empowering.
- ◆ Mistakes are learning opportunities and happen to all normal people. Acknowledging them as such is an opportunity for growth and improving human relationships.
- ◆ Becoming involved in helping others does wonders for one's own psychological frame of mind.
- ◆ Many of the people one comes across with a most positive outlook on life have had extremely difficult hazards to overcome and have turned their lives around by a constructive mind set.
- ◆ Staying out of the way of difficult people is a good coping mechanism.
- ◆ Accepting the occupational hazards of certain careers in a positive manner and coping with them is an superb survival tool.

### **Lifelong growth and learning**

- ◆ Lifelong learning and continuous growth are exciting prospects, intimately involved with a sense of wonder.
- ◆ Ideals for post-retirement give meaning to life and make this period something to look forward to, not to be feared.

◆ Concluding remarks

Learning to become socially adept and professionally skilled are two sides of the same coin. No person is excluded from the need for skills to prosper in both domains of human existence. The research participants have reaffirmed that the two terrains of professional and personal success are comparable to the two sides of a balancing scale.

## 5.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented basic characteristics and background data on the research participants as revealed in the demographic data and during the interviews. Key thematic areas identified were discussed in depth with six professional men and six professional women between 45 and 65 years of age. Their experiences and emotional involvement and perceptions were plumbed and examined from various angles. The last chapter will conclude with a synthesis of significant themes, the implications for educational provision and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER 6

### SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS, GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL PROVISION AND CONCLUSIONS

*The skills necessary to become good athletes, dancers, or connoisseurs of sights, sounds, or tastes are so demanding that one individual does not have enough psychic energy in his waking lifetime to master more than a few. But it is certainly possible to find delight in what (can be done).*

Csikszentmihalyi (1990:116)

*What knowledge is of most worth?*

Herbert Spencer (1859)

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has investigated the personal skills which enhance professional career success apart from professional expertise and ability. The investigation has encompassed exploring the life skills which may empower people in both the spheres of their public and private domains with a view to making recommendations for life skills education. Incisive changes in the world of work during the last decades have created new challenges with regard to career preparation in order to function competently within a professional capacity while maintaining a balanced lifestyle (cf career changes 1.1, 2.4 and 3.5). Moreover, school leavers require skills to make several career changes as well as having the competence to survive if they should wish to be self-employed (cf 2.8 & 10). Professionals require a wide palette of skills for career success and individual and social competence. As marriage partners and parents, professionals also require skills for the effective fulfilment of these highly important roles while simultaneously maintaining intensive involvement in their career development (cf 2.9).

##### 6.1.1 Overview of the investigation

In this section, an overview of the foregoing study is presented in the light of the research problem set forth in 1.2.

During the 20th century radical changes took place in the world of work (cf 1.1). The second half of the century saw, not only the increased contributions of women, but the advent of personal computers and the cyber-world of information technology, changing the thought and behaviour patterns in the developed world (cf 1.1). Apart from new skills and combinations of skills needed to function effectively (Nijhof & Streumer 1998:12; Pretorius 1998:xi), there are also imperatives for working successfully with people in all the relationships in a person's life, which Goleman (1995:36) calls emotional intelligence. This he sees as the meta-ability by which the other skills may be utilised. These requirements place immense pressure on education to be both wide in its scope to provide a general development of the human being, as well as significantly relevant so as to provide the learner with the skills to be able to thrive in a career as the public domain, as well as in a family as the private domain (cf 1.1.1&3). Life skills learnt would require development in a three-fold structure of competence: individual, professional and social (Achtenhagen 1998:138). A further requirement has emerged, being that people are compelled to be adaptable in order to be competent, not only in one field of expertise, but able to adapt to the fast-changing situation with the advances of contemporary technology and the demands of working environments.

Professional careers have had more than two thousand years of development (cf 2.3). The concept of what constitutes success has many facets. Discussions of various aspects of success, characteristics and risks associated with professional success were central to this study (cf 2.5). Many new vocations have begun to be recognised as professions. The last century has seen the entry of more women into these vocations, as the life-world of men and women in developed countries and of the family have changed significantly during this period. The changing perspectives regarding male and female identity, theories for motivation and aspects of changing gender roles for career and personal behaviours have had incisive implications for career behaviour across the life-span (2.6, 2.7 and 2.8). New patterns of behaviour have been emerging and it was seen as necessary to investigate various characteristics of behaviour in the dual career family (cf 2.9), as well as to examine factors contributing to career success and those detrimental to success (cf 2.9 and 2.10). Existing theories and career expectations for the future have changed dramatically within the last decade and have disclosed the imperative that people should be able to adapt to various careers within their professional development, accommodating not only the new technologies, but also changed essentials of familiar professional obligations and

longer life-expectancy. Concepts such as 'downsizing', 'jobshift', life-long learning and self-employment have impacted strongly on the realities of the nature of work at the beginning of the 21st century (cf 2.12 and 2.13).

Among a myriad of new vocations, the development of the traditional professions has expanded to encompass the new developments, making it compulsory to know the skills to both survive and to thrive. This means having the life skills as career intelligence and for being attuned to the personal worlds of people (Moses 1998:xv), which has been viewed as a **life chance approach**. Skills for being able to plan and manage one's future need to be dealt with in order to be able to set realistic goals and ways to achieve them (cf 3.4). Domains for learning these life skills and settings for where they may be learnt, more specifically in a South African community, were seen as indispensable for this investigation (3.4.7 and 3.4.8). A further examination of the specific skills needed for future success was required and the accommodation of life skills in the structure of Curriculum 2005 was probed, where the terminology of 'life orientation' has been used (3.5 and 3.6).

The main thrust of this research was the qualitative investigation into the experiences of successful professionals. This was discussed in a prevalent classical musical construction plan, that of Sonata Form, with the main themes in their lives organised into categories (cf diagram 2, 5.1.2). This allowed for division of the discussions into classifications pertaining to their backgrounds, value systems and education (cf 5.1-3). Their professional development was organised into various themes, such as motivation, work ethic, responsibilities and time management (cf 5.4.2.1 and 5.4.2.2). Obstacles, risks and weaknesses were examined as growth experiences (cf 5.4.2.3) and the concept of resilience explored (cf 5.4.2.4) Their experience of the culminating periods of their success and their contemplations of the reasons for doing their work in a dedicated, disciplined and orderly way needed to be analysed (cf 5.4.3), as well as their understanding of responsibilities towards their nuclear and extended families, their communities and their vocations (cf 5.4.3.1 and 5.4.3.2). With a view to greater understanding of the period of later life-work and retirement, it was seen as necessary to contemplate various aspects of these concepts, as well as their plans for future development and career or family/community involvement (cf 5.4.4).

Because the dual career couple has emerged as an important theme of this research, the life-world of the family of which both the husband and wife, father and mother were working, needed to be examined and the views of the research participants explored as a vital part of this research. The interface between work and family was discussed and analysed under themes of the life skills needed for dual career couples (cf 5.5.). As a distillation of the views of the research participants towards life skills in general, their opinions were arranged as groups of pointers in the diverse areas observed. From these discussions and analyses significant findings were discussed, interlinked and arranged under theme headings (cf 5.6) to form grounded theory (cf 4.2.2.9) concerning life skills education (cf 6.2).

### **6.1.2 Organisation of the material**

The findings of the qualitative investigation presented in chapter 5 are synthesised in 6.2. This is followed by suggested recommendations for life skills education which would support and enhance the development of prospective career professionals (cf 6.3). The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research (cf 6.4) as well as a discussion of the limitations of this study (cf 6.5).

## **6.2 SYNTHESIS OF SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS**

Following the qualitative investigation done, the significant themes uncovered are synthesised and brought into relation to prior research and theory, as reviewed in the literature study presented in chapters 2 and 3. The synthesised findings are not arrived at from a mere summary of the themes discussed in chapter 5, but by scrutinising of the themes for meaningful and frequently occurring aspects, where certain rubrics have emerged. The relevant data from the various themes are then described once more in terms of identified rubrics. In this way grounded theory, being theory grounded in the data, is generated (cf 4.2.2.9).

Where this study was initiated from the belief that there was a need for more cohesive theory regarding the learning of life skills, the following conspicuous features of aspects contributing to career success emerged from the accounts given by the participants.

