

EXPLORING FLOW IN RETIREMENT

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for

the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the subject

PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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February 2011



CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

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I, Aletia Nortjé, hereby declare that this dissertation, Exploring Flow in Retirement, 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.

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ABSTRACT

This explorative study originated from the researcher's personal encounters with "disappointment, regret and purposelessness" in retirement. The aim of this research study is thus exploring what the opposite of these negative sentiments, namely "successful" aging or "successful" adaptation to retirement could constitute and, most importantly, the role of FLOW therein. Initial indications are that FLOW could play a key role in "successful" retirement. Another focus has been to explore whether and how retirees with post-matric qualifications or training could redeploy their accumulated expertise in the post-retirement years. Various models of social entrepreneurship, ranging from voluntary work to paid work, were found to enhance successful adaptation to retirement, addressing society's needs at the same time.

In this qualitative research study, I have followed a case study approach, interviewing nine participants, whose results were analysed individually and then integrated in a comparative fashion to answer the research questions.

KEY WORDS

Ageism; Differential aging; FLOW; Retirement; Social entrepreneurship; Successful aging.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank God for His grace and providence during this journey of growth and (self) discovery into the role of FLOW in successful, purpose-driven and meaningful retirement, and for blessing me with the following support system:

I would like to thank my mentors whose strengths enabled me to grow and learn, namely

- my promoter, Dr. Beate von Krosigk, who encouraged analytical and critical thinking, yet remained positive, kind and patient, spurring me on to greater heights with challenging questions throughout this learning curve;
- Prof. Marié de Beer, for introducing me to the FLOW concept, for her continued enthusiasm for this project and for her encouragement to explore and develop my own strengths.

Thirdly, I would like to thank my participants for sharing and trusting me with their triumphs and tribulations in their experiences of retirement and enriching my life by teaching me much.

Lastly, and very importantly, I would like to thank my husband, Jan, for his continued support and encouragement throughout this journey, and for granting me the freedom to develop and grow as a person and be the “best me.” In my mind this is one of the greatest gifts one person can give to another. I would also like to thank my mother for her continued prayer support, and my children for their technical wizardry and loving encouragement. To all my friends and family who followed my path of growth with love and support, my heartfelt thanks!

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Nomenclature

Ageism: Ageism, according to Macnab (1994, p. 59), “signifies deprecating and discriminatory attitudes, beliefs and practices towards people because of their age.”

Differential aging: Very few people follow a predictable course in terms of age-related changes over time, and therefore aging is an atypical experience (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Friedrich, 2001; Rowe & Kahn, 1999, Schaie, 2006, 1990), which is also referred to as “differential aging” by Paúl (2007, p. 138).

FLOW: *FLOW*, according to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, is “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 4). Therefore *FLOW* is an experience that is “autotelic” or “the doing itself is the reward” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 67).

Retirement: “cease from or give up office or profession or employment” (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1987).

Social entrepreneurship: According to Young (2006, pp. 66-67), a common thread running through social entrepreneurial activities is the creation of socially added value, resulting in sustained improvement in the social or economic situation of a disadvantaged group.

Successful aging: Rowe and Kahn (1999) see three key aspects in successful aging: 1) preventing disease and disability as far as possible, *inter alia* through good life-style choices; 2) continuing with mental and physical exercise throughout the life span; and 3) keeping up an active life-style, being productive and by fostering strong social relationships.

1 EXPLORING FLOW IN RETIREMENT

1.1 To Retire or not to Retire – that is the Question!

“The debate for the 21st century is not simply: ‘How can people be encouraged to delay retirement?’ It is rather whether or not retirement is any longer a relevant concept” (Minichiello & Coulson, 2005, p. 142). Most Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) reject the idea of retirement, as they are not ready to slow down and be less influential (Smith & Clurman, 2007). Yet, paradoxically, most people want to or are eager to retire, and only an “elite” group leave their jobs “reluctantly”, according to Moody (2006, p. 237). In the USA life expectancy has risen by 30 years since 1900 (Moody, 2006). Therefore, a retired person can expect to live a quarter (Lehr, Re & Wilbers, 2007) or a third (Freedman, 1999) of his or her life in retirement. No wonder that Macnab (1994, p. 46) sees retirement as a “waste of human resources, skills and experience” and Freedman (1999, p. 20) also sees retirees as an “untapped resource for society”.

The subject of this research study is exploring the role of *FLOW* in successful adaptation to retirement, or successful aging and how *FLOW* can contribute to sustainable community involvement, such as volunteer work or social entrepreneurship, in order to address some of society’s needs and challenges. In this chapter, I shall delineate the concepts *retirement* and *FLOW*, before progressing to what *successful aging* constitutes in Chapter 2. However, I shall begin this explorative study with a brief look at the motivation behind the research.

1.2 Reasons for Exploring FLOW in Retirement

Through my work as a psychometrist conducting Creative Retirement Workshops, I aim to help retirees find their strengths and *FLOW* interests. The

concept of *FLOW* was popularised and promoted by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who describes it as “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 4). *FLOW* will be described in more detail from pages 15 to 32.

In helping workshop participants to identify possible *FLOW* interests and strengths, I usually make use of a personality questionnaire such as the MBTI (Myers - Briggs Type Indicator) or KEIRSEY, and other adapted or self-designed interest questionnaires.

I have found that issues of “regret” and “meaninglessness” are often mentioned by workshop participants. These sentiments were also described by Csikszentmihalyi (2002): “Despite the fact that we are now healthier and grow to be older, despite the fact that even the least affluent among us are surrounded by material luxuries undreamed of a few decades ago...and regardless of all the stupendous scientific knowledge we can summon at will, people often end up feeling that their lives have been wasted, that instead of being filled with happiness their years were spent in anxiety and boredom” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 1).

My first encounter with the concepts of regret and meaninglessness however, was much closer to home, when my own father, a retired attorney, became increasingly depressed, wasting away at home in front of the TV after his retirement. His identity was so entangled with his career-self that he could not seem to adjust to the unstructured and goalless environment of retirement. At least the TV-programmes seemed to bring some structure into his life with set programmes at set times that could be watched. Csikszentmihalyi’s (1988c) findings are very similar. He found that most people want more free time, but paradoxically do not know what to do with it once they obtain it. Meaningful and active experiences or challenges are substituted for more passive endeavours, which result in some people becoming irritable, or sad, and

allowing the TV to provide daily structure instead of finding “personally meaningful” and “intrinsic rewards” in challenges (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988c, pp. 378 & 382).

During the time of my father’s steady decline, Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) book, *FLOW: The classic work on how to achieve happiness*, provided the impetus for actively thinking about retirement. Seeing my father become increasingly depressed first planted the seed of: If one knew what brought about *FLOW* – could that help to restore meaning and happiness in retirement? Roberts (2006) in reviewing the *FLOW*-theory is of the opinion that everyone is capable of seeking and experiencing *FLOW* through leisure activities. My father, however, seemed very unhappy during his time of “endless leisure.” Thus began my journey into learning more about *FLOW*, and how *FLOW* tied in with interests, talent, personality and retirement. Creative aging, meaning and happiness became a research topic, as I did not want my future retirement to mimic my father’s type of retirement. Another aim of my retirement workshops is to help participants find practical applications, such as starting a *sustainable* community project from an interest or hobby that could result in positive and meaningful aging, which could also simultaneously benefit society by addressing some of its needs. The premise is that once one experiences *FLOW*, the project becomes a longer-term self-sustaining investment of “psychic energy”, i.e. a process taking place in consciousness, involving thoughts, emotions, will, and memory (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, pp. 30 & 248).

Personality, aptitude, and previous work experience or enjoyable, fulfilling, and interesting parts thereof, could all play an important role in finding *FLOW* and aging creatively. These individual resources influence one’s creative potential, according to Lubart and Guignard (2004). Plucker and Beghetto (2004) define creativity as an ability rather than as a trait. The word trait would imply a more static view, namely that creativity is present in a predetermined measure that does not change with “experience, learning, or maturation” versus a more

“plastic” view which regards creativity as malleable by “experience, instruction, and maturation” (Plucker & Beghetto, 2004, p. 156).

I started reflecting on the process of *creative aging*: could it enhance individual self-enrichment and meaning, and is it possible that it could also inspire retirees to find creative solutions to some of society’s needs? I consequently wondered if one could link *FLOW* to *social entrepreneurship*. Davis (2002) sees social entrepreneurs as creative and practical possibility thinkers who want to make a difference by changing society for the better. Social entrepreneurs tend to be people who diligently follow through on their goals by using their skills and talents (Davis, 2002).

I began to wonder about what happened to all the expertise, knowledge and skills of retirees. I learnt that the elderly (in the UK) tend to spend their time sleeping (9-10 hours) or dozing (1,8 hours), especially due to the use of sleeping tablets and alcohol; watching television (2,9 hours); listening to the radio (1,5 hours); reading (1,3 hours); walking (0,6 hours), and 0,9 hours on pastimes and hobbies (Abrams, 1995). Housework, shopping, cooking, eating and visiting doctors take up 5 hours per day according to a BBC survey, “Daily Life in the 1980’s,” discussed by Abrams (1995, p. 83). Very few of the elderly seem to engage in stimulating and mind-enriching activities or broaden their social interaction such as attending church regularly or belonging to a club. This could result in isolation and even be a threat to longevity, according to Abrams (1995). I could not find statistics for SA in this regard, but one could presume the situation to be similar.

According to Caprara, Steca and Caprara (2007), new psychological research and knowledge are much needed to develop potential even at an older age, for a new appreciation of one’s own strengths, and to promote healthy aging and adaptation. A focus on the resources of old age, rather than on stereotypes of illness, decline and loss of independence, is needed (Caprara et al., 2007; Freedman, 1999; Hill, 2005, 2008; Rowe & Kahn, 1999; World Health

Organisation, 2002). According to the World Health Organisation's Active Ageing Policy framework, it is time for a new paradigm in terms of ageing. Traditionally, old age and retirement have been associated with illness and dependency, but it is time for new policies and programmes that view older people as active participants as well as active contributors to society in economic, cultural, spiritual and social matters (Freedman, 1999). Moody (2006), Rowe and Kahn (1999) and the WHO (2002) echo the same sentiments. Older people must take the lead in forging this new active aging paradigm to generate more positive views on aging, and help to reduce discrimination and abuse. Active aging allows older people to optimise their physical, social and mental potential and this fosters well-being throughout their life course (Hill, 2005, 2008; Moody, 2006; Rowe & Kahn, 1999; WHO, 2002). I am of the opinion that the twenty first century demands a fresh and novel look at aging, at "creative" aging in the broadest sense, i.e. a redeployment of personality, talents, strengths and accumulated expertise. This, in my view, needs to be explored further.

With longevity envisaged and the Baby Boomers retiring in large numbers (Friedrich, 2001; Moody, 2006; Smith & Clurman, 2007), which can be described as an aging avalanche, and as an aging Boomer myself, these and other retirement issues are highly relevant to me. In the next section, I take a brief look at the challenges longevity present.

1.3 The Aging Avalanche

According to Freedman (1999), as well as Rowe and Kahn (1999), half the people in the USA who have ever lived to the age of 65 are currently alive. Life expectancy increased by approximately 3 days per year between the birth of Christ and 1900, while from 1900 to date this increase has risen to 110 days of life expectancy per year (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). This means that life expectancy increased by 30 years during the past hundred years (Freedman, 1999; Moody, 2006). The elderly can thus be expected to enjoy more well-being and

be more healthy and active than ever before. Eighty-year olds might appear to be like sixty-year olds and sixty-year olds like forty-year olds as compared to previous generations (Freedman, 1999).

Retirement will be as long as the childhood or the middle-years since men can expect to live at least a further 15 years and women a further 20 years after having retired (Freedman, 1999). The reasons Rowe and Kahn (1999) provide for this increase in longevity is that people are taking better care of themselves in conjunction with improvement in science and medicine, such as drugs that manage chronic diseases, and new diagnostic equipment which benefit the whole of society, including the aged.

Demographically speaking, Europe as a whole remains the oldest continent in the world with 75 million people aged 65 years and older in 2004 (Fernández-Ballesteros, Pinguart & Torpdahl, 2007). According to the United Nations' predictions, this will increase to 300 million people who will have reached the age of 60 or more by 2050 (Fernández-Ballesteros, et al., 2007b). Eighty year olds will make up 3,4% of the total world population, of which 8% will come from developed countries rather than developing countries according to Paúl (2007), quoting the United Nations' statistics of 1996. According to Prof. Flip Smit, in a keynote presentation at Expo 50Plus in 2008 in Pretoria, the world's elderly over the age of 60 are predicted to reach the 1,2 billion mark in 2025. Using UNISA's Buro of Market research statistics he predicted that there will be 721 000 Whites and 2,05 million Blacks in South Africa who will be over the age of 65 in 2021. The total for Whites, Blacks, Coloureds and Indians who will be older than 65 years in 2021 is predicted to reach 3,3 million.

According to Muller and Stevens (2001), boredom after retirement tends to lead to substance abuse, particularly with regard to alcohol and prescription drugs as well as an escalation of marital conflict. Retirees apparently miss the structure and status that an occupation provided (Muller & Stevens, 2001) and negative predictions abound with regard to the escalation of dependency,

disease and dementia (Freedman, 1999; Macnab, 1994). Csikszentmihalyi (2002), however, presents a more optimistic view of aging, such as when aging is linked to an optimal experience, namely *FLOW*.

Csikszentmihalyi (2002) clearly found in his research that the *FLOW*-experience is not limited to any particular cultural group, irrespective of whether people are affluent or not, young or old, male or female. *FLOW*, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 3), can be defined as an “optimal experience”, or a time when one’s body or mind is stretched in an effort to bring about something meaningful. He also describes it as a “sense of mastery” and “a sense of participation in determining the content of life – that comes as close to what is usually meant by happiness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 3). According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), applications of *FLOW* are already found in school curricula, business, leisure products, services, clinical psychotherapy, the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents, the organisation of activities in old-age homes, and occupational therapy with the handicapped. It is my aim to add *FLOW in retirement* to this list with my research project.