### 6.2.1 Facilitating childhood environment

The belief that attitudes towards work are shaped by childhood experiences and perspectives learnt in the home, was corroborated (5.4.1.1 and 5.4.1.2). Thoroughness and a work ethic of delivering the very best possible work and of finishing a task which had been begun were the foundations of the career success observed. The added facet of doing more than what was the basic duty was evident and this had been learnt from parents, mentors and role models (5.4.1.1. and 5.4.2.1.b). Eleven of the twelve participants had grown up with abundant love and support, while the twelfth one's parents were decent, hard-working people, but from whom she experienced rejection as the middle child of seven. Working with ideals in mind was what motivated the participants from the perspective of a value system which underpinned their core values, as flowing from the Christian outlook that one's life work should be of significance to others (5.4.1.2). Consequently, the lifestyles reflected a high sense of moral values, including the striving for superior standards in all involvement. Cordial and respectful relationships with people with whom a person had any dealings, whether privately or in the workplace, was unquestioned and were experienced as empowering throughout their lives. Learning from an early age that topics dealt with needed to be viewed from every possible angle, so that the full picture could be understood, was an approach common to the thinking of participants (5.4.1.2.b).

Sharing the characteristic of either early intellectual ability or being enthusiastic about a wide range of endeavours, the participants demonstrated the characteristic of doing activities with dedication (5.4.1.3). Three participants were academic "late bloomers" who fulfilled their vocations with zeal and fervour once they had discovered their *metier*. All shared the characteristic of an insatiable hunger for knowledge, not only concerning their fields of expertise, but about life in general. Reading widely was an attribute all twelve demonstrated, one which most experienced from often being read to as children, as they all came from homes where reading was a passion. Two had come from homes where voracious reading had made up for a lack of education and one did not have the opportunity for full time study, compensating by reading extensively. One participant stressed the skill he had learnt in his home of the whole family reading widely, with lively discussions of a wide range of topics being the subject of interesting debates at the dinner table (5.4.1.3.c). Three men and two women had studied with bursaries and three men and four women were able to finance themselves through loans, savings

or part time work. Four men and four women were able to study directly after school, while the others went to university later, studying through evening classes or distance education.

### **6.2.2 Career development as an evolving process: 'ladder', 'trellis' and 'patchwork' careers**

Having made their initial career choices from either a pragmatic or an idealistic point of view, the participants proceeded to work with zeal and commitment. However, few careers developed in a sequential and orderly fashion. Only one, the gynaecologist, made steady advance in her initial career choice. The others eventually ended up in related careers or in career directions only indirectly related, reaching success by circuitous routes. The literature surveyed confirms that sequential career development is not the route for the majority of professionals. Many professionals find themselves interested in new fields of expertise as they mature with consequent branching into careers which they had not foreseen when they started out. This study showed that educators may develop into experts in other fields, such as psychology, scientists may develop into managers, lawyers become tennis coaches and librarians become archeologists. People may start their own business in an area where they see a need or with opportunities presenting themselves which they had not expected with their original pursuit of interests. The career break is the normal route for women during the time of family formation, with attention to their children taking priority, especially when they are small. This often has the result that they find part-time work or work on a part-time basis from home once the children are bigger or at school.

An increasing trend is self-employment and work from home in various enterprises. This was the case with two-thirds of the people participating here. Creating various streams of income and of interest has become a viable option to full time work in one area, especially after retirement. Where part time involvement in organised work provision is the ideal situation for a mother with children, it is also to the advantage of men who have their own practice or business, who serve on advisory boards or have a short-term consultancy basis, as was the case with most participants. This can also be advantageous for retired people and would ensure that their expertise and experience is not lost to society. With the convenience of the electronic media, people may also work with greater productivity when the time travelling is eliminated or shortened.

During the 20th century, being able to 'climb the ladder of promotion' during the span of a career lifetime up to retirement has been slowly replaced by simply being able to survive the contemporary social turmoil and 're-engineering' in the world of work (Moses 1998). The contemporary situation is that the majority of professionals do not progress predictably in a given situation, but follow the route of lateral moves, compared to a trelliswork, where progress may be sideways or diagonal, sometimes staying on the same level by choice, so as to deliver high quality work as a personal aim for improvement (cf 2.4). The experience of the participants bore this out with only a third of them having made direct progress in the type of appointment they occupied when starting. Among the participants in this research only three men, the agricultural scientist, the physicist, the mathematics educator and two women, the archaeo-zoologist and gynaecologist, had moved more-or-less directly 'up the career ladder' in the professional career in which they had started. The others had started in one career and moved on to another or had gone the lateral route, reaching their present professional involvements through various related positions: the businessman/politician had progressed through various positions in both these fields; the architect had moved from being a pilot; the clinical psychologist had realised that full time motherhood was not for her as a single mother; the journalist had taken a long time to reach motherhood, but had been compelled to vary between full time employment and freelance work after economic setbacks and the lawyer had gone the route of motherhood combined with part time legal work from home. The concept of 'plateauing' in corporate structures or on a professional level, is associated with the present trend towards self-employment, consultancy and contract work, formerly mostly associated with medical, legal and architectural practice. Engineers, psychologists and computer experts, as an example, are presently moving in this freelancing direction.

### **6.2.3 Maximising potential through motivation and thoroughness**

Being motivated to do excellent work and to have positive attitudes, as discussed in 5.4.2.1.a and b, was exhibited clearly by the participants in their commitment to their vocations. This ranged from rising above difficult economic circumstances to empowering others through the work they were doing. Others were motivated by the will to know more about the essence of their fields of specialisation, by the will to create work of quality and by a feeling of triumph through improving situations into which their work led them. As they had seen their parents and role models do, they

were consistently doing not only their duty, but more than was expected of them. Their work ethic was such that they took pride in a job well done, with a 'streak of excellence' running through their career obligations. Moreover, this was seen to be the spirit in which duties towards families were fulfilled, confirming that balance between public and private success was the goal that had been set, which was consistent with the general philosophy of 'doing a thing well or not at all' (6.2.1). Through pursuing the aims of hard work and thoroughness, the participants were observed to persevere until the goals they had set themselves were reached, preferably reaching more than what they had set out to do. One participant, the physicist, said that he had noticed that he had consistently done more work than his colleagues throughout his career.

Another point of shared vitality was the fact that they invariably kept up with developments in their fields, working with focused attention on their responsibilities and never losing sight of their goals, which included improving circumstances for the environment around them, including those of humans, animals and of nature. The question of a value judgement by participants of whether a matter was honest, kind or ethical was evident in the interviews (5.4.1.2.b), as was the matter of being dependable and trustworthy. The question of self-discipline was highly evident in the interviews, with the ultimate deduction that the more self-discipline was practised, the better a person became at doing it (5.4.2.1.b).

The aspect of time management was a facet regarding which two participants expressed the wish that they would have liked to have been more successful (5.4.2.1.c). The majority said that they were adequate with time management, but that it had only come about as a result of definite planning and conscious effort. Time management was seen as an aspect of the greater panorama of general state management, which was experienced as being able to cope with their lives, including both the blessings and the misfortunes. The men expressed the view, mostly in indirect terms, that they were concerned about being able to maintain a balance between devotion to their work and also to their families, while the majority of women expressed their concern that they were so involved in family matters, that they often consciously had to make enough time for work. Both men and women were aware that both commitments had to be performed with wholehearted loyalty and that both had to be compatible for a person to be prosperous (5.6).

#### **6.2.4 Commitment to relationships and responsibilities**

Without exception the participants were observed to have excellent relationships with people whom they came into contact with, which correlated with their abilities to communicate well and with being congenial, helpful and generous (5.4.2.1.d and e). As they indicated, they were brought up to be co-operative, warm, sincere and hospitable in their dealings with family, friends and colleagues, including both seniors and subordinates. This was again demonstrated by their willingness to co-operate in this research, without the compensation of any reward. All participants saw this research as an opportunity to be useful and to make a contribution. Having a friendly and co-operative disposition has clearly been part of their ability to be successful in their professions.

Their congenial personalities notwithstanding, most of the participants have the capability to be highly assertive when necessary. Even this ability to differ in a constructive way was done in a spirit of co-operation rather than to let the relationships involved be harmed. Three women stated that they were somewhat shy and would rather be submissive than be involved in disagreements. Three participants expressed the explicit view that one should not 'burn bridges behind one', which had the effect that they were able to have sound relationships with even colleagues with whom they had had serious professional disagreements. This ability to be on a good-natured and even humorous footing with all-comers was a clear advantage to their career advancement, as was the willingness to take on extra responsibilities from early in their careers. A striking pattern emerging was the emphasis on shouldering responsibilities rather than stressing personal rights (cf 5.4.2.1.e).

#### **6.2.5 Distinguishing elements necessary for professional success**

As the participants were selected from a wide range of professions and types of personality, it was heartening to observe that, in an overview of their own career development, they had much in common (5.4.2.2). These strengths include the ability to distinguish between what characteristics, traits and behavioural patterns would have positive or negative consequences for their personal and professional lives. This may be summarised by the concept of 'healthy and empowering state management' as contrasted to unhealthy and disabling state management.

All twelve participants were motivated by a desire to do something meaningful with their lives. Ten felt they wanted to render a service to society, while one was interested in science and used a bursary that was available for studying agricultural and soil science, while one was driven to physics by a quest for knowledge. Five were motivated by a desire to rise above difficult circumstances. Doing their work as thoroughly as was humanly possible, creatively and with enthusiasm meant that they were valued students, employees and colleagues. The three educators experienced much work satisfaction if learners were able to experience the “*AHA Erlebnis*” in their learning matter and to see the children grow in confidence through the atmosphere in the classroom or sports field, especially those that were not the obviously bright ones or leaders. One experienced great work satisfaction from helping people in her psychology practice and one felt rewarded when she was able to assist patients to a better quality of life through her medical practice. The general experience of all twelve participants was an awareness of joy through work well done, as well as having really made a contribution to the circumstances surrounding them. ‘Walking the extra mile’ and persevering with difficult tasks was a source of pride and joy to all twelve. All the men were able to work fast and effectively, while one woman mentioned being able to do this, although three more women were observed to be highly effective and organised in their work, though not referring to it. This ability to work with focus, concentration and commitment was the characteristic shared by the participants, all the while working towards a goal they had set for themselves. Not only were they dedicated and most self-disciplined at their professions, consistently ‘doing things right’, but were also observed to aim at ‘doing the right things’, as the educational psychologist called this approach. At the same time their relationships with their colleagues and with the members of their family were warm and ‘user-friendly’, empathy being one of their strongest shared characteristics.

Time management is seen by Covey (5.4.2.1.c) as being essentially personal management and ten of the participants did not have much of a problem with this. All six women acknowledged that when their children were smaller, they had very little control over their time and were most grateful when husbands, family and other caregivers could assist with an exhausting schedule of child-care coupled with trying to keep up with their professional fields, never being off-duty. The men were seen as being much more organised with a balance between work, family-time and relaxation. Five men have highly competent and supportive wives, who made every effort to let the housekeeping flow smoothly. The five married women have very helpful husbands, helpful

children and/or domestic help. The single man and woman have grown children and part time domestic help, enabling them to spend their productive time professionally.

#### 6.2.6 Maintaining healthy life-styles

Being able to be well-informed, to meditate on matters concerning their lives and to utilise 'self-talk' beneficially have been observed to be highly functional capabilities that the participants shared. Consequently they had developed the emotional strengths to choose lifestyles with healthy long term outcomes, as well being able to make judgments regarding making the best of personal and professional setbacks and obstacles. This involves making choices, that is, being able to make rational decisions and using moderation at all times (5.4.2.2.a). Physical health was not only a matter of having a healthy diet and staying fit, but also of dealing with health setbacks in the best possible way.

The mental health of the participants can be summarised by the concept of superb emotional intelligence, which is in keeping with what Goleman (1995) believes to be the cornerstone of optimum mental health consisting of self-control, zeal, persistence, social intelligence, empathy and the ability to resolve conflict. Collins (motivational course, 1998) sees this as the essence of state management (5.4.2.2.b). Joy in overcoming impairments and coping with problems was a decided strength observed by the participants. The range of setbacks these twelve men and women have had to contend with ranged from very serious to mild and were part of the highly valuable characteristic of resilience which they shared, by which they were seen to overcome problems by conscious effort (5.4.2.4). At the same time they were all of the opinion that this was a valuable benefaction and were grateful for this strength. Although all twelve were at times most disconsolate, even depressed about grave setbacks, all used the aptitude of positive self-talk, meditation and physical exercise to overcome times of misfortune and the results of mistakes, not allowing their quality of life to be permanently affected in a negative way. They were preferably inclined to see such obstacles as growth experiences. All participants were deeply grateful for being emotionally and physically supported by caring loved-ones and/or health professionals during trying times, without whose help they would not have been able to survive as well or at all. This grateful conviction underlies the certainty of ten of the twelve participants who have had the committed support of their marriage partners in a concerted team effort during

the progression of their different careers. Even the two who were divorced attested to the support of their previous marriage partners regarding their study or professional progress. All participants remembered consciously working on perceived weaknesses to overcome these and turn them into strengths (5.4.2.3 and 5.4.2.4). Yet, for all participants, the work satisfaction experienced was worth the risks taken and difficulties experienced, although being resilient enough had often taken conscious effort to work through problems sensibly.

### **6.2.7 Self-directive styles of working**

While the majority of people prefer to have a fixed routine with established, but pliant hours of work, many are more satisfied with the opportunities of an *ad hoc* approach. Flexitime is a mode of empowering people to work at the time which may be more advantageous to their personal situation or style, such as preferring to work late at night or early in the morning. Being free to move as opportunities are observed or created has the advantage of being able to be malleable in one's working style. Of the twelve participants in this study, no one has a 'nine to five job'. The part time work of three women may be seen as 'plateauing' by staying on the same level, but with the difference that they are self-employed, work as it suits their time schedules and work according to their own convictions.

The professional activities of all the participants may be seen as **working on a continuum ranging from the pure sciences as organised knowledge on the one end of the line to the arts as applied skills/aptitudes at the other end.** The people involved may also be seen as ranging from the quest to understand and control nature, through the need to understand and discipline the human temperament and then be involved in the nurture of human and life in general through the caring professions. This may be seen as fairly representative of most human activity. The skills needed to engage in these activities as meaningful for this research concerning life skills needed for a wide range of human professional endeavour regarding careers.

### **6.2.8 Validating ideals and investing in lifelong learning**

As a continuation of an idealistic philosophy of life and a value system which was clearly endorsed by their way of life, the participants do not experience their culminating professional success and

the respect they have enjoyed as anything but grace and divine gifts. Nevertheless, they were in a position to work extremely hard to attain these laurels. All were quite modest and unassuming about what they have achieved, although they were all convinced that success had been preceded by a determination to succeed coupled with the will to work as hard as it took to attain this . Without exception all twelve were of the opinion that they could not really make a contribution to this study as they had not really achieved anything worth any exceptional esteem, mentioning that they felt honoured to have been included in the research (5.4.1.2 a and b). Their professional involvement and observed success was discussed in the light of them simply having done their work to the best of their ability, making the best of their opportunities (5.4.2.1 and 5.4.2.2). They were grateful to have been successful with most of their projects and to have achieved most of the goals they set themselves, including to have made a contribution to the betterment of society and/or the world of nature.

Even retirement or the prospect of eventual retirement was not seen as the end of their productive lives and ideals. The four that had officially retired were highly involved with aspects of their professional careers, family involvement, community service and intensive reading to improve their general and specific knowledge. All twelve participants had a number of ideals they still wanted to achieve concerning their life-work, such as further research or consultancy. All were deeply engrossed in practising hobbies such as painting and sport or expanding their consciousness of existence and maintaining contact with family and friends, which was seen as enhancing the quality of life and this was regularly scheduled into their lives as a matter of course (5.4.4.2).

Close scrutiny of current trends reveals a faster transfiguration of present skills needed, and development in the required disciplines, than ever before in history. Both specialisation and parallel training throughout the working career have become necessities for organised employment, as well as for individuals to stay competent and employable. Continued honing of skills and extended opportunities for education and training have become the passports to remain competitive and well-informed. Not only do these activities raise a person's level of marketability and self-esteem, but are routes towards continuous mental stimulation and personal intellectual enrichment. To keep up with rapid development and change professionals have increasingly needed to devote time to keeping in touch with advances in their respective fields of expertise.

The twelve participants in this research have gone out of their way to keep up to date with their professional disciplines by continuous reading, attending and contributing to conferences, seminars and workshops and by extensive learning, including via the Internet, which they continue to re-invest by their full or part time work, continued academic and community work. The participants are very much involved in raising their own children or assisting with their grandchildren, which is an additional investment as they are continuously concerned with issues relating to children and grandchildren's development. This includes, at present, often being absorbed in explaining and helping with research for homework and projects in subjects ranging from mathematics and science to language and art.

Keeping school learners (as the future general population and workforce) up to date with technological developments and research results could have benefits for both full time employees, the unemployed and for women who are temporarily out of circulation with family formation. It could also be of benefit to have general classes in skills literacy for adults at libraries and clinics. In this way retired professionals, educators in particular, could be meaningfully involved in developing general literacy, especially if this activity could be tax deductible. Classes in entrepreneurship in useful products, made with low cost materials, or in services could stimulate creativity and generate self-employment. Large corporations could be much more involved with organising such classes than simply making donations to charities where much of the money is wasted through misuse. The critical need for health care work is an example of where such expertise of retired professionals could be of incisive influence.