To create a backdrop or context to the above mentioned retirement issues, it is necessary to delineate the concept *retirement*.

1.4 Retirement

1.4.1 Introduction

According to Freedman (1999) and Moody (2006) the retirement age limit of 65 was initially introduced in Europe by Otto von Bismarck. He came up with a retirement plan for soldiers in the Prussian Army in 1875 when the life expectancy for Germans was in their mid-thirties (Freedman, 1999). Pension plans, such as the first private corporate pension plan of the Canadian Great Trunk railroad system in 1875 for workers over the age of sixty, enticed seniors to retire voluntarily (Freedman, 1999).

Compulsory age-related retirement was only introduced during the last part of the nineteenth century, mostly because older workers were seen as unable to keep up with the fast pace of industrial change (Freedman, 1999; Moody, 2006), but was abolished in the USA in 1986 (Moody, 2006). In Europe, mandatory retirement financed by government pension schemes, started in the early twentieth century. In 1890, 68% of men older than 65 in the USA were still working, and roughly a hundred years later this figure had dropped to under 17% (Moody, 2006), mainly because it was cheaper to employ younger rather than older people for the same work (Freedman, 1999; Moody, 2006). In the USA during the Depression of the 1930's there was a notoriously high level of youth unemployment rates. A federal old age pension scheme was thus seen as a way to rectify this problem, and to cut costs at the same time, since older workers usually received higher wages for the same work than their younger counterparts (Freedman, 1999). Previously, only the rich or very ill or those with a regular income could retire. The majority of people could not afford retirement, and they either worked as long as possible or became self-employed (Freedman, 1999). Those who could do neither and did not have relatives to fall back on, came to live in "almshouses" or "poorhouses" where the "pathetic" stereotype of the elderly first began, and has continued to influence our thinking until today, according to Freedman (1999, p. 47). Social Security benefits (federal old-age pension) and beneficiaries steadily increased from 1940 onwards and for the first time the majority of workers could retire and this eventually became the norm as the USA's overall wealth grew (Freedman, 1999). However, when the retirement age was established at 65 years, the average life expectancy in the USA was around 62 years of age in 1940, thus limiting the prospect for payout (Freedman, 1999). Longevity and good health also improved over time and elderly people on pension could live independently, albeit with a lowered status according to society's stereotypes (Freedman, 1999).

According to Moody (2006), contrary to popular stereotype, retirement is not a negative event causing feelings of worthlessness or ill health. However, this has been challenged by several other researchers, such as Rowe and Kahn (1999) and Muller and Stevens (2001).

In the next section, I shall highlight the origins of some of the stereotypes that are still ascribed to retirement and the aging population today, thereby negatively influencing society's views of the aged.

1.4.2 A Brief History of Leisure Retirement

A brief look at the origins of leisure retirement in the USA will help to understand some stereotypes of the elderly that persist even today. The aging population was and is often still viewed as a burden on their families, on the health care system as well as on society's finances (Freedman, 1999). Freedman (1999, p. 14) quotes an American economist, Thurow, who sees seniors as selfish and self-indulgent, affluent, inactive, in need of expensive social services that place a heavy burden on society, and largely dependent on government funds for income. Furthermore, the elderly tend to live in age-segregated communities and only promote their own selfish aims, not caring about the needs of the broader society (Freedman, 1999).

The concept of retirement communities has its origin in the 1920's in Florida in the USA and religious groups and labour organisations were mostly responsible for developing these communities. This development almost came to a halt in 1929 when the stock market crashed (Freedman, 1999). In 1960 a private developer, Del Webb, apparently a brilliant salesman, made a fortune by developing the first of a succession of retirement villages, called Sun City, in Arizona, in the USA. These were age-segregated housing developments for people over fifty. The focus was on sport such as golf, swimming, and bowling and included other recreational facilities as well as shops and restaurants (Freedman, 1999). It was a lucrative "experiment in active ageing" that yielded

2,5 million dollars in sales during the first two days (Freedman, 1999, p. 36). Hundreds of retirement communities were established following the success of the first one. This trend continued for several decades and ingrained a lifestyle of leisure, of disconnection from society's problems, and using up resources as a new token of success for the retired (Freedman, 1999). From the 1950's onward leisure retirement thus became a new status symbol for retirees and another version of the "American Dream" was born (Freedman, 1999, p. 54). Construction companies, life insurance companies and the press actively promoted the idea of an active leisure retirement and thus played a big part in inventing the "golden years" in "age segregated paradises" (Freedman, 1999, pp. 54-55). The success formula was affordability and activity. This started a revolutionary new trend of "disengagement" from a broader youth oriented society that saw older people predominantly as "useless", to pursue a life of active leisure and "a year round vacation", as there were so few other options available to older people (Freedman, 1999, pp. 37 & 58-59). Active leisure greatly improved the image of elderly people (Moody, 2006), but the drive behind this new initiative, according to Freedman (1999), was money, not values. Volunteerism existed, but only within the walls of the retirement facility, and few projects reached out to the outside world (Freedman, 1999).

The above situation is almost the opposite of previous years in which older people were fully integrated into society and honoured (Daatland, 2007) as wise mentors of cultural values and skills for the younger generation (Freedman, 1999). Previously, in the agricultural era of pre-industrial America, retirement was virtually unknown. Farmers worked the land as long as they were healthy. Older women were usually midwives, or helped with child rearing (Freedman, 1999).

To summarise, in the early 1800's a paradigm shift moved the emphasis away from valuing elders towards "youth and progress" (Freedman, 1999, p. 43). During the nineteenth century this view intensified, and elders were seen as "useless, dependent, and obsolete" (Freedman, 1999, p. 43). Retirement

villages were first hailed as status symbols of leisure retirement, but later became symbols of self-indulgence and idle retirement (Freedman, 1999).

In the next section, I describe the circumstances currently surrounding retirement.

1.4.3 Retirement Today

It is apparent from the previous section that age segregated retirement options seem to be a double-edged sword, providing status and activity, yet also contributing to age-stereotyping. *The question now arises as to how retirement is viewed in the 21st century?*

Many people complain about work, yet most need work to maintain a sense of self-worth and well-being (Friedrich, 2001). Retirement results in a loss of accumulated skills, experience, resources and talents in the workforce (Macnab, 1994; Moody, 2006; Smith & Clurman, 2007), and therefore a phased retirement would be preferable (Moody, 2006). The movement from an industrial towards a post-industrial economy and therefore towards a more technological driven society, could mean that older workers' skills could become obsolete without individuals being retrained (Moody, 2006). The result, according to Macnab (1994, p. 2), could be that retirees may experience feeling "useless and bored, of having a limited sense of power and identity in their restricted lifestyle". Many may thus still experience retirement as a loss of status, networks and identity as the "very word 'retirement' suggests in-activity, withdrawal, passivity – a time of doing nothing and being free" (Macnab, 1994, p. 3).

According to Moody (2006), however, the majority of retirees look forward to retiring *inter alia* as an opportunity for self-fulfilment. The real problem (in the USA) lies with the unstructured and abundant free time available and not with work *per se*. This free time is not utilised for the greater good and thus lacks

meaning (Freedman, 1999; Moody, 2006). A greater emphasis should therefore be placed on productivity, whether in work or leisure, or in volunteering activities (Freedman, 1999; Moody, 2006). Promoting early retirement for older employees often benefit a younger and generally more technologically advanced workforce, emphasizing the issue of meaningless unstructured time even more (Freedman, 1999; Moody, 2006).

However, the idea of less involvement in the world is increasingly being challenged as the Baby Boomers retire (Moody, 2006; Smith & Clurman, 2007). The generation born between 1946 and 1964, better known as the Baby Boomers, are generally better educated and healthier than their parents or grandparents were (Freedman, 1999). Of those who have pension benefits in the USA, 80% want to work part-time during retirement, of which 35% want to work part-time because of interest and enjoyment (Friedrich, 2001; Smith & Clurman, 2007). According to Smith and Clurman (2007, pp. 43-44), Baby Boomers are not retiring in the same way as their parents did, as they are not ready to “step aside and let others take the reins” and therefore they reject taking up the role of retiree. Smith and Clurman (2007) found that retreating into insignificance is not a preferred option for Baby Boomers. Retirement is associated with old age and Boomers are apparently unwilling to think of themselves in this light.

Quality of retirement is seen by many Boomers as determined by an “attitude, not a life situation”, meaning that the retirement experience is positively influenced by continued active and meaningful engagement in life, which entails more than merely the presence or absence of work. Withdrawing from former meaningful activities is thus not a preferred option for the Boomer generation and attitudinally this will be reflected in continuously seeking out new possibilities (Smith & Clurman, 2007). Boomers want to keep working during retirement, but also spend more time at home, thus working from home has become a new trend to fit the idea of “reinvention” rather than retirement (Smith & Clurman, 2007, p. 44).

Helping Boomers to keep up an active lifestyle of perpetual middle age by employing all kinds of aids to slow down or help with physical decline is already big business in the USA. Fulfilling and meaningful work are associated with positive well-being (Friedrich, 2001), and the Boomer group is perceived as having an opportunity to address society's needs by redeploying their accumulated skills, knowledge and expertise in a new way (Smith & Clurman, 2007). Research shows that Boomers are "redefining retirement" and opposing "the myth of retirement – of no longer being an active, contributing member of society" (Freedman, 1999, p. 229; Smith & Clurman, 2007). "Demographers and political scientists are predicting that the unprecedented numbers of the Baby Boomer generation will be exerting powerful social and political influences in the decades to come" (Minichiello & Coulson 2005, p. 32).

In a 1999 survey by Peter D. Hart and associates, participants had to choose between a traditional retirement (more leisure, "taking it easy") and active retirement involving setting new goals. Sixty five per cent of Americans aged 50-75, chose the latter (Freedman, 1999, p. 224). More life-long learning, including degrees for those aged 60 and older, life-long contribution, and doing some form of work in the retirement years were important for 80% of the Boomers (Freedman, 1999). A retirement that focuses more on finding meaning than on financial gain thus seems to be a new Boomer trend, with travelling and then volunteering as emerging top priorities (Freedman, 1999). According to Smith and Clurman (2007), Boomers want to self-invent, meaning that they want to focus on actualising their own potential, with an added focus on family relationships. Active retirement is already in place according to Freedman (1999), but society still lacks the vision to inspire more retirees to take on new and also self-transcending roles in society.

There are, however, some practical problems standing in the way of retirees stepping into these new roles. According to Abrams (1995, p. 78), the average retired elderly in Europe, aged 65 and older, are individuals who presumably have more time for leisure, yet who experience a decline in income after their

retirement. This decline in income results in an increased cut in expenditure for goods and services, and less money to spend (e.g. on leisure activities) the longer they spend time in retirement (Abrams, 1995; Biggs, 1993; Muller & Stevens, 2001). Eating out, travelling and accommodation, club-membership, visits to cinemas, transport, and vehicle maintenance become increasingly more difficult to afford (Abrams, 1995). Health problems are a second restriction to enjoying leisure time (Abrams, 1995), and keeping aging Boomers healthy to maintain an active lifestyle, is already big business in America (Smith & Clurman, 2007). Educational limits are a third constraint according to Abrams (1995), however, Smith and Clurman (2007) report that Boomers are very interested in academic pursuits for self-development purposes, even after retirement.

Having highlighted some general challenges retirees face in the retirement years, I now take a brief look at gender differences for retirement in the next section.

1.4.4 Gender Differences in Retirement

According to Moody (2006), women over the age of 55, and up to the age of 64 in the USA tend not to favour early retirement, but work longer than their male counterparts. This is probably due to the fact that men, on average, have higher pension funds. Women tend to outlive men, and must face a longer retirement with less pension benefits because of lower average incomes. Women's income on average is three quarters of that of males for people living in the USA. Women also make up nearly three quarters of the poor elderly in the USA (Moody, 2006). Nevertheless, beyond the age of 65 the majority of both men and women are retired (Moody, 2006).

This general retirement overview concludes the outline or framework of retirement within which *FLOW* can now be contextualised. *FLOW* will be further investigated in the next section to explore its possible importance as

one of the vital aspects of successful aging or successful adaptation to retirement.

1.5 FLOW

1.5.1 Introduction

FLOW, according to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, is “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 4). Therefore *FLOW* is an experience that is “autotelic” or “the doing itself is the reward” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 67). An activity that produces such enjoyable and optimal experience causes people to do it for its own sake, and not for any external rewards, even when it is difficult, or dangerous (e.g. rock climbing) according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002). This “autotelic” or intrinsically rewarding experience is in contrast to an “exotelic” experience where activities are pursued because of external pressures or motives. Many activities may start as “exotelic” and with time develop into an “autotelic” activity, such as forcing a child to practise piano scales which later brings a “*FLOW*” of wonderful music (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 67).

Although *FLOW* is not a primal survival instinct such as sex or food, it “seems to function like other universal sources of positive rewards, like food or sexuality,” producing pleasure that motivates the repeat of the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988c, p. 367). As soon as basic survival problems are addressed, new expectations, needs or desires come to the fore which tend to bring with it the hope of happiness, but... as our “level of wealth and comforts keeps increasing, the sense of well-being we hoped to achieve keeps receding into the distance” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 10). Yet the function of *FLOW* is to foster growth that fulfils one’s “potentialities” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988c, p. 367). Research by the latter author in many countries found this to be equally

true for cultures, age groups, gender, the poor and the rich. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), money (research found a mild correlation between wealth and happiness), power, status, possessions, new friends, accumulating things, alcohol, drugs, and expensive pastime do not necessarily make people happy – only improving the quality of their experiences makes people happy.

Religion, science and politics can be used to either oppress or benefit people. In the same way *FLOW*, as an optimal experience, can become addictive and can be used for either good or bad. *FLOW* is thus not ‘good’ *per se*: “It is good only in that it has the potential to make life more rich, intense, and meaningful; it is good because it increases the strength and complexity of the self” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 70). Skills and challenges can thus also be used in a destructive way, such as building a nuclear bomb, gambling or committing crime, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1993).

In the light of the possible benefits of *FLOW*, especially in retirement, the origins of *FLOW*, are now further examined to create a more comprehensive backdrop to this experience. Thereafter various application areas for the *FLOW* experience are discussed, such as during movement, by employing the senses, while thinking, at work, during relationships and when chaos reigns. Lastly, the consequences of the absence of *FLOW* are delineated.

1.5.2 The Discovery of FLOW

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) observed male artists working, sculpting and painting for his doctoral research. These artists were very absorbed in these activities, and intrinsically motivated as none expected their work to make them rich or famous. Until then Freud’s “sublimation,” which refers to “the symbolic expression of the artists’ true desires, which are repressed instinctual cravings” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988a, p. 4) were given as reasons for this immersion in an activity. Maslow came the closest to identifying intrinsically rewarding experiences with what he referred to as “peak experiences” due to a desire for

“self-actualisation,” meaning a need to develop and test the boundaries of one’s potential through “activity and experience” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988a, p. 5).

A notable forerunner of intrinsic motivation was Richard de Charms, who did research with schoolchildren who “owned their behaviour,” and therefore enjoyed their chosen activities whether there were external rewards or not (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988a, p. 6). In the 1970’s researchers at the universities of Rochester and Stanford discovered and focused on the behavioural aspect of intrinsic motivation, the causes and consequences, but more in laboratory type experiments, rather than natural settings. Csikszentmihalyi (1988a) on the other hand, focused on participants’ subjective experiences. He interviewed over 200 people involved in activities for which they got no remuneration and little recognition. They included amateur athletes, chess masters, rock climbers, dancers, high school basketball players, and composers of music (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988a). This was the beginning of the *FLOW* concept which suggested that intrinsically motivated quality experiences could be found in many activities and settings such as work, education, leisure activities and play. These optimal experiences tended to be influenced by culture Csikszentmihalyi (1988b).

FLOW has found application in a variety of settings as has been discussed, but what prompts this optimal experience to occur? The conditions for *FLOW* to occur are described in the next section.

1.5.3 The Conditions for FLOW

FLOW as an optimal experience may sometimes occur by chance, under the right favourable internal and external circumstances, but usually *FLOW* occurs during a structured activity, and not when someone is passively engaged in a leisure activity such as watching television (Csikszentmihaly, 2002).

Csikszentmihalyi (1993, pp. 178 & 184) lists eight conditions for *FLOW* to occur:

- clear goals
- skills and challenges are matched and therefore “higher complexity” becomes possible
- single-mindedness
- intense concentration
- a perceived sense of control (this usually happens when skills and challenges are matched)
- loss of self-consciousness due to being deeply involved in the action at hand
- altered sense of time (perception of time passing quickly or slowly)
- autotelic experience or wanting to repeat an activity because of the enjoyment it brings

Spontaneous feelings of well-being can be triggered by anything a person holds dear, but most of the optimal experiences occur with activities which are goal directed, with clear goals being set, activities that require skills to meet challenges, and activities that have set rules (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). The “investment of psychic energy” or the “processes taking place in consciousness – thoughts, emotions, will, and memory” and immediate feedback enhance the experience tremendously (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, pp. 48 & 248). To build enjoyment into life, the challenges one faces must be neither too easy nor too difficult, so that there is “no excess psychic energy left over to process any information but what the activity offers” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 53). Initially Csikszentmihalyi (1988b) theorised that *FLOW* would occur when there is an optimal ratio of 1:1 of challenges to skills. These theoretical predictions, however, were not always confirmed. When challenges and skills are below what is normal for a certain individual, the person would not be in *FLOW* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Therefore, challenges and skills need to be in balance for *FLOW* to occur (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Mitchell, 1988). Argyle (2001) found that contrary to Csikszentmihalyi’s *FLOW*-theory,

the most enjoyable activities were not always those that were the most challenging, but those that were the most social in nature. He also found that dangerous sports, where challenges outranked skills, were the most enjoyable, and although no skills or challenges were involved while watching TV, the activity was still very popular (Argyle, 2001).

Tremendous concentration in the present, and not the past or the future, tends to allow only selected stimuli into awareness, and as a result, people become so absorbed in the activity at hand that this activity becomes “almost automatic” and other stimuli tend to be blocked out (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 53). In *FLOW* there is thus no room for self-scrutiny, or self-consciousness, and this results in a stronger self-concept (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). An overly self-conscious person who bases self-esteem on others’ opinion will find it difficult to experience *FLOW* because of an inability to lose “consciousness of the self” and will find it difficult to pursue intrinsic goals (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 64). According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 85), the same holds true for an overly self-centred person, who cannot become “more complex” as all “psychic energy at its disposal is invested in fulfilling its current goals, instead of learning about new ones”. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, pp. 30 & 248), “psychic energy” refers to a process taking place in consciousness, and which involves thoughts, emotions, will, and memory. He also sees control over consciousness as liberating and a determinant of the quality of life because where too much “psychic energy” is “wrapped up in the self”, one cannot “lose oneself in an activity that offers no rewards outside the interaction itself” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 85).

A person can make him- or herself happy, or miserable, regardless of circumstances, just by changing focus. Selecting which feelings and thoughts to act upon, i.e. choosing what will appear in consciousness as “intentionally ordered information” can either make life miserable (“psychic entropy”) or richer, such as during an optimal experience, where personal goals are actively pursued and happiness ensues (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 26). Order

in consciousness produces *FLOW*, and the more *FLOW* experiences one has, the better the quality of one's life will be. "Attention shapes the self, and is in turn shaped by it," which Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 34) describes as "circular causality". The result is a more complex organisation of the self, where both differentiation (movement towards uniqueness or separation from others) and integration (a union with other people and their ideas) take place in a balanced way, avoiding both selfishness and conformity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). According to Lyubomirsky (2001), self-proclaimed happy people reflected less on themselves and they compared themselves less often to others in a negative way.

Activities that require the learning of skills, intrinsic goals, feedback opportunities and intense involvement and concentration therefore make *FLOW* easier to occur (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). However, Car (2004) warns that in the extreme it is implied that all kinds of rewards reduce intrinsic motivation. Motivation, according to Car (2004), should rather be seen along a continuum, from intrinsic to extrinsic to not being motivated. People may also perform the same activity at different times alternating between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. According to Car (2004), feedback-type rewards do not influence intrinsic motivation negatively.

In the next section, the result and benefits of the intrinsically motivated experience of *FLOW*, are described.

1.5.4 The Result and Benefits of FLOW

The result and benefits of *FLOW* are important as it could potentially lead to a happier and more meaningful retirement. *FLOW* is an intrinsically rewarding experience, which "makes the present instant more enjoyable, as it builds self-confidence that allows us to develop skills and make significant contributions to humankind" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 42). It therefore allows a person to "transcend" himself or herself and his or her consciousness to become more

“complex”. Transcending the self means that one uses one’s “finely honed uniqueness for the common good” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, pp. 235-236), and becoming more “complex” refers to living a balanced lifestyle between having only individual goals or “autonomous individuality” (extreme self-differentiation) and on the other hand being so other-focused that the self almost disappears (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 42). *FLOW* is thus also a state of mind when “consciousness is harmoniously ordered” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 6 & p. 67). According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), this means that intelligence, knowledge, feelings and actions are in harmony and are used to bring goals, desires, and experiences in line to enhance one’s own potential and to benefit others as well. The *FLOW* experience contributes to the “growth of the self” and includes the “mastery of wisdom and spirituality” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, pp. 237 & 248). This, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1993), means to see through, and beyond the obvious, focus on essentials and the common good, and cultivate discipline and responsibility so as not to become “trapped within oneself...” (p. 248).

In the growth of the self lies the potential of self-discovery, enhanced self-esteem and creativity, talent development, and higher levels of performance, motivation and complexity. In turn, this growth of the self results in *FLOW* activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, 2002). Experiencing *FLOW* consequently also reduces stress, which leads to fewer health problems because of increased feelings of happiness and self-realisation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993) and a better quality of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) as there is a carry over effect of *FLOW* to the rest of one’s life which increases happiness levels (LeFevre, 1988).

I explain the concept of micro-*FLOW* next, i.e. when *FLOW* is experienced in a more limited way than has been described up to now.

1.5.5 Micro-FLOW

Micro-*FLOW* refers to the daily, almost routine common experiences or patterns of behaviour that create structure, and which provide meaning and enjoyment in one's life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, 1975). Micro-*FLOW* activities fill the gaps between routine tasks. These activities can be done with or without a specific purpose, such as daydreaming or listening to music or reading. Other examples of micro-*FLOW* activities include socialising with others, shopping, browsing, visiting galleries or kinaesthetic activities such as fiddling, walking or running. Even activities such as singing, humming or watching television are labelled as micro-*FLOW* as *FLOW* exists on a continuum and varies from an extremely low to an extremely high complexity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, 1975). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Graef (1975), enjoyable trivial activities, at a "lower level of complexity" and therefore requiring less skill, can produce micro-*FLOW* throughout one's day. They also found that people show unique personal preferences for micro-*FLOW* activities. Micro-*FLOW* experiences result in a feeling of being alert, relaxed, of having a positive self-image, and of experiencing spontaneous instances of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi & Graef, 1975).

These experiences can diminish boredom, but because of lesser complexity cannot produce *FLOW*, due to skills and challenges which are mismatched. Only when challenges and skills are matched or in balance, when a person becomes totally involved in what he or she is doing, and when a person is intrinsically motivated by using all his or her attention and skills to cope with the challenges at hand, only then can *FLOW* appear as an optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). However, according to Csikszentmihalyi and Graef (1975), micro-*FLOW* experiences may be as intrinsically rewarding as experiences of *FLOW*.

Using intrinsic motivation, engaging the body and the mind and finding a balance between challenges and skills, are the topics of the next section.

1.5.6 FLOW during Movement

FLOW, during movement, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), is not only the result of outstanding athletic skills, dancing skills, martial arts and the like. To achieve *FLOW* during movement, the body must also engage the mind: any person, no matter how unfit, can challenge him or herself to improve a past performance or skill. The idea is to set an overall goal as well as lesser goals and then to find ways to measure progress, to continue setting bigger challenges to avoid boredom, and to fully concentrate and develop and improve the necessary skills to match these challenges. Even the simple act of walking can produce *FLOW* by selecting a route, deciding where to stop or what to see, measuring progress in terms of time and distance, increasing challenges, and focusing on feelings or ideas. The common elements in *FLOW* activities are a sense of discovery, creative feelings, motivation to higher levels of performance, and most importantly, growth of the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, 1988b).

Contrary to popular belief, expensive leisure activities do not increase happiness. A high investment in psychic energy, however, does, and therefore activities like knitting or gardening are more rewarding than passive activities, like watching TV (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). This has been challenged by Argyle (2001) who reported that people watching television find the activity pleasant and rewarding, contrary to Csikszentmihalyi's theory, presumably because it can promote a positive mood or alleviate loneliness. The most popular television shows are light entertainment, such as sit-coms, soap operas and game shows. Watching television takes up the third position with regard to time invested in an activity after sleeping and working. Those who spend a lot of time in front of the television generally do not belong to leisure groups, and they participate less in active leisure (Argyle, 2001).

In the next section, I delineate sensory *FLOW* experiences.

1.5.7 FLOW and the Senses

Sensory *FLOW* activities involve getting delight through the senses, such as looking at beautiful landscapes, art, or listening to music. Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 109) views music as “organised auditory information, [which] helps organise the mind, and therefore reduces psychic entropy”. Listening to music thus not only helps to alleviate boredom and anxiety, but intensely listening to music can also bring about *FLOW* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Argyle (2001) agrees that music promotes a positive mood, and variations thereof such as excitement, calmness, deep joy and happiness. Music can also promote a negative mood such as aggression. However, there is no evidence that music produces long-lasting satisfaction or happiness (Argyle, 2001). Focusing on tasting and appreciating food, can likewise result in *FLOW* when one approaches eating or cooking “in a spirit of adventure and curiosity” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 115).

In the following section I progress from organised auditory information to symbolic activities that order the mind.

1.5.8 FLOW and Thought

Activities that order the mind are usually symbolic, and make use of language, mathematics, or other abstract systems like games, and computer language (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). “Some of the most exhilarating experiences we undergo are generated inside the mind, triggered by information that challenges our ability to think...” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 117). To produce *FLOW* in a mental activity, the challenge and the skill required to meet the challenge must be in balance. Rules, goals, and feedback are also important as previously stated. All forms of mental *FLOW* depend on memory, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), i.e. organising information and exercising control over consciousness. Words can thus be compared to building blocks or an ordering system for information that makes abstract thinking possible

(Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Reading or writing poetry, wordplays, prose, plays, journaling, or engaging in research can produce *FLOW*; as can forging new theoretical patterns or solving “challenging intellectual puzzles” in science or philosophy (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.135).

The delineation of the role of *FLOW* shifts from the “working” of the mind to work in the workplace in the following section.

1.5.9 FLOW during Work

Experiencing *FLOW* during work and optimising one’s potential in the process as well as fostering positive social relationships, improve one’s quality of life. *FLOW* occurs at work because work has set goals, feedback, structure, and challenges that provide an opportunity to get fully absorbed in a given task (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). People who are often in *FLOW* at work feel “strong”, “active”, “creative”, “concentrated”, and “motivated” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 158). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1993), work as an opportunity for excitement, novelty and variety provides more occasion for being in *FLOW* than leisure because the latter is usually marked by unstructured time. Paradoxically, people still prefer leisure to work, even when there is little opportunity for *FLOW*, such as watching television where no challenges and no skills are involved. The “paradox of work” suggests that although people reported more *FLOW* possibilities at work, and rarely in leisure, most people still preferred leisure to work (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 157). Csikszentmihalyi found that motivation at work was generally low, even when it provided *FLOW*, and high in leisure pursuits, even when the quality of the leisure activity could be described as low, such as when watching television. People therefore wanted to work less and spend more time in leisure. In leisure pursuits, such as reading, watching television or going to a restaurant, most of the challenges and the skills that are required are below average (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). One reason people may prefer leisure to work is that work may be regarded as achieving other peoples’ rather than one’s own

goals. People may also find it difficult to be fully immersed in work-*FLOW* for long periods, and thus may seek relaxation to get away from the demands of work (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Lefevre, 1988). Lack of variety and challenges, too much stress and pressure and too little time to spend with one's family as well as conflict at work, also contributed to people preferring leisure to work (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Argyle (2001) reports that retired people tend to be happier in retirement than at work, especially those who had stressful or boring jobs.