The principle of keeping up holds for the partners of professionals as well, who would be better equipped for understanding the life-worlds of their professional spouses if they were to be more directly involved. Instead of simply arranging pleasure trips for partners accompanying professionals to conferences, lectures could be given informing spouses of developments, as well as being a forum for discussion of problems experienced. There could be much scope for individuals with initiative to present lectures at conferences regarding personal development, coping with a full timetable and dealing with the intricacies of contemporary parenthood. These could be regular features at schools, clubs and at libraries as well.

### 6.2.9 Redefining dual career marriage and parenthood

As was indicated in 2.9, 3.4.4 and 5.5, the dual career marriage is a characteristic of life in contemporary society. The interpenetration of work and family cannot be reversed to the days before the industrial revolution and post-modern thought on human existence. 'Dovetailing' work and family and the overlaying of commitments have become part of the reality of present day life if the family is to be preserved and saved from the fate of becoming a one-parent dysfunctional and archaic institution, as is the trend in many layers of society in both the developed and developing nations. As was indicated in the penultimate section of chapter 5, the rethinking of family values, commitments and roles, as well as the redistribution of duties have become to be of critical importance. The entry of women into the professional arena has had many unbalancing effects, but it may also be a catalyst in the rethinking of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. This matter needs to be thrashed out anew by every person, regardless of whether they are directly involved in education, health care, social, applied or pure sciences. Far from meaning that women's role in the work force of the country is temporary and interrupted, uncertain and subject to continuous change, there needs to be a re-evaluation of the contributions of women of childbearing age; of what the strengths may be when these women, forming a meaningful percentage of half the country's work force, are kept up to standard by continued part time involvement with developments at work.

What also needs to be re-evaluated are the benefits that may be derived from marriage partners working as a team, in stead of being over concerned with the hierarchy of a family. As stated in 5.4.2.1.e and 6.2.4, there is a critical need for thinking about and discussing in open debate in the media, *a charter of responsibilities towards the country*. Taking this a step further, there is an urgent need for widely publicised antenuptial education for couples wanting to be married, but an even more compelling need for all learners at school to think about the consequences of sexual activity, procreation and parenthood as a basic life skill - the need for *a charter of responsibilities towards a family*.

The vibrant character of present mature adulthood is assuming a more vigorous alternative to the outdated cast-iron, solidified identities necessitated by past lifestyles. A transformed view of developed humankind has emerged, having thrown off the antiquated roles of men and women

living in the grinding bondage of obsolete roles: the man solely responsible for an income and the woman solely responsible for housekeeping and parenting. This has made way for whole-brain developed partners working as a team as more prosperous and liberated shareholders in the way marriage may be allowed to develop if guided by the principles of team work and consolidated effort possible in a dual career marriage. This was seen to be highly evident in the approaches of the twelve participants in this research (cf 5.5).

Observations in a wide range of scholarly writing, such as Gerdes (1998), see mature women branching out, becoming more involved in the public domain, while mature men become more involved in the private domain (cf life-span developmental patterns 2.6, 2.7.3 and 2.8.5). The personality type seen as **integrators** or role model people were observed by Sheehy (1977:289 and 339) as the logical answer for the disintegration of the contemporary family, which was described by Margaret Mead as "the nuclear family (being) an experiment in disaster". She was of the opinion that the rational answer provided by nature was that of the extended family, where every person was important and had a role to play (lecture c.1977).

#### **6.2.10 Ongoing career growth and involvement after midlife**

The mature years, including and after middle adulthood (2.8), have become an 'exciting period' according to the perspective of the retired educational psychologist. He believes that these years of added life expectancy due to improved health care have the potential of being exceptionally rewarding according to the research proving that lifelong learning is possible (5.4.4). Not only is it possible, but it is most advantageous for people's personal well-being, using and re-investing the knowledge and experience of many productive and enriching years. During the mature years and after retirement there is more time for delayed research and academic involvement, reading great literature, studying topics of interest, being active with hobbies or family, doing community service and for business concerns. Realising ideals not possible before are now a distinct possibility if sound state management has been applied. A comparison between the lives of people doing this successfully and those with poor and inappropriate life management is distressing and has been instrumental in bringing about this research (1.1 and 5.4.4.1).

Having worked with commitment towards a state of successful accomplishment of many parallel life goals has been another of the shared experiences of the participants in this study. They have played their part in being stable, responsible, trustworthy and respected professionals, as well as family members, and now have the satisfaction of looking back over well-developed professional careers and stable, loving families. The added advantage is that they are financially in a position to reach many of their dreams, such as travel and meaningful recreational activities. Looking back over choices made, values re-endorsed and of having made a valuable contribution to society makes the experience of a sense of achievement and of being appreciated most worthwhile and renders sound dividends on what society and the state have invested in their development (5.4.3.2, 5.4.3.3 and 5.4.4).

### **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION**

In 1.1.5 and 1.1.6 it was contended that the quality of educational provision across the life-span is of critical importance. This education would provide life skills as key-qualifications and competencies by and with which people may lead a successful career and personal life through individual, professional and social competence. In this section, therefore, attention is drawn to the range of implications for life skills education that have suggested themselves on the basis of this exploratory study of professional career success. It is proposed that these recommendations have the potential of contributing to the more effective development and utilisation of the life skills dormant in young and upcoming professional people. Not only could these proposals affect those learners and young professionals still in training and adults wanting to improve their skills, but also, where appropriate, for vast numbers of future generations of people in the work force in general.

These proposals are discussed under the following subheadings:

#### **6.3.1 Research**

6.3.1.1 That analyses be made of the needs of professional people be undertaken so as to design educational and employment policies which would best meet their requirements (cf Goleman 1995:xi-xii). These needs analyses should further

differentiate between different populations of professionals such as self-employed professionals, those employed full time in the work force, women working part time and adults wanting to develop more extensively, as well as the needs of mature and late adulthood.

6.3.1.2 Large scale surveys and longitudinal studies of professional career development be undertaken to establish ongoing demographic, attitudinal and employment trends revealed in the behaviour of present professionals.

6.3.1.3 Extensive research concerning the educational needs of the most appropriate teaching methods to be used when dealing with these divergent groups.

### **6.3.2 Career guidance in schools**

As a result of the early socialisation of children in the home and school (Lemmer 1989:313), the examples of parents and teachers are often emulated to the extent that the professional bearing and attitudes witnessed often influence the career choices of learners. The role of teachers as role models and as a strong influence in these choices has been stressed by the participants in this research, as well as the values and patterns modelled by the parents. In this regard the following recommendations are proposed:

#### **6.3.2.1 *Training of teachers***

In this respect the following recommendations are made:

- (a) That adequate training of teachers in life skills education through their subjects be stressed, including a theoretical understanding of what life skills education encompasses. Specialisation in career guidance, also by way of in-service training, would have the advantage of being able to stay up to date with the latest career developments in other countries and in the RSA should be developed to reach every learner at school. These educators could then be utilised in communities with classes for adults as well. Counselling skills for learners and adults should be part of the specialisation and be utilised

to serve to test people and/or recommend to them what areas of career training would suit their aptitudes and interest, as well as ensuring that they have the basic skills for being able to adapt to change.

- (b) The utilisation of these trained teachers could be done in tandem with existing psychological services at guidance centres, clinics and resource centres to serve entire communities, especially in rural areas. This could have a domino effect of helping schools to prepare learners more adequately, as well as assisting parents to help their children make more informed initial career choices and be able to make sensible and advantageous changes if necessary.

#### **6.3.2.2 *Career skills and life skills education in schools***

The changing circumstances surrounding careers of all kinds highlights needs improved competence over a wide range of abilities. Many of these abilities are incorporated by the new approaches of Curriculum 2005.

- (a) Basic education concerning skills needed for being able to do well as school should consciously be taught from Grade 0 (cf life skills education and preparation for life 3.4). Teamwork between teachers and parents could be improved, especially in overcrowded classrooms, if parents and grandparents could be invited to share skills, games, tales and songs from folklore with school learners.
- (b) Inviting parents and acquaintances with interesting vocations to share their life-worlds with school children: ecologists/nature conservationists could share concepts teaching learners to care for nature surrounding their life-world; doctors and nurses could talk and demonstrate concepts such as hygiene, immunisation and sonar readings of unborn babies or the inner workings of organs; lawyers could be invited to talk about the reasons for 'living by the rules', such as obeying road signs; mock courts could be held to sensitise learners about legal procedures and fire-fighters could talk about safety procedures and first aid in emergencies. The world of business could be made more understandable with

businesses in the area being brought in to explain entrepreneurship and their part in the economy.

- (c) Women in non-traditional careers could be brought in to talk and demonstrate their own interest in these vocations - the impact of a woman engineer speaking about mining, road or building construction or the workings of a factory in action, could leave indelible memories and inspire girls to think more widely concerning possible career choices. Men with less well-known careers such as running a restaurant or a hotel, a clothing factory or doing micro-biological research could inspire learners in their subjects, while a veterinarian of either gender could make a great impact concerning the care of animals and the role of animals in human lives.
- (d) Parents who are observed to be good role models could be invited to speak about their sharing of household and child rearing duties to encourage greater understanding of the advantages of teamwork by marriage partners and families.
- (e) Employers with a good track record of the founding of facilities and practices for being helpful to families could be invited to share their ideas with learners and to hear what the needs of learners in this regard are.
- (f) Schools and guidance teachers should work together to have career information centres at their own schools, as well as a programmes for rotating poster exhibitions in which certain careers are highlighted. Career specific guidance education including knowing the realities of what career needs there are, what the training would be and would cost, as well as discussions of possible future developments, could make learners aware, not only of the skills and subjects needed, but of the realities concerning the practice of these vocations.
- (g) Schools would do well to have a **theme per year** which is highlighted in every subject. Such programmes in other countries have been highly successful. An example of this could be a theme such as "A river in our lives" where every subject from biology to geography and poetry could be involved. Creative contributions from the learners could

stimulate much activity in every possible facet of life, from class speeches, essays and songs to models and posters about the reasons for conserving natural resources.

### 6.3.2.3 *Parental involvement and ongoing education for adults*

As parents are primary educators who exercise a considerable influence upon the career and attitude choices made by learners, it is recommended that:

- (a) Career conferences, seminars, workshops and enrichment courses for parents be provided at schools and community organisations to enrich parents with wider knowledge of parental opportunities and skills. This would include greater awareness of their own life skills and coping strategies, especially regarding teamwork as marriage partners and raising their own self-esteem regarding these vital roles.
- (b) Attention could be drawn to the influence of role models who practise their professions successfully, as well as to those who successfully combine their work and family roles. Team-building courses, including life skills games could be presented. As more men are becoming interested in cooking at present, it could be fruitful to present courses for fathers and sons or daughters, including the outdoor cooking of balanced meals and avoidance of unhealthy eating habits. Courses for team work concerning having a more organised home or garden could also be presented. Parents who have successful patterns could be invited to participate.
- (c) Life skills courses for adults (cf chapter 3) as a regular feature at schools, churches and clubs would be of great benefit to communities. This should centre around a holistic perception of state management from an improved life chance point of view as continuing guidance for adults regarding career success and 'branching', career development and management

### 6.3.3 The responsibilities and roles of employers for life skills development

As the people providing employment, employers also have the requirements that schools should provide them with a skilled workforce. This is an ongoing circle route where employers need to understand that an employee is not only motivated by a salary scale alone, but also by having a feeling that the employer is concerned for and investing in the welfare of employees.

Employment policies and practice should reflect the goodwill referred to in the previous paragraph by having regular in-service training to keep their employees up to date with latest developments. Employer involvement in educational provision for career development should not be restricted to their own employees, but should be broadened to include schools in the area, as a reinvestment in future workforce empowerment. In-service training would need to include mothers who are at home with small children to empower them to be able to get back into the market with skills that are updated. Employers would also need to provide creches and after school care, or at least indicating that they are concerned for this aspect of an employees' life, such as having policies whereby employees may be with sick children or parents in critical times. A great advantage would be if certain types of work could be done at home via the electronic media and policies adapted to make provision for this. This would of necessity not only be with reference to women, but also to men who would like to do their share of responsible parenting for improved quality of life. Employer involvement in life skills provision for employees with families would need to include continuing guidance for adults regarding family planning and their parental responsibilities, 'coping-guidance', networking and teamwork for parents and families.

### 6.3.4 The involvement of local governing bodies in life skills education

Governing bodies of schools and of districts, such as municipalities, should also be aware of having the same responsibilities as what employers have, with the increased well-fare of the population under their jurisdiction. Continued life skills education as 'efficient state management' could make vast inroads into the well-being of the general population of an area. This could be seen as investment in future health and emotional well-being of their citizens. Possibly they are in the best position to reach the maximum number of people concerning ongoing life skills education.

#### 6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While there is an abundance of literature about success attained in specific fields, such as vocation, marriage or parenting, their conviction is that researchers had not paid enough attention to the core character strengths necessary to succeed in all the principal adult roles: there is a need for a psychology of persons who succeed in many roles (Heath & Heath 1991:xv, emphasis added). Questions need to be asked about whether successful men and women make good marital partners and parents, whether virtuous persons are likely to be healthy and happy, as well as from what kinds of homes men and women come who succeed in their familial and vocational roles. Also needed are questions about what adolescent strengths and weaknesses might determine how successful and happy a youth will be when forty-five years old. Their conviction is that growing up to succeed and be happy is to develop the mind and character necessary to satisfy needs, achieve goals and fulfill dreams, meaning a lot more than just living out a vocational, marital or other adult role. Visible success may not reflect hopes and ideals or even be enjoyable or fulfilling.

There is a further need for research into:

- ◆ what comprises the requirements of the skills in the career portfolio of professionals, seen from the perspective of enhancing people's **life chances**;
- ◆ what the ways are to accommodate every person's family requirements, including the biological role women have to play in procreation, combined with professional involvement;
- ◆ the influence into the negative effect of career interruptions; whether they be for family matters, study or travel, they are each enriching in their own way, due to the expanding of perspectives experienced;
- ◆ how career guidance in schools may be improved to incorporate all the realities of the contemporary world of work;

- ◆ how workshops for adults may be implemented regarding the building of future career resilience, including how career barriers may be overcome.

In addition, it is recommended that:

- ◆ Research be carried out into methods whereby the experience of seasoned professionals may be recorded and their expertise analysed for life skills education at schools, universities and where it may reach the adult population.
- ◆ Research be done into the market value of the educational and viable subject content choices available be undertaken so as to determine the relationship between subject curricula and existing gaps in the lifestyles of professionals in the labour market.
- ◆ Research be done into the possibility of opening the concept of A charter of responsibilities towards the country, as well as towards marriage for public discussion concerning life skills education.
- ◆ Research be done into enabling employers to present life skills programmes, such as family planning and financial management, for their employees.
- ◆ Research be done as to how communities may make more of an effort to form support groups for discussing shared problems

The most incisive changes to concepts regarding the world of work observed in the literature include the following possible research topics:

- ◆ In what constitutes 'work' and why it is important to the quality of life (cf 2.2.2, 2.2.6 and 2.3.2.8).
- ◆ How the gender roles have started to adjust to contemporary social circumstances in more developed countries (cf 2.6. and 2.7).

- ◆ How technological and scientific progress has affected the world of work (2.13, 3.4.6 and 3.5)
- ◆ What the needs are regarding the skills needed to work effectively, both for a living and to enhance the individual's quality of life, as well as for fulfilling the requirements of the family of humankind (cf 5.5 and 5.6).

## 6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As a research project based on qualitative methodology, this study of the life-world of a small sample of career professionals demonstrated not only the strengths of such an investigation, but also the limitations. The small sample size, which is typical of the qualitative tradition (cf 4.3.9), is the most obvious limitation of this study. The research was however, designed to be exploratory and descriptive in nature (cf 1.4 and 4.2.2.9), using semi-structured interviews to draw data from the participants by way of recorded conversations. Its primary goal was to understand and describe how the professionals interviewed experienced important events relating to their own developmental background, their educational histories, their professional maturation and success, interwoven with their views of commitment to their families (cf 5.4.3.1.a) No attempts were made to establish trends, to generalise or to quantify the findings. Presentation of the data was in descriptive terms only. In addition, no attempts was made to predict behaviour or to establish cause and effect relationships under experimental conditions. Hypotheses were not formed except in the form of speculations which arose from the participants' accounts of their life experiences (cf 4.2.2). While the overview of the existing literature (chapters 2 and 3) provided an important framework for the interviews, no attempt was made to prove or disprove theory (cf 4.2.2). Instead, the focus was on understanding the experiences of the participants from their own point of view (cf 4.2). Ultimately, grounded theory, that is, theory grounded in the data, was formulated according to specific themes emerging from the participants' accounts (cf 4.2.2).

Contributing participants were not selected by random sampling techniques, rather by judgement sampling (cf 4.4.3). For this reason the method of selection was not based on sufficient objective data to ensure that the study could be exactly replicated. The resulting information is therefore of limited predictive value. Furthermore, the lack of racial and ethnic variation among the sample

further narrows the study. The selection of six men and six women from the white population group alone constricts the study fails to expand knowledge of how professional men and women from different racial and ethnic groups experience their career development linked to their personal duties. The sample was limited to married persons (or in the case of two participants, to formerly married persons). Therefore their experiences do not represent those of single or widowed people, who would obviously have had different experiences. The participants were also mostly from well-nurtured backgrounds and do not represent the experiences of people with completely traumatic backgrounds, such as those participants used in the research of Harrington and Boardman (1997, cf 2.5.6). The study is also based upon the experiences of people drawn from a particular birth cohort (cf 5.2) and does thus not claim that the findings can be summarily extrapolated to persons from other birth cohorts.