Mitchell (1988, pp. 36 & 40) proposes that there is enough evidence to support the theory that most people find *FLOW* not in their productive work, but rather in their leisure pursuits. He describes "nonflow situations" (as work often is) as a state where there is imbalance between a challenge and a skill. A brief imbalance may result in boredom or anxiety, but when personal and meaningful goals are thwarted over a longer period of time "alienation" may be the result. Alienation, according to Mitchell (1988), is a subjective but conscious state in which an individual experiences constraints, such as an environment that is overregulated with too many rules. Alienation is also the result when ability exceeds responsibility and therefore personal creativity, spontaneity and own interests are inhibited. The results are feelings of frustration, powerlessness and self-estrangement. "Anomie" on the other hand, is experienced when responsibility exceeds ability, when uncertainty dominates and a sense of meaninglessness and isolation is experienced due to inadequate social support. Predictably, this leads to a search for "social stability, security, and certainty". *FLOW* only results when ability and responsibility are in balance (Mitchell, 1988).

The quality of life, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), depends on how one experiences work and on the quality of social relations. *FLOW* can be an optimal experience for adult workers, but the type of occupation and the type of activity determine the time in this state and the quality thereof (Mitchell, 1988). Allison and Carlisle Duncan (1988, p. 124) found for example that women

doing manual labour often experienced “antiflow” at work due to the boredom of unchallenging work. Professional women’s situations differed greatly in that they experienced work as “challenging” and “stimulating”, and therefore their involvement and focus caused the perspective that time passed quickly.

FLOW can be increased by improving the necessary skills to meet increasing challenges and to work in a goal-directed manner. “Thus transformed, work becomes enjoyable, and as a result of a personal investment of psychic energy, it feels as if it were freely chosen as well” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, pp. 151-152). Thus, the more variety, flexible challenges, clear goals, and immediate feedback there are in a job (like in a game), the more enjoyable an activity will become. Nevertheless, “even the most favourable external conditions do not guarantee that a person will be in flow. Because optimal experience depends on a subjective evaluation of what the possibilities for action are, and of one’s own capacities”... (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 154).

Argyle (2001) reports that most people who lose their jobs become less happy. Being unemployed has a detrimental effect on life satisfaction and all aspects of happiness, and feelings of boredom, low self-esteem, apathy, and aggression ensue (Argyle, 2001). Unemployment also promotes passive leisure, and poor mental and physical health. According to Argyle (2001), work is beneficial since most people are happier and enjoy better mental and physical health when they are employed. However, Argyle (2001) also states that retirees tend to be happier than those who work, especially retirees who had boring or too challenging jobs. People who found their work interesting, on the other hand, and who were happy with their salaries, were generally less happy not working any more. Retirees, who keep on working, generally also live longer. It is therefore necessary to make a distinction between retirees and those who are unemployed (Argyle, 2001).

Free time is generally wasted if it is unstructured and lacks goals, feedback, rules and challenges, all of which prevent optimal experiences. According to

Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 162), leisure activities that demand skill, require goals and also set limits, incorporate personal interests and which require inner discipline, “make leisure what it is supposed to be – a chance for recreation”. He is of the opinion that the modern leisure industry tends to promote passive leisure: “instead of using our physical and mental resources to experience flow, most of us spend many hours each week watching celebrated athletes playing in enormous stadiums. Instead of making music, we listen to platinum records cut by millionaire musicians. Instead of making art, we go to admire paintings that brought in the highest bids at the latest auction. We do not run risks acting on our own beliefs, but occupy hours each day watching actors who pretend to have adventures, engaged in mock-meaningful action” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 162).

Moving away from work and leisure to investing “psychic energy” in relationships is the topic of the next section.

1.5.10 FLOW and Relationships

Csikszentmihalyi (2002) explains that people tend to be happy, alert and cheerful in the company of friends, family or other people. Yet relationships can also make people depressed when they do not work out. A happy relationship depends on how much mutual “psychic energy” is invested in the relationship and in each other’s goals (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 190). Sharing mutual goals with family and friends keeps communication channels open (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). According to Car (2004, p. 63), intimate relationships can be improved if the psychological and the erotic dimensions of a relationship become more “complex”, for example by caring deeply for one’s partner, by sharing interests, hopes and dreams, stresses, losses and adventures, and by sharing the responsibilities of raising children. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) is also of the opinion that one can improve the quality of life by making relationships more like *FLOW* experiences, that is making it more enjoyable and a fulfilling source of happiness.

Most people feel pain or emptiness when they are lonely and most people therefore enjoy any activity more in the company of others as opposed to being alone. Boredom and loneliness often lead people to turn to television or recreational drugs or obsessive activities such as house cleaning to forget about their personal worries. Yet, on the other hand, solitude can also be seen as an opportunity for growth; thus as an opportunity to achieve a higher level of complexity, such as improving skills to achieve goals that cannot be attained whilst in the company of others (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Activities that require concentration and that increase skills, lead to self-development, and therefore *FLOW* activities lead to growth and “greater complexity of consciousness”, while obsessive activities only keep the mind busy to diminish boredom or anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 170). The habit of finding challenges in solitude needs to be formed in adolescence since a person who has not learnt to be comfortable with solitude, may turn to external distractions such as drugs, entertainment and excitement (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Retirees are happier when they are with friends than when they are with their spouses or families. This is not surprising, as a friendship usually involves mutual goals and activities, and therefore it is also mutually enjoyable and can lead to inner growth in those involved (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). When challenges provide opportunities for growth, such as learning or improving skills, this leads to “higher levels of complexity.” Subsequently, when physical energy declines with age and it becomes hard to explore the “external world,” the “inner reality” can be further explored (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, pp. 172 & 175). Someone who rarely gets bored, and who does not constantly need his or her external environment to provide enjoyment, can be regarded as leading a creative life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Another form of creativity is the ability to transform a challenge into a *FLOW* activity, and this is discussed in the following section.

1.5.11 FLOW during Chaos

According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), the ability to transform adversity into a challenge or *FLOW* activity that adds quality to life, can be seen as a rare gift and the product of how someone interprets circumstances as either a threat or as an opportunity for action. Csikszentmihalyi (2002, pp. 203-204) lists the following inherent characteristics of people that are conducive to bringing about *FLOW*:

- 1) people with an internal locus of control who have an “implicit belief that their destiny is in their hands”;
- 2) people who are self-confident, yet not self-absorbed, who are more externally focused than on investing too much “psychic energy” on “the concerns and desires of the ego”; and
- 3) people who can generate alternative solutions to an obstacle, and create new goals instead of focusing on inner turmoil.

The “autotelic” person is one who easily transforms potential pressure into pleasant challenges, and who works on his or her self-chosen goals. Such a person who is “never bored, seldom anxious, involved with what goes on, and in flow most of the time may be said to have an autotelic self. The autotelic self transforms potentially entropic experience into flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 209). Such a person is able to set clear, but flexible goals that have intrinsic meaning. Taking responsibility, such a person is also willing to develop the necessary skills that stretch his or her abilities to implement the chosen goals (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Focusing on and staying involved in a chosen activity, pursuing purpose driven goals, and losing self-consciousness, i.e. not evaluating the self whilst immersed in an activity, are important further steps to experiencing *FLOW*, despite possible adverse circumstances. When actions and feelings are in harmony because of the above, a sense of being meaningfully engaged in an activity is likely to follow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

In the next section I explain what happens when *FLOW* is absent.

1.5.12 The Absence versus the Presence of FLOW

When there is an absence of *FLOW* people tend to be engaged in activities that are either wasteful or destructive, which result in “entropy” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 197). “Psychic entropy” is the result of having little control over consciousness on a cognitive, emotional and self-determination level, and this negatively influences the quality of one’s life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 36). “Psychic entropy” can be experienced as “fear, boredom, apathy, anxiety, confusion, jealousy, and a hundred other nuances”, depending on the nature of the goals thwarted (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988b, p. 22). *FLOW* as an optimal experience is the opposite of “psychic entropy”, and brings order into consciousness according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 39).

He gives the example of juvenile delinquents in rich suburbs who are bored due to a lack of positive role models, and who turn to crime or addiction as an artificial way of acquiring an optimal experience. When there is an over emphasis on passive pastimes such as watching TV, it is a sign that too few *FLOW* experiences exist in a community, such as being actively engaged in activities like crafts, music, volunteer work, sport and arts. Passivity does not increase growth in a person and infrequent *FLOW* experiences lead to little pleasure in relationships and work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993).

Csikszentmihalyi (1993) lists the following positive consequences for people who experience *FLOW* regularly: creativity such as seen in science or art; peak performance, for example in sport; talent development; work enjoyment and motivation; less stress and higher self-esteem. *FLOW* is the most important element of enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and results in happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). However, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002) and Lyubomirsky (2010), *FLOW* can become addictive and result in neglecting one’s duties or the needs of people, often those closest to oneself.

Having explored the concepts of *retirement* and *FLOW*, the next section delineates the research objectives.

1.6 Research Objectives and Questions

In retirement the retiree has a new opportunity to restructure time previously taken up by work or other non-chosen responsibilities. The concept of *FLOW* can play an important role in retirement, as *FLOW* activities are meaningful because they are *freely chosen* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1988b), there seems to be a carry-over effect of *FLOW* to the rest of life in terms of the subjective rating of the quality of life as the time in *FLOW* increases. Therefore, it is imperative to ask questions about what successful aging constitutes to gain more knowledge thereof, as much is known about pathological aging, but very little about successful aging (Vaillant, 1990). According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), *FLOW* also means that intelligence, knowledge, feelings and actions are in harmony and used to bring goals, desires, and experiences in line to enhance one's own potential and to benefit others as well. However, how does the retiree accomplish this? My research intends to discover if and how finding *FLOW* in retirement can result in successful, happy and meaningful aging in the retirement years. Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 48) explains one of the benefits of *FLOW* as follows: "Without enjoyment life can be endured, and it can even be pleasant. But it can be so only precariously, depending on luck and the co-operation of the external environment. To gain personal control over the quality of experience, however, one needs to learn how to build enjoyment into what happens day in, day out". My first research aim, therefore, is to explore the value of *FLOW* in the post-retirement years.

My second research aim is to explore whether knowing one's *FLOW* interests can lead to sustainable involvement in the community and to social entrepreneurial projects, such as by transcending the self and finding meaning in retirement whilst addressing certain needs in society.

My third research aim is to determine if retirees with an academic background or post-matric training are better equipped to utilise *FLOW* to help with society's needs, due to their accumulated knowledge and expertise. Finding out what would enhance *FLOW* in retirement is therefore very important, as Argyle (2001) found that middle-class and educated people have more resources and interests to replace employment. Higher levels of education in older people show a positive relationship with higher levels of "self-direction, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and personal growth", according to Caprara, et al. (2007, p. 120).

Exploring *FLOW* in retirement will hopefully contribute to understanding more about successful aging or successful adaptation to retirement as it is embodied in finding personal *FLOW*. Finding *FLOW* in retirement will hopefully contribute to sustainable community involvement such as volunteer work or social entrepreneurship in order to address some of society's needs and challenges.

The research questions therefore are as follows:

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?
- Can knowing one's *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society's needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?
- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-matric training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

1.7 Overview

Chapter 1 served as an introduction to the various aspects of *FLOW* and of *retirement*.

Chapter 2 focuses on *successful retirement* and its relation to *FLOW*.

Chapter 3 gives a detailed account of the chosen *research design*, *methodology*, and *analysis of data*, as well as the *ethics* used in exploring *FLOW* in retirement.

Chapters 4 to 12 provide the research findings for the nine participants.

Chapter 13 presents the integrated findings for the nine participants.

Chapter 14 provides the conclusion and future research suggestions.

The Appendices contain the questionnaires and the consent form.

2 EXPLORING SUCCESSFUL AGING, OPTIMAL AGING, AND POSITIVE AGING IN RELATION TO FLOW AND AGE-RELATED DECLINE

2.1 Introduction

“We all know the phrase ‘You’re not getting older, you’re getting better!’ It’s a funny phrase, because we’d all like to believe it, since we’re all getting older, seemingly at an increasingly rapid rate. But I think we all share some cynicism about the phrase....It seems like wishful thinking” (Sheldon, 2006, p. 216).

In the light of our collective cynicism as described above, and Hill’s (2008, p. 6) warning that, as one ages, “society expects you to act your age. Older people are sick, older people are ugly, older people are obsolete, and older people are definitely not sexy”, the question arises: is there any hope to age successfully, and experience some *FLOW* in the process, and what would that entail?

Successful aging, optimal aging, positive aging, productive aging, active aging, adaptive aging, or aging well, are late 20th century ideas without universally accepted definitions (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Fernández-Ballesteros, Kruse, Zamarron & Caprara, 2007; Pederson & Harris, 1990; Rowe & Kahn, 1999; Sadler & Biggs, 2006). A focus on aging includes concepts such as health, life satisfaction and quality of life (Freund & Baltes, 2007; Hill, 2005, 2008), and genetic, biomedical, behavioural and social factors (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Baltes and Baltes (1990, p. 4) broadly refer to research on successful aging as identifying “factors and conditions” to aid the potential development of the “untapped reserves” of the aging person, while Friedrich (2001) in this vein refers to successful aging as leading a long, productive and satisfying life. Further complicating the issue of defining successful aging, definitions tend to be culture-specific (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Fernández-Ballesteros, et al., 2007b).