The potential bias in the retrospective reporting techniques was clearly acknowledged by the researcher. As in all qualitative research, the validity of findings were entirely dependent on the researcher's ability to use the techniques chosen, which were in this case, semi-structured interviews. In research of this nature, demands are made on the researcher's own skills in interviewing and establishing the necessary *rapport* with participants (cf 4.2.3). In this case the researcher was able to draw on both her own experience as an education professional and on years of friendship or professional relationships with participants to establish a comfortable relationship. Further potential for bias was present, inasmuch as the researcher herself constituted the research instrument. To counteract possible bias a statement of subjectivity was presented in 4.4.6 as is customary in qualitative research.

Nevertheless, in spite of these limitations mentioned, comparison of the experiences confronting this small sample of successful professionals, in comparison to other related research in the discussions (2.5.6) suggest the presence of several generic key issues which transcend different social environments and situations: the essentials of hard work, commitment and idealism (5.4.2), the role of motivation and self-discipline (5.4.2.1.a), the overlap of family and work spheres, the role of marriage partner support, the realities of changing conditions of employment, technology and the necessities of contemporary ability to be versatile and adaptable, the changing needs of roles in a family and the altered need for fathers to be more involved in their children's upbringing.

Furthermore, the longer life expectancy and improved health in later life have brought about new possibilities for career extension and life-long learning. In this limited sense then, this study may serve to expand our knowledge of the issues career professionals need to deal with to be successful in both their public and private domains, by the formulation of grounded theory and the suggestion of speculative hypotheses which can form a basis for future large-scale studies of professional and general career success.

## **6.6 IN CONCLUSION**

Incisive impacts of changing global economic conditions have indicated radical rethinking of contemporary personal and social roles with which to bring individual well-being and market forces into line with each other. Human requirements need to be taken into account which are often overlooked by material theories and economic strategies. What is required is a far more realistic awareness of the social needs of human beings to work and to make economic contributions, not only as individuals, but as members of the human family. This may be achieved by educating towards greater life skill abilities and knowledge of what is needed to be seen as being professionally successful in balance with success as a human being.

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**ERRATUM:**

CONDRIN, BD 1975 *Successful women: A study in the development of female competence*. Ph D thesis. San Francisco: Californian School of Professional psychology.

# SONATA FORM/CONSTRUCTION OF CHAPTER 5

## EXPOSITION

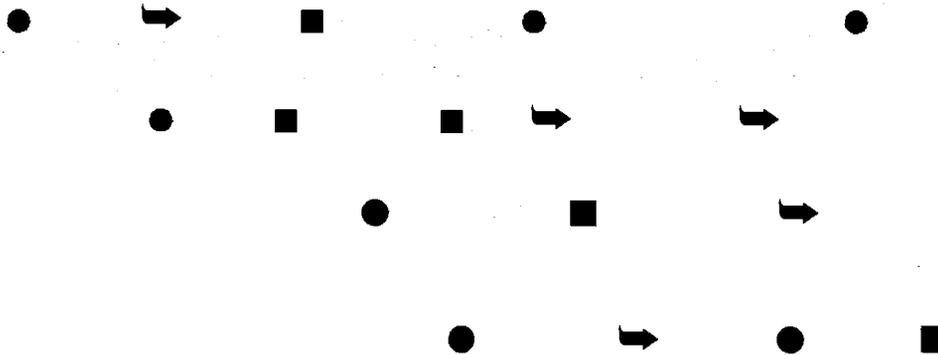
A ● (PRIMARY THEME IN HOME KEY)

BRIDGE →

B ■ (SECONDARY THEME IN RELATED KEY)

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## DEVELOPMENT



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## RECAPITULATION

A ● (HOME KEY)

BRIDGE → B ■ (HOME KEY)

CODA (CLOSING SECTION) ● → ■

(Diagram 2)

TABLE 1

**AGE AND FAMILY BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS  
AT TIME OF INTERVIEWS**

PARTICIPANT (alphabetically) (men/ women)	AGE (2000)	YEAR OF BIRTH	MARITAL STATUS	NUMBER AND AGES OF CHILDREN
DONALD	60+	1935	Married	28 + 26 + 20
ELMAR	60+	1939	Married	38 + 36 + 33
HANS	50+	1946	Married	18 + 16 + 14
HENRI	65+	1928	Married	42 + 40 + 39 + 36
FRANZ	55+	1943	Married	31 + 30 + 28
STEVEN	50	1950	Divorced	24 + 22
ALETTE	50+	1948	Divorced	32 + 28
ELKE	45+	1953	Married	20 + 17 + 14
INNEKE	55+	1941	Married	35 + 32
JESS	60+	1939	Married	38 + 36 + 33
LYNNE	45+	1956	Married	19 + 17 + 9
SUSAN	50+	1949	Married	18 + 16 + 14

TABLE 2

## CAREER HISTORY AND MOTIVATION

First or preferred choice of career and subsequent "branching"

DONALD	(medicine)*	PT/science teacher, educational psychologist, retired university lecturer /freelance speaker
<u>ELMAR(**)</u>		agricultural researcher/advisor, CEO research/marketing agency
<u>HANS(++)</u>	(medicine)+	physics lecturer, professor/head of science faculty
<u>HENRI</u>	(medicine)*	maths teacher, deputy/headmaster, subject inspector, national education advisor
FRANZ		own businesses/accountant, local/provincial politics /chambers of commerce
STEVEN		airforce pilot, architect
ALETTE	(medicine)#	clinical psychologist
ELKE		personnel management, journalist/author
INNEKE		librarian, research archeologist/paleontologist
JESS(**)		PT/language teacher, university lecturer in English
<u>LYNNE</u>		medicine, gynaecologist
SUSAN(++)		accountant, lawyer

(Medicine)\* = could not afford medical studies.

(Medicine)+ = first wanted to find out how nature works.

(Medicine)# = did not like medical studies.

Underlined = direct climb on career ladder.

(\*\*) and (++) = married

TABLE 3

## EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

	type of school	financial situation	financial support for studies/ career/development
	primary/high school	at home as a child	
DONALD	rural academic	difficult	bursary
ELMAR	rural academic	average	bursary
HANS	farm school	good	loans
	rural academic		
HENRI	farm school	difficult	bursary
	rural academic		
FRANZ	urban academic	difficult	after hours/self
STEVEN	urban academic	average	full-time/self
ALETTE	farm school	average	father 1 year/self
	rural academic		
ELKE	rural academic	average	bursary
INNEKE	urban academic	difficult	after hours/self
JESS	rural academic	average	bursary
LYNNE	rural/urban academic	good	loans
SUSAN	rural academic	good	after hours/self

TABLE 4

## PRESENT HOBBIES AND ACTIVITIES

<u>Travel &amp; Wide reading</u>	<u>Hobbies</u>	<u>Sport</u>	<u>Community work</u>
DONALD ✓	—	senior athletics skydiving	motivational speaker
ELMAR ✓	—	golf/gym	family/church
HANS ✓	(stamp- collecting)	tennis	family/church
HENRI ✓	—	bowls	family/church
FRANZ ✓	—	(observer) walking	job creation/family/ church
STEVEN ✓	—	scuba diving	job creation, welfare work
ALETTE ✓	—	—	family/church
ELKE ✓	writing	gym, walking	family/church
INNEKE ✓	gardening	walking	family/church
JESS ✓	gardening embroidery	walking	family/church/ disabled work
LYNNE ✓	camping	—	family/church
SUSAN ✓	—	tennis	family/church

TABLE 5

## TYPE OF OBSTACLES EXPERIENCED:

	<u>Family</u>	<u>Career/study</u> (lack)	<u>Health</u>	<u>Observed own deficiencies</u>
DONALD	—	money	—	lack of time
ELMAR	—	money	—	stutter (corrected: therapy)
HANS	—	—	eye operations (corrective)	lack of time
HENRI	—	money	heart bypass knee	lack of time
FRANZ	—	money	heart bypass	smoking
STEVEN	—	—	back broken in plane crash	lack of administrative ability
ALETTE	emotional rejection; difficult marriage	—	—	tired: managing alone
ELKE	—	—	diabetes	lack of time-management
INNEKE	—	—	—	shyness
JESS	—	—	two benign brain tumours	shyness, hearing loss
LYNNE	—	—	—	difficult patients
SUSAN	—	—	(present light sport injuries)	—

TABLE 6

## OBSERVED STRENGTHS

	ability: hard work	wanting to help/ make a difference	ease with people	distinctive
DONALD	✓	✓	✓	humour / helping others grow
ELMAR	✓	✓	✓	stability / staying calm
HANS	✓	✓	✓	wish to know more / focus
HENRI	✓	✓	✓	humility, leadership
FRANZ	✓	✓	✓	leadership / service
STEVEN	✓	✓	✓	leadership / service
ALETTE	✓	✓	✓	honesty / warmth
ELKE	✓	✓	✓	writing / mothering
INNEKE	✓	✓	✓	wish to know more / focus
JESS	✓	✓	✓	gentleness / compassion / leadership
LYNNE	✓	✓	✓	commitment / empathy
SUSAN	✓	✓	✓	commitment / warmth

TABLE 7

**AIMS FOR LATE CAREER ACTIVITIES AND RETIREMENT\*\*\***

DONALD	community service, radio and television programmes, writing, fitness
ELMAR	consultancy, fitness, improving golf
HANS	research in physics, academic supervision, tennis
HENRI	community service, managing holiday estate, bowls
FRANZ	managing own business, tourism, chambers of commerce
STEVEN	managing building consortium, water sport
ALETTE	consulting, possible business
ELKE	writing, gym, hiking
INNEKE	research in palaeontology, writing, painting, embroidery
JESS	translation, editing, embroidery, walking
LYNNE	gynaecological / obstetrical consulting, camping
SUSAN	part time legal work, tennis

\*\*\* All participants are highly interested in reading, touring and personal growth

TABLE 8

**KEY SKILLS / STRENGTHS +++**

<b>DONALD</b>	communication, humour, wide involvement
<b>ELMAR</b>	stability, management, keeping up with scientific developments
<b>HANS</b>	research, management, scientific writing
<b>HENRI</b>	stability, management, wide involvement
<b>FRANZ</b>	communication, management, wide involvement
<b>STEVEN</b>	artistic creativity, management, wide involvement
<b>ALETTE</b>	ability to assess human problems, ability to help others
<b>ELKE</b>	literary / journalistic ability, artistic creativity
<b>INNEKE</b>	research, scientific writing, artistic creativity
<b>JESS</b>	languages, ability to help others, artistic creativity
<b>LYNNE</b>	sympathetic approach to women's needs, ability to help others
<b>SUSAN</b>	accountancy, legal insight, sporting ability

+++ All participants are highly versatile, have a wide range of interests, have excellent personal relationships with family and friends, are accomplished hosts / hostesses and have a wide general knowledge

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULES**

**SOURCES :** (cf bibliography)

CONDRIN, USA 1975

HARRINGTON & BOARDMAN 1997, Columbia University, New York

LEMMER, RSA 1989.

WHEELLOCK, UK 1990

**SUMMARY / ESSENCE OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE / GUIDE**

The questions presented here served as guidelines for the interviews rather than questions to be asked in a fixed order. It was intended to achieve an open interview format (semi-structured) with sufficient probing to obtain the necessary information.

- 1 Information: personal, occupation, age, education, religion, language group, socio-economic.
- 2 Family background, number and position of siblings, extended family, typical family activities, father's interests, mother's interests.
- 3 Development as a child, personal interests, friends, hobbies and extramural activities / lessons.
- 4 Educational history, type of school experience, attitude towards school, intellectual stimulation.
- 5 Career: early interests, other possible careers, problems and challenges, satisfaction in.
- 6 Marriage, occupation of spouse, attitude of spouse towards career, attitudes towards dual careers, involvement in children's activities.

7 Hobbies and community interests, time involved in community service

8 Satisfaction with self and life, highlights of career.

Specific questions are SPREAD THROUGHOUT the interview schedule.

Typical questions suggesting the flavour of this interview schedule are:

What was a typical afternoon / evening like in you family?

What did you like to do best as a child?

What was school like for you?

What motivated you in your career?

A "SWOT"-analysis : what have been your career

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS?

Do you feel that you had sufficient support from your spouse?

As you look at your life, what do you feel most satisfied with?

What would you have changed if you could?

If someone were to describe your character and life to another person, what would be the things you would like them to mention most?

How would you handle a dual career family today? (household duties and children)

**LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH**

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PO Box 33035, Glenstantia 0010

10 October 1999

Dear .....

As a doctoral student in Comparative Education, I am interested in the development of your career. You have come to my attention through

.....

The purpose of my research project is to study the career development of a selected group of successful men and women professionals. The selected group consists of six men and six women (whom I fondly refer to as "**THE WINNING TEAM**"). This observed success includes not only career success, but also the observed success as a family person, spouse and member of the community. I am particularly interested in factors influencing your career success, your marital situation and quality, what you have observed to be positive influences in these fields and, especially, what wisdom you feel you could pass on to future generations regarding skills needed.

The time involved for an interview is approximately 2-3 hours. This will consist of an initial interview of about an hour-and-a-half, followed by a second interview two or three weeks later. This would give you time to reflect and give me time to transcribe the first interview and develop areas for further clarification. Included is a demographic / life history form and some subjective information which would take about half-an-hour to an hour to complete, at your convenience.

The title of my thesis is "Aspects of professional career success and the implications for life skills education". My study supervisor is Prof Eleanor Lemmer, Vice-Dean of Education at UNISA.

The people who have been interviewed so far have indicated that they have enjoyed the experience and have asked for a copy of the transcript. This I would be more than willing to provide in exchange for a wealth of information from you. The information is kept confidential and all participants are asked to select a pseudonym by which you can be referred to in the study to preserve your anonymity.

I am hoping to complete the necessary interviews during October / November 1999. You will be contacted telephonically for a convenient interview time and location. You may choose the language you are most comfortable with for the interview. Any questions you may have I will gladly discuss with you and I may be reached at the telephone numbers provided above, mornings, evenings and weekends. I am unable to obtain study leave and teach music at Pro Arte Alphen Park Academy from approximately 13:00 to 19:00 on weekdays during the school term.

I feel most honoured and grateful to you for having expressed your willingness to join in on this project and look forward to your participation.

Yours sincerely

**Leone de Villiers van der Merwe**

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT**

Herewith I consent to participate in the following research project::

**The nature of the project**

The project is part of doctoral research dealing with the career experiences of professional men and women who have generally been regarded as successful in their careers

**The researcher**

The researcher is Mrs SL van der Merwe (née de Villiers), a music teacher at Pro Arte Alphen Park Academy, Pretoria, who is a student at the University of South Africa.

**The nature of participation in the project**

I am fully aware and understand the following aspects and the implications thereof:

- (i) That my participation lies in the granting of an interview in which I supply information about my personal and employment experiences and educational history as a professional person;
- (ii) that this interview will be taped on audio cassette, and that I may listen to this tape if I choose to do so;
- (iii) that I am free to refuse the answering of certain questions;
- (iv) that this information, taped on cassette, is part of the research material of the project; and that the researcher may quote certain parts of my interview and interpret such, in the light of the rest of the project, with the view to facilitate the understanding of professional career success;
- (v) that the researcher guarantees that my identity will be treated as confidential information at all times, and that this will at no stage be disclosed in reports emanating from this research.

**Joint declaration**

We, the participant and the researcher, fully understand the above information and implications thereof.

Signed this ..... day of ..... 1999, at .....

\_\_\_\_\_  
Research participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

**BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

**Form to be filled in by participant:**

***I BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL***

NAME..... DATE.....

TITLE..... PSEUDONYM to protect  
anonymity.....

BIRTH DATE ..... PLACE OF BIRTH .....

PRESENT ADDRESS (physical and social).....  
.....

TEL (.....) ..... CELL PHONE .....

YOUR OWN ESTIMATE OF YOUR ORIGINAL AND PRESENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC  
STATUS  
.....

***II EMPLOYMENT / OCCUPATION / VOCATION***

1 FIELD/S OF EXPERTISE  
.....  
.....

2 PRESENT/LAST OCCUPATION ..... LENGTH OF TIME  
.....

3 CONCISE CAREER HISTORY: 1st job / occupation ..... Next and  
succeeding occupations.....  
.....  
.....

**III SCHOOLING / EDUCATIONAL HISTORY**

1 EDUCATIONAL DETAILS .....

2 POST HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL HISTORY EDUCATIONAL DETAILS (include fields, years studied, institutions attended and / or field experience) .....

**IV FAMILY AND COMMUNITY OF ORIGIN**

1 LANGUAGE GROUP OF FATHER..... MOTHER.....

2 PRESENT MARITAL STATE OF FATHER .....

MOTHER.....

3 OCCUPATION OF FATHER..... MOTHER.....

4 BACKGROUND AND OCCUPATIONS OF GRANDPARENTS / EXTENDED FAMILY WHO MIGHT HAVE HAD AN INFLUENCE ON YOU .....

5 EDUCATION OF PARENTS

MOTHER..... FATHER.....