Variability in aging and some debilitating factors in terms of *FLOW* and age-related decline will also be discussed. Building blocks for successful aging such as creativity, goal-setting, happiness, meaning, personality, resilience, wisdom and strengths are described to capture an overview of the parameters of successful aging. Discussion of two strategies for successful and positive aging which aim to ameliorate age-related decline, as proposed by Baltes and Baltes (1990) and Hill (2005, 2008), will follow. The discussion of successful aging in this chapter will be concluded by delineating *FLOW* in terms of meaning, goals and altruism, such as transcending the self in a volunteering or social entrepreneurship capacity, and a discussion on gender and *FLOW*.

2.2 Successful Aging, Positive Aging and Optimal Aging

2.2.1 Introduction

A brief outline of the terms *successful aging*, *positive aging*, and *optimal aging* will be provided. The terms *successful*, *positive* or *optimal aging* are usually used interchangeably, but, according to Hill (2005), the term *successful aging* focuses on life-style choices that promote quality aging, and therefore minimise age-related decline. The term *successful aging*, according to Hill (2005), was made fashionable by Rowe and Kahn (1999) in order to describe quality aging well into old age (Friedrich, 2001). Successful aging is one of three types of aging described by Friedrich (2001), the other two being *normal aging*, or the average aging development as assessed on any measure and with any age definition, and *pathological aging*, which incorporates acute or chronic disease that hampers a normal aging pattern and accelerates decline. Many people, particularly Americans, view aging as “something to be denied or concealed”, but *successful aging* has to do with “aging well” which is not the same as “not aging at all”, according to Rowe and Kahn (1999, p. 49).

The terms *successful aging*, *optimal aging* and *positive aging* will be used as synonyms during this research in a bid to learn as much as possible about

aging well, without the restriction of semantics. Nevertheless, these terms are briefly delineated in the next section.

2.2.2 Successful Aging

“Successful aging’, is no longer an oxymoron but a reality”, according to Minichiello and Coulson (2005, p. xi). Nevertheless, a standard or uniform definition for *successful aging* still does not exist. Freund and Baltes (2007) explain that part of the problem in defining the term is a lack of consensus on what *aging* is, when it starts, and finding general criteria for *success*, since social and cultural values both play a role in the definitions. Successful aging can be defined as “the process of promoting gains and preventing losses” through a process called Selection, Optimisation and Compensation, or SOC (Freund & Baltes, 2007, p. 250). According to Baltes and Baltes (1990, p. 7), an inclusive definition of successful aging necessitates “a value-based, systemic, and an ecological perspective. Both subjective and objective indicators need to be considered within a given cultural context with its particular contents and ecological demands”. The solution is thus to use various subjective and objective criteria for successful aging, focusing on individual variability (Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2005; Rowe & Kahn, 1999) within a given culture (Featherman, Smith & Peterson, 1990; Minichiello & Coulson, 2005). Successful aging is the result of the interaction between an aging individual within his or her society over the life span (Featherman, et al., 1990), and can also be described as the process of “adaptive competence” with regard to the challenges of later life, using both internal and external resources (Featherman, Smith & Peterson, 1990, p. 53). Since dynamics in society influence the aging process, Featherman, et al. (1990) argue that successful aging is not solely an inherent quality of an aging person. There is a bi-directional relationship between an aging individual’s adaptive competence and the *developmental tasks* of society. Successful agers appear to fare well on developmental tasks. There does not seem to be clear scientific agreement on a definition of *developmental tasks*, but Featherman, et al. (1990, p. 56)

describe them as "sequences of tasks over the life course whose satisfactory performance not only is important for the person's sense of competence and esteem in the community, but also serves as preparation for the future". *Developmental tasks* require using one's cognitive, emotional and behavioural skills to manage one's life circumstances. Examples of adaptive competence include gathering social support, maintaining independence as far as possible and adjusting well to retirement. Featherman, et al. (1990, p. 58) observe that, as aging progresses, "ill-structured tasks outnumber well-structured tasks". *Well-structured tasks* are sometimes defined as problems with standard solutions or techniques, and *ill-structured tasks* as more ambiguous problems with relative solutions. Reflective planners tend to fare better in retirement because of their accumulated expertise in solving ill-structured problems (Featherman, et al., 1990).

Rowe and Kahn (1999) see three key aspects in successful aging: 1) preventing disease and disability as far as possible, *inter alia* through good life-style choices; 2) continuing with mental and physical exercise throughout the life span; and 3) keeping up an active life-style, by being productive and by fostering strong social relationships. According to Sadler and Biggs (2006), Rowe and Khan's (1999) research that views aging as an optimal state with low probability of decline, high physical and cognitive functioning as well as meaningful social ties and productive involvement in society, understates age-related decline. Duay and Bryan (2006) also suggest that Rowe and Kahn's (1999) theory implies that frail, disabled or ill elderly people cannot age successfully. Rowe and Kahn's study was based on the 10-year MacArthur-study involving a multi-disciplinary team of professionals that wanted to answer three questions: 1) the meaning of successful aging, 2) what can be done to age successfully, and 3) what changes are necessary in American society to facilitate successful aging (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Their research also helped with a paradigm shift away from conceptualising aging as more focused on disease and disability, to a more hopeful approach (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). However, research confirms that few very old people (older than 85 years) age

successfully (Sadler & Biggs, 2006). Thus, according to Hill (2005, p. xii), the concept *positive aging* is more “comprehensive” than *successful aging*, because positive aging focuses on “quality of life and a sense of well-being” *despite* age-related decline or ill health.

According to Hill (2005) and Minichiello and Coulson (2005), *successful aging* is an idealised term that is not necessarily in accordance with the present reality of aging, due to the fact that restrictive factors such as ageism, affordable housing, adequate income and quality healthcare are not taken into consideration. On the other hand, the value of successful aging lies in understanding that an individual can contribute to aging well, for example through specific activities or life-style choices (Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2005; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Nevertheless, Friedrich (2001) warns that few elderly people fit neatly into the categories of successful, normal or pathological aging for all capabilities and suggests that one should maximise successful aging in the capabilities one can control as early in life as possible, employing preventive measures to delay age-related decline for as long as possible.

Featherman, et al. (1990, p. 52) argue that a process-based definition of aging rather than an outcome-based one, such as *happiness* or *health*, suggests that “successful aging is a social psychological, processual construct that reflects the always emerging, socially esteemed ways of adapting to and reshaping the prevailing, culturally recognised, conditions of mind, body, and community for the elderly of a society”. Therefore, according to Featherman, et al. (1990), an aging person is continuously busy adapting and using intrapersonal and extra-personal resources to age successfully.

Fernandes-Ballesteros, et al. (2007a) state that successful aging usually includes basic constructs such as well-being, life satisfaction, health and some kind of physical activity, as well as quality of life. Paúl (2007, p. 140) views aging as a positive experience comprising “optimism and positive emotions toward the self, others and the world”, which to him appear to be critical

aspects of longevity and quality of life. Quality of life is thus sometimes perceived to be a result of successful aging, and it has subjective, objective, personal and environmental components (Fernandes-Ballesteros, et al., 2007a). There does not seem to be scientific consensus on what quality of life entails, but it is thought to be a “differential and multidimensional construct useful for describing people, groups, and contexts” (Fernandes-Ballesteros, et al., 2007a, p. 204). *Quality of life* is nevertheless described by Fernandes-Ballesteros, et al. (2007a, p. 201) as “a highly complex, multidimensional concept” in which societal and environmental factors such as pension systems, housing, or access to health and social services, and personal factors such as health and functional abilities all play an important role. Life satisfaction and subjective well-being are “psychological characteristics” and “individual constructs” according to Fernandes-Ballesteros, et al. (2007a, p. 218), and are commonly accepted as a subjective condition of quality of life and successful aging. Csikszentmihalyi (1993, p. 192) views *FLOW* as a prerequisite for quality of life and declares that every other desire, such as for health, wealth or success, is pursued in the hope that it will lead to happiness. He therefore views control over subjective experiences as bringing about happiness. The older one gets, the more a disability-free life expectancy (being able to function without limitation), a positive outlook on life, social ties and optimism become important as measures of quality of life (Paúl, 2007).

Ryff and Singer (2007) caution that the growing literature on successful aging fails to adequately take into account the challenges, difficulties and stresses of older age, calling for more research on thriving despite adversity, and the resilience factors behind such flourishing. Hill (2005, 2008) tries to reframe the concept of successful aging into what he views as a more realistic paradigm, namely positive aging. The concept of *Positive Aging* and a more restrictive term, in Hill’s (2005) view, *Optimal Aging*, will be discussed in the next two sections.

2.2.3 Positive Aging

The concept *positive aging* resulted from the work of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) which was built on the premise that people possess strengths and resources that can act as a buffer against age-related challenges and decline (Hill, 2005). Acting on the available psychological resources such as courage, environmental resources such as good medical care, and individual resources such as personality strengths, values and attitudes, helps to make the best of the experience of aging (Hill, 2005).

In Hill's (2008) view, *positive aging* incorporates mobilising resources and making affirmative life choices, such as to exercise, to eat in a healthy way, to manage stress and to try new things. Flexibility, operationalised as substituting forgiveness, gratitude and altruism, for pessimism, regret, self-absorption and worry, and lastly, focusing on the positives instead of the negatives of growing older, are very important requirements for aging positively. "Positive Aging is not how to avoid, dodge, or even suspend age-related decline and its deficits, but rather to understand it, learn how to live with it, and deal with its effects, even to reframe decline not as a loss, but rather as a source of meaning that can make being old worthwhile" (Hill, 2008, pp. 9-10). Positive aging, according to Hill (2008), involves a positive mindset by simply focusing on the positive instead of the negative, and reframing negative events as meaningful. This does not negate age-related losses and decline, but finding meaning, which could include "insight, astuteness, common sense, shrewdness, sagacity, and wisdom" as by-products of maturity, ameliorates the aging process Hill (2008, p. 7). Therefore, focusing on assets instead of losses creates meaning in older age (Hill, 2008). Hill (2005, 2008) regards *positive aging* as being a more realistic perspective on handling the aging experience since it is not as idealised as *successful aging*, as defined by Rowe and Kahn (1999).

2.2.4 Optimal Aging

Optimal aging, according to Hill (2005), refers to biological or genetic qualities in an individual that can enhance longevity. Hill (2005) considers *optimal aging* a restrictive term in contrast to *positive aging*, which is to him a more comprehensive term, even more comprehensive than *successful aging* because of a focus on well-being *despite* age-related decline. For Baltes and Baltes (1990, p. 8), the term *optimal aging* refers to “a kind of utopia,” i.e. aging under the best possible environmental and developmental conditions. This is in contrast to pathological aging, characterised by illness or dementia, such as Alzheimer’s dementia (Baltes & Baltes, 1990).

As indicated in the introduction, a universal definition for *successful aging* is still lacking. I use the term loosely, by including the concepts of positive, optimal and non-diseased aging in order to understand what it entails to age well during the retirement years. So doing, I concur with the observation of Baltes and Baltes (1990, p. 5), that the 1955 motto of the Gerontological Society of America, “adding life to years, not just more years to life,” illustrates the desire to find a formula for successful, optimal, and positive aging.

In the following section, I shall attempt to delineate the factors that have been found to influence well-being during the retirement years.

2.3 Factors Influencing Successful Aging

2.3.1 Introduction

The question arises: What sets “successful agers” apart from “unsuccessful agers”? Secondly, what is the relationship between *FLOW* and successful aging? In this section, an attempt is made to understand the various factors that contribute to aging “successfully” and how these relate to age-related decline.

According to Friedrich (2001), the term *successful ager* can be used to describe an older person who optimises available resources: psychological characteristics like courage, environmental resources like medical care, and individual traits associated with personality, values, attitudes and beliefs. Lifelong learning is important, which includes the capacity to develop personally throughout one's life span (Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2005, 2008; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). The answer to the question about what successful aging entails will therefore be sought in many different domains: in psychological factors, such as personality traits; in physical factors, such as productivity and activity or using one's skills and resources; in social relationships; in cultural factors, such as the country in which one lives; and also on a cognitive level such as lifelong learning. Since these domains rest on an arbitrary division between facets of our human lives, there will naturally be an interaction and overlap among many of them.

2.3.2 Psychological Factors

Successful aging, according to Friedrich (2001), refers to the aging process of people who have led long and productive lives and who experience satisfaction and a sense of well-being into old age. Successful aging also refers to the aging of those who subjectively feel that they are fulfilling their potential (Friedrich, 2001; Muller & Stevens, 2001; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Openness to experience is one of many pre-requisite personality factors that contribute to successful aging as it entails flexibility in thinking and behaving, creativity, an imaginative tendency, and openness to new ideas (Hill, 2005). Resilience, or successfully handling the challenges of aging, can, according to Ryff and Singer (2007), be defined as an outcome and as a process. As an outcome, *resilience* is described as the preservation or enhancement of mental and physical health despite challenges. As a process, the term emphasises psychological well-being, which includes such aspects as a positive self-image, meaningful social relations and sustained growth and development as a person. Resilience also includes physical health, i.e. the absence of illness as

well as healthy behaviour and exercise. Both aspects of resilience are important for optimal functioning (Ryff & Singer, 2007). Thriving in the midst of decline or adversity encompasses such moderating aspects as a deep sense of spirituality or religion, forgiving self and others, resilience, feelings of hope and optimism, and the ability to handle stress. It also articulates with aspects of personality, such as not having a victim-mentality, maintaining fulfilling social relationships, being compassionate and having meaningful goals (Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2008; Ryff & Singer, 2007), as well as positively perceived self-efficacy (Caprara, et al., 2007; Friedrich, 2001; Minichiello & Coulson, 2005; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). According to Caprara, et al. (2007), psychological well-being is contingent upon self-efficacy, which refers to being able to perform everyday tasks well.