6 YOUR PLACEMENT IN THE FAMILY .....

SIBLINGS (include gender, age and occupational interests of each) .....

7 Did your mother work prior to being married? ..... at what?

.....

8 Did your mother work at any time since your birth? .....

Full time ..... Part time .....

9 If she did, at what ages in your life between 0 and 20 did she work? .....

10 If your father did not work full time during your life, please specify during what ages of yours between 0 and 20 he did not work and what the circumstances were

.....  
.....

**V CURRENT / PRESENT FAMILY**

1 OWN MARITAL STATUS .....

(if married more than once, please include information on each spouse) .....

.....  
.....

2 If presently married, please include spouse's present occupation (including fields of study and specific strengths and achievements) .....

.....  
.....

3 Please list below the ages, genders and occupational or primary other interests of your children

Age	Gender	Interests / strengths
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....

**VI HEALTH**

- 1 How would you describe your health? .....
- 2 Significant changes .....
- 3 How do you deal with health issues? .....
- 4 How do you deal with stress/ anger/ depression? .....
- .....
- .....

**VII PERSONAL HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE**

1 In the spaces following pages, please indicate briefly the places you have lived in and the key non-occupational activities that have occupied your time in five year intervals since the age of twenty. (Examples might be: "Took part in ..... and ..... Got married..... Had first child.....).

- 20 .....
- .....
- 25 .....
- .....
- 30 .....
- .....
- 35 .....
- .....
- 40 .....
- .....
- 45 .....
- .....
- 50 .....
- .....

55.....

.....

60 plus.....

.....

2 Taking your life as a whole, what do you think of as the major events and people that influenced you? How do you feel they influenced you?

.....

.....

3 Describe anything in your early life (up to 10 years of age) that may have been influential in your later career plans and achievements (e.g. parents, siblings, other relatives, friends who influenced you; early hobbies and interests; any early manifestations of intellectual interests, leadership or talents):

.....

.....

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## GUIDELINES: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### OPENING REMARKS:

- ◇ A brief re-explanation of the objective
- ◇ Confirmation of the confidentiality of the interview
- ◇ Consent to tape interview on audio cassette
- ◇ Prerogative to refuse the answering of certain questions
- ◇ Signing of the **Consent to participate in research project form**
- ◇ Completion of **Basic interview information**

### *I COMMENTARY ON/ DISCUSSION OF BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL*

### *II CAREER DEVELOPMENT*

#### **1 Discussion : Career and professional job satisfaction**

What do you see as a definition of your profession?

What do see regard as reaching success in this profession?

Was your professional occupation your first choice of career?

Which other possibilities were open to you?

How did you obtain your jobs/positions?

What family/ institutional networks and supports were available?

What financial support was available?

What obstacles emerged and how did you overcome them?

Did you dislike anything about your career?

What attempts did you make to change that and how?

What did you experience as “dangers” and “costs” associated with success in your career?

#### **2 How did your career decisions come about?**

What motivated you?

Who and what influenced you career decisions?

Was your family of origin influential and / or supportive? How?

**3 Attitudes regarding responsibilities / positions:**

Were there differences from one position to another in degree of responsibility involved?

How did you respond? Did you experience discrimination against you?

DO you like the type of person required to do this work?

**4 Preferred work and relations with co-workers:**

How did you get along with subordinates, colleagues and seniors?

In case of problems, disagreements or conflicts, how have you dealt with them?

What were the differences among handling conflicts with senior, co-worker and subordinates?

What has been most satisfying about your work?

What factors have made your work particularly difficult?

**5 Have there been events or persons that have been particularly influential in your career?**

Did you have a mentor?

Were you consciously aware of learning how to behave / dress / speak in ways that might facilitate your career progress?

Have there been shortcomings / failures in your work or career that you consider particularly difficult?

How do you feel about retirement and future plans?

How did your masculine / female identity help or hinder you in your career?

**6 What did you use as coping strategies?**

How did you manage your time?

When did you start "walking the extra mile"?

What is your type of locus of control - 'inner-directed' or externally motivated?

How have you learnt from pain and mistakes?

Are your professional skills transferable?

**7 Future plans? Where do you feel you are heading?**

What are / have been your long-term career goals?

**III SCHOOLING / EDUCATIONAL HISTORY**

- 1 Describe your pre-tertiary educational history in terms of types of schools you attended, particularly teachers or other educational experiences that may have had a significant impact on you.

Any interruptions or other delays / financial problems in your educational development that may have been important; how your teachers acted towards you, your perception of yourself as a pupil / learner.

- 2 Describe your experience of your tertiary and post-graduate and / or occupational education and notable influences on your career development.

Parents and siblings' education: were there any striking differences between theirs and yours?

How do you account for the differences?

- 3 School ability: best / favourite subjects; what subjects did you dislike?

What were your feelings about school and teachers in general?

How did family, teachers and friends/ peers feel about you?

Was anyone particularly important in encouraging you at school?

Extracurricular activities and hobbies? Leisure time and holidays ?

What skills did you learn early in your life which were of benefit to you?

And in primary school? High school?

How did you overcome obstacles?

- 4 What do you regard as key skills for your profession?

How can they be taught?

How did you learn the interpersonal skills that you have found beneficial?

What lack of personal skills are weaknesses in your field?

5 What did you experience as counterproductive education?

What should you have wanted to learn in stead?

6 Were there any changes in post-school / tertiary / educational experiences?

How did you experience your professional training?

How did / do you keep up with developments in your field?

#### ***IV FAMILY AND COMMUNITY OF ORIGIN***

1 Who were the most significant figures / influences in your childhood / role models/ mentors (inside or outside nuclear family)? In what way were they significant?

Did you have enough emotional support from your family?

How was your career influenced by the examples of your circle of friends and acquaintances?

Did you have serious relationships with the opposite gender?

2 How do you characterise the way you were raised?

Was your family traditional regarding gender-role socialisation? How?

How do you characterise the “atmosphere” at home during childhood and your own response to it?

Did you learn good personal relation skills from your parents and extended family?

Did they teach you “what not to do” that has helped you in your career?

What was the “work ethic” like in your family?

How did you learn persistence at a task?

3 What were typical afternoons/ evenings/ weekends like?

How about the neighbourhood you primarily grew up in? What was it like?

What role did religion play in your family? What are your feelings about religion now and what role does it play in your life?

Did the composition of your family change as you grew up? How so?

When did you leave home and under what circumstances?

Do you see much / enough of your family now?

What feelings are generated by the places/ people where you grew up?

## **V PRESENT FAMILY**

1 Describe your (first) marriage. What do you feel about marriage at present?

How do members of your family share work and responsibilities?

Can you describe your husband / wife / present partner? Tell me something about him / her.

To what extent has your spouse been helpful / supportive in your career?

What would have liked him / her to do to help you more?

How should couples balance families and careers?

What conflicts arise? How would you like these to be dealt with?

2 What are your children like?

How do you handle/ resolve disagreements with your spouse and children?

Do you believe that everyone "has a case" / a right to their opinion?

What happens when your child misbehaves?

How is leisure time spent? And holidays? With whom and how often?

## **VI HEALTH**

1 How would you describe your health? Have there been any significant changes?

How have you dealt with them?

What are your eating/ smoking/ drinking/ medication-taking patterns? Do you sleep well?

Do you have an exercise routine, such as sport, going to a gym or jogging?

Do you become upset / angry / depressed? How do you deal with it? What usually precipitates it? What are your big worries?

- 2 When you have physical problems, how do you deal with them? Do you go to a doctor?
- 3 When you have emotional problems, do you work them out alone, or do you turn to family / friends / professional help?

## ***VII PERSONAL HISTORY AND GENERAL EXPERIENCE***

- 1 How do you account for where you are in life? What part did sheer luck / good fortune/ specific blessings play? - “being in the right place at the right time” ?
- 2 Who and what were the most significant persons and factors contributing to your success? Who and what hindered it?
- 3 Who have been your best friends? Do you keep in touch with old friends? What place do friends have in your present life? How have friends helped you in your career?
- 4 What would you like to improve about yourself? - things you dislike? What do people criticise or find irritating about you? What do people tend to admire?
- 5 How do you feel about your life overall? What satisfactions and dissatisfactions do you feel with yourself and your life?
- 6 How do you feel regarding your personal and career accomplishments?
- 7 What role has political activity played in your life?
- 8 Your evaluation of your occupational history in retrospect (other choices, different routes and planning).
- 9 What would you recommend to young people with the same ideals as you had when starting out.
- 10 What would you recommend to young couples in a dual career marriage? Should both be considerate of the other’s career aspirations?

## **YOUR (SINGLE) GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT/S OR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY?**

Do YOU have any questions to put to the interviewer?

Do you wish to receive information about the results of this study when they are available?

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