According to Featherman, et al. (1990), Hill (2008, 2005) and Paúl (2007), older people want to live independent lives, taking care of themselves and thus mastering daily living in a competent way, but they also want to be engaged in the community at large whilst coping with the declines of getting older. Staying competent even in very old age (Paúl, 2007) is thus important for successful aging (Featherman, et al., 1990), but competence is also a complex and ill-defined construct, according to Fernández-Ballesteros et al. (2007a). Competence includes conditions such as health and physical fitness, good cognitive functioning, a high level of well-being, life satisfaction and social participation (Fernández-Ballesteros, et al., 2007a). According to Mitchell (1988, p. 44), feelings of competence, such as experiencing oneself as “qualified, capable, fit, sufficient [and] adequate”, emerge as one’s talents, skills and resources can be meaningfully applied to a challenge, or a problem. It is important that the tasks should be of one’s own choosing and equal to one’s perceived ability. Thus, Mitchell (1988) maintains that perceived ability and perceived responsibility must be in balance. This is also one of the premises on which experiences of *FLOW* are based, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002).

Psychological difficulties associated with non-diseased aging include periodic bouts of depression, feelings of inadequacy, problems with memory, and problems with information processing speed (Friedrich, 2001). More serious dysfunctions include phobias, alcoholism, more prolonged bouts of depression, suicide, and drug abuse. Friedrich (2001) supplies reasons for experiencing psychological difficulties, which include physical changes, such as the appearance of wrinkles, social changes in retirement, such as problems with financial security, and loss of significant others. Friedrich (2001) moreover reports that accumulating losses on a physical, psychological and sociological level impact negatively on the meaning given to life and to psychological well-being. Paúl (2007) holds that it is not age *per se* that is a problem, but that health and psychosocial factors, such as personality and self-confidence, have an influence on competence or may create stress, which in turn may result in disease, disability or death.

It thus appears that feelings of self-efficacy, competence and good social relationships emerge as some of the most important psychological factors that influence successful aging. However, a “fully functioning person is continually developing and becoming rather than achieving a fixed state wherein all problems are solved” (Ryff, 1989, p. 44).

2.3.3 Physical Factors

Duay and Bryan (2006) and Moody (2006) observe that early research on successful aging encompassed two opposite theories: *Disengagement theory* and *Activity theory*. *Disengagement theory* usually refers to a letting go of activities and social interaction as one ages, or it can refer to a sharper focus on the inner life and self-transcendence. Disengagement theory is criticised for not reflecting modern social conditions, having originated in the 1950's (Moody, 2006). *Activity theory*, by contrast, focuses on remaining physically active, continuing to play a productive role and pursuing social relationships for as long as possible during the retirement years (Duay & Bryan, 2006; Moody,

2006; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). The more actively one engages on a physical, psychological and social level, the more successful one is at aging (Friedrich, 2001; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). According to Moody (2006), however, active involvement in life may not be feasible for the old-old, which usually refers to those over the age of 80 (Friedrich, 2001) although Rowe and Kahn (1999) view the cut-off date as 75. The “oldest old”, or “old-old”, or “very old,” are usually taken to be people aged 80 years and older, but the boundaries vary from 75 to 85 years old (Paúl, 2007). For Duay and Bryan (2006) this implies that frail, disabled or ill elderly people cannot age successfully. Rowe and Kahn (1999) is of the opinion that the pre-requisite for successful aging is an active engagement with life, which includes potential development, maintaining relationships, productive behaviour, high levels of cognitive and physical functioning and avoiding disease and risk factors. Productive involvement in life is described in terms of the hours worked in a compensated or uncompensated capacity and in terms of helping activities (Rowe & Kahn, 1999).

Preserving good cognitive abilities for as long as possible is conducive to successful aging and will be discussed next.

2.3.4 Cognitive Factors

Cognitive abilities change and tend to deteriorate over the life course. *Fluid* abilities are more directly associated with neurological functioning, and tend to decline first and faster than the *crystallised*, or the more learned and pragmatic, abilities (Friedrich, 2001). According to Hill (2005, p. 6), age-related decline can be “mitigated” by education and good life-style choices. It is therefore not only important to maintain physical fitness, but also to improve the mental fitness of lifelong learning by acquiring new skills, as well as actively pursuing mental exercise to improve and compensate for diminishing cognitive abilities (Doidge, 2007; Friedrich, 2001; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Focusing on abilities that are less likely to decline with age, such as social and

practical intelligence and verbal abilities, will enhance successful aging (Friedrich, 2001). In summarising the general results of the Seattle Longitudinal Study for cognitive aging by Bosworth, Schaie and Willis (1999), Friedrich (2001) highlights the following: There is a relation between the level of cognitive functioning and mortality or survival, with levels of psychomotor speed inversely related to mortality. He concludes that dramatic changes in cognitive functioning thus increase the risk factor for death (Friedrich, 2001). Cognitive decline is delineated in more detail on page 55.

Social factors play an important role in terms of aging well and will be discussed next.

2.3.5 Social Factors

Featherman, et al. (1990) view successful aging from a social perspective rather than from a trait-centred perspective. The successful aging of the individual can also be seen in the broader context of a successfully aging society, where the practical input of older people can help society function better (Featherman, et al., 1990; Freedman, 1999). An interactive viewpoint of successful aging focuses on the interplay between society and the individual as a “social psychological construct” and emphasises adaptation rather than a specific outcome, such as happiness (Featherman, et al., 1990, p. 52).

As one ages within a specific society and culture, cultural factors will be discussed next.

2.3.6 Cultural Factors

According to Featherman, et al. (1990) and Ryff (1989), an aging person is continuously busy adapting, using internal and external resources to age successfully in a given culture and within a historic period. Featherman, et al. (1990) state the example of “wisdom” as opposed to any other characteristic,

as being an important attribute of a certain period in history, and within certain cultures. Cultural and historical factors also influence society's ideas about age-appropriate behaviour, according to Moody (2006) and Ryff (1989). The post-industrial life course has become less predictable in the 21st century, than was formerly the case, with some knowledge bases, such as engineering or computer technology, becoming outdated within a decade or less, prompting the use of younger workers in these areas (Moody, 2006). According to Moody (2006), the aim should rather be to progress from an age-differentiated society to a society that integrates and accommodates older people with regard to education, work and leisure. The institution of retirement is another example of aging within a given cultural and a historic period, and forced retirement at a certain age has been abolished in the USA and elsewhere in recent years (Moody, 2006).

Cultural and societal circumstances (slavery, oppression, exploitation, the destruction of cultural values) and the historical period one lives in can have a detrimental effect on *FLOW*, such as the industrial revolution in Great Britain where children were forced to work in difficult circumstances for very long hours each day. Nevertheless, even in adverse situations like those that the holocaust survivor Victor Frankl had to endure in a Nazi concentration camp, one can survive by having a strong other-directed purpose or goal that can bring meaning to one's life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Life conditions, such as income or where people live, are very important according to Veenhoven (1991). Veenhoven from the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, reports on his website, "World Database of Happiness" (retrieved October 14, 2010 from <http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl>) that countries with high educational possibilities, where people feel safe, where there is political stability and good health care as well as healthy longevity, tend to have happier societies. Surveys found that citizens of wealthier, better-educated and more stable countries, such as Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands and the USA, report high levels of happiness

(Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Nevertheless, Lyubomirsky (2001) contends that income and residence are responsible for only a little variance in happiness.

It is difficult to be happy in the absence of fulfilling relationships. Enjoying many positive relationships is indeed what the happiest people have in common (Diener & Seligman, 2002). This holds true even for people who live in extreme poverty, such as prostitutes, the homeless and slum-dwellers in Calcutta, who were neither “flourishing”, nor were they “miserable” (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2001 as cited in Biswas-Diener & Dean 2007, p. 75). However, Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade (2005) report that life circumstances, such as income or where one lives, have surprisingly little impact on happiness.

Although it seems to be true that some nations are happier than others, no matter where one lives, age-related decline, in terms of the life trajectory will be progressive, yet individualised until death (Friedrich, 2001). In the next section, some theories on age-related decline are delineated.

2.4 Theories on Age-related Decline

2.4.1 Introduction

Contrary to ageist beliefs, age-related decline in respect of physical, psychological, and social competencies shows variability among and within people (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Friedrich, 2001; Schaie, 2006), and therefore each person’s journey of aging will be different, yet progressive with age until death (Friedrich, 2001).

Hill (2005) and Friedrich (2001) make a distinction between successful aging (minimal decline until near the end of one’s maximum life span), normal aging (culturally specific non-diseased and unique aging in terms of physical and cognitive functioning), and diseased or pathological aging (accelerated decline due to disease). Rowe and Kahn (1999, p. 53) prefer the term *usual aging* to

normal aging, as the normal agers may be at risk for disease although they may not be experiencing symptoms yet (e.g. high blood pressure): “By calling people who are on the borderline of disease “normal,” we underestimate their vulnerability and fail to take protective action on their behalf. This has to change.” Usual agers are then those elderly people who function well, yet may be vulnerable to the development of disease or disability (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Successful agers are *inter alia* those who minimise or avoid disease and disability in later life through prevention strategies such as physical activity and a nutritious diet, and maintain mental stimulation as well as meaningful social relations and productive behaviour (Rowe & Kahn, 1999).

The frequency of chronic disabilities such as arthritis, hypertension and heart disease as well as mere frustrations, such as the loss of sustained physical energy, increases with chronological age. The risk for progressive disabilities and having to deal with more than one disability is more common in the old-old, i.e. those older than 80 years (Friedrich, 2001).

According to Rowe and Kahn (1999) and Fries (1990), there are two paradigms regarding age-related decline and longevity. The first is the compression of morbidity theory, which claims that medical advances will keep up with a longer life span, and therefore there will be less sickness and decline with increasing age. The second theory states that longevity will increase misery due to prolonged decline and disability. A few factors regarding these theories and other age-related issues will now be considered.

2.4.2 Ageism

Robert Butler, an American psychiatrist, first used the term *ageism* in the 1960's in denoting his dissatisfaction with the discrimination against older people (Minichiello & Coulson, 2005) simply because of their age (Minichiello & Coulson, 2005; Moody, 2006; Neuhaus & Neuhaus, 1982). The term denotes a discomfort among younger, and even some older people, because of a fear of

growing old due to aging stereotypes of disease, disability, powerlessness, uselessness and death (Macnab, 1994). Ageism, according to Macnab (1994, p. 59), “signifies deprecating and discriminatory attitudes, beliefs and practices towards people because of their age.” The senior citizen can “shrink in his self-esteem and gradually become the person he is constantly reminded he is” (The Spectator Bird 1976, cited in Minichiello & Coulson, 2005, p. 4). The research of the MacArthur Foundation has done much to expel myths such as “to be old is to be sick,” or that it is too late to employ health-promoting strategies. The research has uncovered that unhealthy life-style choices such as a lack of exercise or poor diet are often the culprit in disease, much more so than “bad” genes (Rowe & Kahn, 1999, p.13). According to Rowe and Kahn (1999), the MacArthur studies have also shown that older people are more likely to age well, than become disability-stricken and dependent as the common stereotype suggests.

People tend to experience themselves as younger than their chronological age, and there is a universal sensitivity to aging, according to Daatland (2007). This may be due to a decline in desirable roles for aging people or due to a resistance to getting older. Psycho-biologically, fear of approaching death will lead some to deny or try to prevent death. Daatland (2007, p. 38) indicates that “culturally”, feeling younger than one’s actual age can be a self-protecting tactic because of the negative stereotyping of the elderly or a reaction to the loss of youth. The perception of being younger than one’s age can also act as self-protection against bodily changes or decline, according to Daatland (2007). However, good physical and mental health reduces or softens the negative experiences related to aging and narrows the gap between the actual chronological age and the ideal perceived age, i.e. how young one would like to be (Daatland, 2007).

Ageism could lead to an under-estimation of potential in later life as many older people are not aware that the effects of stereotyping and accepting the negative characteristics pinned onto later life, stifle their potential (Biggs, 1993;

Macnab, 1994; Neuhaus & Neuhaus, 1982). In contrast to the stereotyping of previous generations, the aging Baby Boomers, according to Smith and Clurman (2007, pp. 35-37), desire an old age in which they will be perpetually vital, with a youthful life-style, but without being “retro-juveniles.”

A Yankelovich survey done amongst Boomers in 1996 found them to believe that old age begins at 79.5 years - considering those in their early fifties and sixties, to be in early middle age. The Boomers indeed want to enjoy an extended middle age. “...they will employ their sense of youthfulness to remake the experience of aging into one of aging without getting old, heralding a coming era of perpetually middle-aged people, not a generation of active old people” (Smith & Clurman, 2007, pp. 35-37). Boomers want to keep on being significant, redefine what it means to get old, and remain connected, engaged and influential (Smith & Clurman, 2007).

Although ageism is regrettable, it is also clear to me that aging retirees need to take responsibility for changing existing stereotypes. Aging seems to be a continuous process of adaptation, in terms of coping with illness and age-related losses (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Paúl, 2007). Nevertheless, according to Freedman (1999), one of the biggest assets of older people is their time, time to demonstrate perspective, patience, and understanding of “how slowness can nurture and deepen relationships” (Freedman, 1999, p. 233). He also maintains that the leisure ideal of disengagement and age segregation (invented as a money making scheme as narrated in Chapter 1) has outlived its usefulness. There is a new drive, in which aging is “defined more by a desire to leave a legacy than to lead lives consumed by leisure” (Freedman, 1999, p. 74). A greying “demographic time bomb” can be replaced by a “time boom” where excess time is used for the common good (Freedman, 1999, p. 247). According to Featherman, et al. (1990, p. 52), “[t]he elderly may be needed to make society function, in an everyday sense, and not just in some abstract or intellectualized way.” One way of helping society to function in a better way could be through social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship

entails transforming society for the better through entrepreneurial projects (Drayton, 2006) and will be discussed on page 106.

Nevertheless, positive policies concerning aging need to focus on improving the life experiences of older people and providing opportunities for continuing participation in society (Minichiello & Coulson, 2005). According to Lehr, et al. (2007, p. 187), an aging world is a challenge facing everyone. “A policy for the aged, however, should not be determined only by the question: ‘What can we do for the aged?’ One should also ask: ‘What can the aged do for society?’”

It is important to look closer at variability in aging to counteract stereotypes of aging and to promote successful aging. Variability in aging will be discussed in the next section.

2.4.3 Variability in Aging

Better medical care and anti-aging research could mean that people age better and live longer (Freedman, 1999; Hill, 2005, 2008; Muller & Stevens, 2001; Rowe & Kahn, 1999), yet stereotypes of the elderly as “sick, demented, frail, weak, disabled, powerless, sexless, passive, alone, unhappy, and unable to learn” persist (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Very few people, however, follow a predictable course in terms of age-related changes over time, and therefore aging is an atypical experience (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Friedrich, 2001; Park, O’Connell & Thomson, 2003; Rowe & Kahn, 1999; Schaie, 2006, 1990), which is also referred to as “differential aging” by Paúl (2007, p. 138).

Although there is great variability amongst normal agers, everyone eventually experiences some form of age-related decline, although good life-style choices can moderate these losses (Hill, 2005; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Decline is more pronounced where disease is present (Hill, 2008; Rowe & Kahn, 1999; Schaie, 2006, 1990). Where disease is present, functional loss may be sudden and less gradual than in normal aging, but where it is not present, age-related

deterioration varies considerably (Hill, 2008). Therefore, according to Hill (2008), some 70-year olds can be either like 50-year olds or like 90-year olds.

Inter-individual differences in aging (inter-individual variability) reflect variability among individuals in respect of one or more abilities, while intra-individual variability reflects variability within the person in a number of abilities during a whole lifetime (Smith & Clurman, 2007). The focus should therefore be on factors that influence individual differences (Pederson & Harris, 1990). No single factor has so far been isolated that can adequately explain longevity and it seems that an interplay of variables such as genetics, biological and physical factors (Lehr, et al., 2007), medical advances (Muller & Stevens, 2001), and life-style choices (Rowe & Kahn, 1999) seem to account for this phenomenon.

To complicate the picture further, the difference between actual chronological age and subjective age increases as people get older. People tend to feel younger and are also less dissatisfied with their chronological age when they are healthy and have a sense of personal control (Daatland, 2007). The older one gets, the more a disability-free life expectancy and ability to function without constraints become important as a measure of quality of life (Paúl, 2007).

In terms of physical and mental decline (inter-individual variability), young and middle-aged elderly people are more variable as individuals when compared to very old adults. The older one gets, the more the body declines and sets limits to one's activity and potential (Biggs, 1993). "The self grows and develops, while the body increasingly lets it down" and this has an influence on an elderly person's sense of value (Biggs, 1993, p. 36). According to Hill (2008), dysfunction (difficulty with everyday tasks), disability (needing help to perform everyday tasks), dependency (inability to function independently any more) and death (end state of decline) are unavoidable progressive stages that everyone passes through in old age. Even so, positive aging regards the finding of meaning in older age as an advantage of the aging process, despite

the decline – “even to reframe decline not as loss, but rather as a source of meaning that can make being old worthwhile” (Hill, 2008, p. 9).

While it is comforting to realise that differential aging is a reality, the fear of “losing one’s mind” may be one of the worst fears for those of us who are in or nearing the retirement phase. Maintaining cognitive agility seems to be of paramount importance, for when you lose your mind – you lose yourself... Cognitive decline will be investigated in this section.

2.4.4 Cognitive Decline

According to Schaie (2006), there are four major patterns of cognitive change over time, namely normal aging, successful aging, mild cognitive impairment and dementia. *Normal aging* is characterised by those maintaining good cognitive functioning until their 50’s or 60’s, and then experiencing a slight decline in their 80’s and a more significant decline in the period just before death. In this group, there are those who maintain high cognitive functioning, and who remain independent despite possible physical frailty (Schaie, 2006). *Successful agers* are usually “genetically and socio-economically advantaged”, and are those who actively engage in cognitively stimulating endeavours for as long as possible. This group show “very modest decline on highly speeded tasks”, and tend to maintain a high level of intellectual functioning until shortly before death (Schaie, 2006, p. 15). The third pattern of cognitive change in the elderly entails *mild cognitive impairment* in early old age, which may or may not progress to dementia. The fourth pattern pertains to those who are diagnosed with *dementia*, and who consequently experience “dramatic impairment in cognitive functioning” (Schaie, 2006, p. 16).

Today, past theories and stereotypes of irreversible gradual decline are being challenged (Doidge, 2007; Macnab, 1994; Lehr, et al., 2007; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). The stereotypical belief that aging inevitably results in cognitive deterioration, makes the deceleration of cognitive decline even more important

than health or quality of life. However, it remains a fact that there are vast cognitive differences among aging individuals (Caprara, et al., 2007; Friedrich, 2001; Schaie, 2006).

Cognitive decline or deterioration is generally described as “a decrease in the performance in different cognitive abilities measured by a neuropsychological test, dementia symptoms, or a diagnosed dementia illness” (Berg, Dahl & Nilsson, 2007, p. 165). A test-training-retest format is usually used and behavioural changes in performance as well as changes in brain activity are then measured (Fernández-Ballesteros, Zamarrón, Calero & Tárraga, 2007). Cognitive reserve or learning potential (*versus* intellectual potential that is actively used), refers to the potential to improve cognitive performance if extra time, support and effort are invested (Fernández-Ballesteros, et al., 2007c). Cognitive plasticity, cognitive reserve capacity and learning potential all play an important role throughout the life span because of the deterioration of the neuro-physiological systems that lead to a decline in fluid and crystallised abilities, as already described by Horn and Cattell in 1967 (Berg, et al., 2007). Fluid abilities include reasoning, visio-spatial functioning and processing speed, and these decline with age, whereas crystallised abilities such as knowledge and verbal meaning remain fairly stable over the life span (Berg, et al., 2007). Cognitive reserve capacity or the unused learning potential of an individual declines with age (Moody, 2006), for fluid ability more so than crystallised ability (Friedrich, 2001). Higher levels of education and cognitive stimulation may buffer or moderate the onset of cognitive decline (Friedrich, 2001; Rowe & Kahn, 1999).

According to Rowe and Kahn (1999) and Friedrich (2001), decreases in mental functioning can be slowed down, but cognitive decline cannot be avoided in full, because genetics, level of education (higher levels of education predict more sustained mental functioning throughout one’s life), physical fitness and lung function all play a role in maintaining optimal mental and physical functioning.

The most commonly accepted theory up to now has been that the anatomy of the brain is unchangeable and that aging means little more than the decline of functions, and that damaged brain cells are irreplaceable (Doidge, 2007). According to Rowe and Kahn (1999), stereotyping of the aged implies that mental inactivity and decline is the only prospect for those who supposedly cannot benefit from cognitive stimulation any more. However, taking general mental ability, verbal skills, spatial skills, thinking speed and memory into consideration (Rowe & Kahn, 1999), only half of all age-related decline can be attributed to genes, while the other half is related to life-style choices and environmental factors (Moody, 2006; Rowe & Kahn, 1999).

The theory of “localizationism” (Doidge, 2007, p. 12), which dates back to 1861, advocates that the brain structure is fixed and that each mental function has a specific location in the brain. As each part in the brain only has a single pre-determined function according to this theory, it means that damage results in permanent loss and that “the brain [can]not reorganise itself or recover that lost function” (Doidge, 2007, p.17). To the contrary, regular brain stimulation, and achieving higher levels of education or working in a stimulating environment, may buffer the onset of dementia later in life (Doidge, 2007; Schaie, 2006).

Dr Merzenich (in Doidge, 2007, pp. 47 & 60), described as a leading researcher in his field of brain plasticity, maintains that brain plasticity exists from the very young to the old, that “radical improvements in cognitive functioning – how we learn, think, perceive, and remember – are possible even in the elderly”. Brain resources are allocated according to the principle of ‘use it, or lose it’ -basis, as disuse of mental abilities leads to mental decline (Doidge, 2007; Lehr, et al., 2007). According to Dr Merzenich, people in their 80’s have a 47% chance of getting Alzheimer’s disease. Moody (2006) puts this figure at one out of three people over the age of 80. This has important implications in terms of prolonged and costly health care. Lower levels of education, not engaging in cognitive stimulation, and disengagement from the

activities of life, have been linked to an increased risk for Alzheimers' disease and cognitive decline, according to Schaie (2006). Therefore, Doidge (2007) suggests that not focusing on intensive learning while aging "leads the systems in the brain that modulate, regulate, and control plasticity to waste away" (Doidge, 2007, p. 85). He maintains that brain exercises will lessen the decline of memory, thinking and processing speed and views such exercises as far superior to the drugs available today that raise the level of chemicals in the brain to slow down age-related decline. Brain exercises such as proposed on www.lumosity.com have been found to slow down cognitive deterioration and even "turn back the clock on people's cognitive functioning so that their memories, problem solving abilities, and language skills are more youthful again," improving these by up to 30 years (Doidge, 2007, p. 89). With the prediction of increased longevity, it is vital that the mental life span should equal the body's life span (Doidge, 2007; Rowe & Kahn, 1999).

According to Paúl (2007) and Park, et al. (2003), cognitive decline is associated with aging, and is even expected in most of the old-old, although the degree of impairment varies greatly. Thus, there are huge inter- and intra-individual differences among the elderly in terms of cognitive decline (Berg, Dahl & Nilsson, 2007). *Inter-individual differences* refer to differences in terms of change of the same ability, and *intra-individual cognitive decline* refers to individuals who, though they may show decline in some cognitive functions, can remain stable or even improve in respect of other abilities (Berg, Dahl & Nilsson, 2007). *Cognitive plasticity* refers to the inter-individual differences in terms of cognition that exist among older individuals and the positive changes or improvements from baseline performance that are possible with training. Regular physical activity, a strong social support network, and a sense of self-efficacy can enhance cognitive functioning in aging (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Cognitive ability can also be influenced by the mental and physiological state of an individual, according to Berg, Dahl and Nilsson, (2007). Cardio-vascular fitness, for example, is correlated with cognitive ability, as exercise enhances memory function (Rowe & Kahn, 1999).

Research has found that cognitive interventions can compensate for normal cognitive decline in healthy older people (Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2005) as well as people with mild Alzheimer's disease (Fernández-Ballesteros, et al., 2007c). In their review of several researchers' work on cognitive decline, Berg, Dahl and Nilsson (2007) summarise the results as follows: the average performance on most cognitive tasks decreases over time; large variations in the level of deterioration exist amongst individuals; decline starts at different ages for individuals; and dementia is a "major threat" to well-being in aging.

Fernández-Ballesteros, et al. (2007c, pp. 211-212) state that there does not seem to be any agreement on a type of programme that could be regarded to consistently promote positive or successful aging. However, components such as being physically active, following a healthy life-style and applying strategies to compensate for cognitive decline and enhance social skills have been found to be beneficial. Preventing cognitive decline, including the decline of memory and intelligence, is crucial in terms of successful aging, since problem solving, learning and decision-making can become compromised together with decline or impairment (Caprara, et al., 2007). A longer life span due to the success of the medical technologies does not necessarily correspond with quality of life in the later years (Friedrich, 2001). According to Berg, et al. (2007), life-style changes (e.g. exercise or a diet for type 2 late onset diabetes) and medication (e.g. for cholesterol or high blood-pressure) may prevent or lessen the impact of cognitive deterioration.

Doidge (2007) argues that reading a newspaper, practising a profession or speaking one's own language involves the use of previously mastered skills and not learning *per se*. According to Doidge (2007), this could imply that, at the age of seventy, a person may not have truly learnt for fifty years. Therefore he suggests that learning a new language as one becomes older would enhance and maintain memory, as would solving difficult puzzles, learning new physical activities like a (new) dance (the benefit lies in memorising the steps), and mastering new skills, such as when a career change is made. Fernández-

Ballesteros, et al. (2007c) note that older people are usually exposed to a lesser level of physical and cultural stimulation and training, such as cognitive fitness programs or memory training. Since cognitive deterioration increases when no intervention is made, these could be beneficial even to cognitively challenged elderly people. However, Berg, et al. (2007) come to the conclusion that many studies on cognitive performance show conflicting results, and that mental training programs seem to have limited preventative effect on cognitive decline.

Lehr, et al. (2007) and Schaie (2006) suggest that optimal stimulation in youth, adolescence and middle-age are mitigating factors with regard to cognitive decline. Keeping mentally acute is of vital importance since Lehr, et al. (2007) regard mental activity as a prerequisite for successful aging. Successful aging also includes physical activity, having numerous interests and being socially active. Older people who are in good health, who have had a good education and who come from a higher socio-economic background tend to fare better on some memory tests (Lehr, et al., 2007; Schaie, 2006). According to Berg, et al. (2007), citing the Seattle Longitudinal Study of 50 years of ongoing research, and Schaie (2006), the lack of chronic illness, high socio-economic status and living in a stimulating and constructive environment mitigate the risk of cognitive deterioration. Thus, a “complex” environment, such as one with a variety of “stimuli, choices, and opportunities” can improve mental functioning (Rowe & Kahn, 1999, p. 135).

During the past 70 years, the importance of problem solving skills has increased, as an historic shift occurred from an emphasis on agriculture to manufacturing and service (Schaie, 2006). This shift, as well as prolonged education, have improved verbal ability skills and inductive reasoning skills. Successive generations thus display different patterns of cognitive aging (Schaie, 2006). There is also a positive correlation between educational achievement and reasoning ability as well as verbal ability. Professional people outperform unskilled and skilled workers in terms of reasoning ability and

verbal ability throughout any life stage (Schaie, 2006). However, information processing speed and some forms of memory do decline with age, such as “explicit memory”, that entails such functions as the recalling of known names and locations, whereas working memory, such as “learned routines”, show little decline (Rowe & Kahn, 1999, p. 131).

It is argued that cardio-vascular fitness is correlated with cognitive ability since exercise has been found to enhance memory function (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Good nutrition, such as the use of anti-oxidants, also plays a vital role to enhance cognitive functioning (Muller & Stevens, 2001; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). The personality trait of self-efficacy, or one’s belief in one’s ability to handle life’s ups and downs, also plays an important role in good mental functioning (Rowe & Kahn, 1999).

I end this description of cognitive decline on a positive note, courtesy of Friedrich (2001) and Rowe and Kahn (1999): they conclude that notwithstanding age-related decline in some mental functions, the majority of the elderly maintain more than enough cognitive reserve capacity to lead a meaningful and satisfying life, and to remain independent.

2.4.5 Health factors

Moody (2006, p. 36) thinks of aging not as a “disease,” but as a “process of change, part of which may make us vulnerable to disease.” Moody (2006) asks a very interesting question, namely whether people would really want to tripple their life span, do the same work and be married to the same person for 150 years (Moody, 2006). Indeed a thought provoking question?! Moreover, one that deserves taking a closer look at health factors.

Paúl (2007) holds the opinion that older people presently tend to be healthier and have fewer disabilities than 20 years ago. Having a disease currently seems to be less restrictive for the elderly than previously. Nevertheless, pain

and sleep disorders seem to have a negative impact on the lives and quality of life of the old-old (usually defined as those of 80 years and older, according to Paúl, 2007). Those with more health problems are also more likely to be depressed, and depression seems to be more prevalent in the old-old. Subjectively evaluated health has a greater impact on quality of life than objectively rated health, such as by a medical doctor (Paúl, 2007).

Good health is sought by all, but Baltes and Baltes (1990, p. 45) regard the virtually sole reliance on medical intervention to cope with diseased aging an expensive and “after-the-fact” approach to aging. Postponing the onset of chronic illness is much less expensive, and therefore the emphasis should be on preventive care (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Delle Fave, 2006; Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2005; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). To complicate this issue further, it was found that those who had gained from cognitive training had experienced approximately half the illness episodes or clinical visits than those who had not, leading Paúl (2007) to conclude that health seems to be important in terms of well-being, especially in the old-old.

Good health as well as a healthy life expectancy is instrumental in the positive subjective assessment of psychological well-being and quality of life, according to Fernández-Ballesteros, et al. (2007b). The World Health Organisation views health as not only the absence of illness or disease, but as physical, social and mental well-being. On the other hand, well-being and life satisfaction are thought to be independent of objective health, one’s living situation and socio-economic situation by various researchers, such as Delle Fave (2006), Rudinger and Thomae (1990) and Ryff and Singer (2007). It appears, therefore, that well-being is more often subjectively evaluated than objectively (Paúl, 2007).

Health is seen by Delle Fave (2006), and Ryff and Singer (2007) as a construct that includes physical and social support systems, and psychological aspects (e.g. emotional state). Cultural and value systems influence and interact with

the individual with disabilities or disease to hamper or foster quality of life. However, people often choose not to use the adaptive coping strategies such as optimism that they may have at their disposal, and to look for meaning in the experience of illness (Delle Fave, 2006; Hill, 2005).

There seems to be a correlation between life-style and health and cognitive functioning (Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2005; Rowe & Khan, 1999). Some life-style interventions proposed to enhance longevity and good health, such as following a restricted calorie intake diet, may, however, have unintended consequences such as malnutrition (Moody, 2006). According to Baltes and Baltes (1990), up to 25% diseases, such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease or multiple sclerosis, may only be helped by medical intervention, and not by life-style intervention.

In terms of a genetic approach, current research is challenging the assumption of a fixed life span, since scientists have identified the gene that is responsible for a specific protein that ages skin cells and have succeeded in doubling the life of skin cells in the laboratory (Moody, 2006). But "biology has not yet succeeded in unravelling the mystery of aging", and there is much debate in terms of different research views on what causes aging and how it can be slowed down (Moody, 2006, p. 38). Genes become less important the older one gets. For example, high blood-fat levels (triglycerides) that may cause heart attacks are influenced more for those over 70 by life-style choices than by hereditary factors (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Genetics also play an increasingly diminishing role in conditions such as high blood pressure or lung function the older one gets. Cutting down on alcohol and consuming less sugary foods, or exercising more, is within an elderly person's control, according to the MacArthur study (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Rowe and Kahn (1999, p. 60) state unequivocally, "[n]ature and nurture interact, and in many cases, the effects of genes can be avoided or modified by appropriate life-style changes and medical treatments".

There seem to be two contradictory schools of thought with regard to the taking of supplements to slow down age-related decline. On the one hand, Moody (2006, p. 40) holds the opinion that anti-aging products, such as certain vitamin supplements, have not scientifically been proven to do what they claim to do, and health promotion should rather be based on science, “not on conjecture of hopes for the future.” On the other hand, some other researchers, such as Muller and Stevens (2001) and Rowe and Kahn (1999), have a more positive view of the use of anti-aging medicine and supplements, albeit with some reservation.

Schneider and Brody (2006) observe the challenge for the future to be in finding cures for chronic diseases, especially in individuals over the age of 85, which is the fastest growing age bracket. Since there has been an emphasis shift from curing acute disease to curing chronic disease, such as Alzheimer’s disease, this implies that a growing number of elderly people will be in need of long-term care (Schneider & Brody, 2006). Fries and Crapo (2006) are more optimistic about people living longer and experiencing improved quality of life, on condition that personal health habits improve on a physical level (e.g. reducing chronic disease such as cancer), a psychological level (e.g. reducing depression and helplessness) and a social level. Fries and Crapo (2006, p. 50) foresee older people living more healthy and active lives for a longer period and decreasing the time spent in “terminal infirmity” before death.

So far, I have delineated the various factors influencing successful aging (including optimal and positive aging), namely psychological, physical, cognitive, social and cultural factors, and have discussed theories on age-related decline. In the next section, ten aspects or building blocks to enhance or promote successful aging are described.

2.5 Building Blocks for Successful Aging

2.5.1 Introduction

This section comprises the major building blocks for successful (or positive and optimal) aging, compiled and integrated from the work of various researchers. The building blocks are, in alphabetical order: creativity, goal-setting, health, lifelong learning, meaning, personality, resilience, social relations, strengths, spirituality and religion, subjective well-being and happiness, transcending the self through volunteering and social entrepreneurship, and lastly wisdom.

2.5.2 Creativity

The importance of creativity and creative thinking in retirement should not be underestimated. Creativity could enhance retirement and could be a valuable tool in aging well, as the following quote suggests:

“Creativity is extremely valuable to individuals and society as a whole. It is related to productivity, adaptability, and health, and it benefits individuals, institutions, and societies” (Runco, 2004, p. 29).

2.5.2.1 Exploring the Nature of Creativity

In this section I briefly explore different aspects of creativity, bearing in mind that there are many definitions for creativity and that creativity is “notoriously difficult to define and measure” (Runco, 2004, p. 21).

Runco (2004, p. 28) believes that *creativity* should be used only as an adjective and not as a noun, and that it would be more precise to refer to “*creative behaviour*” or “*creative products*” or a “*creative personality*” versus actual “*creative performance*”. Creative work is not limited to artistic achievement and is seen as encompassing all types of new and original ideas,

and uniqueness, meaning that something has not existed before (Henderson, 2004; Lubart & Guignard, 2004; Peterson, 2006). It also includes interpretive skills and ego-strength (Henderson, 2004; Runco, 2004) and the idea of reinventing or reinterpreting something previously known (Henderson, 2004; Lubart & Guignard, 2004). According to Lubart and Guignard (2004), creative ideas have limitations, such as being useful in a certain context *versus* just being bizarre.

Cohen (2000) acknowledges Gardner's distinction between *C*reativity (capital C), which refers to the astonishing accomplishments of individuals such as Einstein or the artist Braque, and *c*reativity (small c), which is encountered on a daily basis, such as in writing a memo, teaching a lesson, selling something, sculpting the back garden, preparing a meal differently, or tackling a problem from a new angle. Cohen (2000) views creativity as being public or private. *Public creativity* involves acts that are recognized and celebrated as creative by a specific community or culture, or beyond. This would correspond with the "big C"-creativity. *Personal creativity* involves a new product, idea, or perspective, something that has been created, that has not existed before, and something that now improves life and brings joy, to oneself or the people in one's own circle of friends (Cohen, 2000).

There is an age-old debate about whether creativity is a domain-specific or a general attribute (Lubart & Guignard, 2004; Plucker & Beghetto, 2004). An individual is usually only gifted or talented in limited domains that are not transferable to other domains (Plucker & Beghetto, 2004), i.e. without crossover-type creativity (Singer, 2004) such as between building structures, the art of making collages or writing poetry (Kaufman & Baer, 2004). One of the reasons given for this phenomenon is that it takes an average of 10 years of practice and study to achieve true excellence in a given domain (Singer, 2004). According to Kaufman and Baer (2004), *FLOW* can be classified as being domain-specific.

Divergent thinking, i.e. generating many creative ideas from a given stimulus, is linked to fluid intelligence and abstract creativity, whereas crystallised intelligence is linked more to wisdom or “practical expertise in everyday life” (Moody, 2006, p. 76). According to Moody (2006), some psychologists are of the opinion that the cognitive processes used for wisdom, intelligence and creativity are similar, but because people differ, the cognitive processes are used in dissimilar ways. Some creative resources are domain- or task-specific, such as domain-relevant knowledge or a willingness to take risks, while others have a more general application, such as some aspects of intelligence, e.g. spatial ability (Kauman & Baer, 2004). Therefore, in creative performance, there is interplay between an individual’s resources and the requirements of a specific task. For example, functionality would receive more emphasis from an architect, and originality more from a painter or sculptor (Lubart & Guignard, 2004).

Lubart and Guignard (2004) suggest that creativity consists of three components, namely a general, a domain-specific and a task-specific part. They (Lubart and Guignard, 2004) also view creative motivation as being either intrinsic or extrinsic, depending on the task, whereas Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 2002) sees *FLOW*, as mainly due to intrinsic motivation. Lubart and Guignard (2004, p. 45), in their review of Amabile’s research (1996), hold the opinion that work done for an external reward has a negative influence on creativity, unless a high amount of intrinsic motivation already exists. Extrinsic goals can result in lower well-being, while the attainment of intrinsic goals can foster well-being (Emmons, 2007).

2.5.2.2 The Creative Personality

One wonders if all people could be creative, or is it an inherent quality of a privileged few?

Creative personality attributes include such characteristics as perseverance, risk taking, tolerating ambiguity and openness to new experiences, an explorative nature and individuality (Lubart & Guignard, 2004; Runco, 2004). In addition, Runco (2004) distinguishes the finding and interpretation of personal meaning in ideas, and the ego strength to withstand pressure to conform to conventional ideas. Kaufman and Baer (2004) observe that creative people act in an intuitive manner and tend to be naturally inquisitive, while Mannheimer (2006) emphasises the possibility-thinking aspect of creative individuals for making something new.

Lubart and Guignard (2004) maintain that creativity is trainable to some degree and that this entails task- or domain-specific “divergent thinking exercises,” or specific domain training. Runco (2004), on the other hand, sees everyone as having the potential to be creative. He distinguishes between creative potential (which is universal and generalised) and being motivated to actual creative performance. Abuhamdeh and Csikszentmihalyi (2004, p. 32) regard the so-called “artistic personality” as “more myth than fact” and they deem creativity to have a social, cultural and individual component. In their view, therefore, there is no unique artistic personality, since a number of traits will encourage creativity as determined by society.

(Runco, 2004) believes that many individuals never fulfil their creative potential because they have not found an appropriate domain in which to express themselves. Runco (2004) views creativity as a form of self-expression, problem solution and problem finding. The latter is often meant in the sense of inventing a solution to an everyday problem or frustration (Henderson, 2004), which necessitates a preference for out-of-the-box thinking, working with the big picture rather than with detail, and the ability to evaluate one’s creative endeavours (Lubart & Guignard, 2004).

2.5.2.3 Creativity and Age

Does creativity necessarily decline with age? In this section, I try to find the answer to this compelling question, as it has direct relevance concerning creative endeavours during the retirement years.

What happens as an artist grows older? Quoting the example of artists such as Rembrandt, Monet, Matisse, Goethe and Yeats, Moody (2006) observes that they all experienced a deepening of their creativity, a focus more on their inner world, rather than on the technical aspects of their work. At 71 years of age, Michelangelo was appointed as the chief architect of the St Peter's cathedral in Rome, while Picasso painted well into his nineties. "There is no law of fate that decrees that creativity must decline with age" (Moody, 2006, p. 77). And indeed in our own country we have the example of Bettie Cilliers Barnard who recently passed away (15.09.2010) at the age of 95, and who painted prolifically up to the age of 92 (*Radio Sonder Grense* newscast 16.09.2010). However, being creatively productive in the later years seems to be a complex issue. Individual differences (Moody, 2006), health or family commitments (Simonton, 1991), and variations across creative disciplines can influence creative productivity in the later years.

2.5.2.4 The Value of Creativity

Csikszentmihalyi (2002) maintains that *FLOW* spurs people on to be creative, and this often results in exceptional achievement. Examining the relation between creativity and successful aging, Fischer and Specht (1999), in their study of 36 artists aged 60-93, summarised their findings as follows: creativity enhances successful aging by applying the creative skills of flexibility and adaptation to deal with the many challenges of aging, which in turn fosters competence and self-confidence. A focus on the positive *versus* the negative, being hopeful and happy despite loss and decline, make the older artists who took part in this study role models for successful aging (Fischer & Specht,

1999). Thus, creativity emerged as a way of thinking that adds meaning to the aging process.

Creativity is also deemed a necessary skill for social entrepreneurship: "...creativity, innovation, and resourcefulness are the elements of entrepreneurship most relevant to social entrepreneurs" (Nicholls & Cho, 2006, p. 102). Social entrepreneurship will be fully discussed on page 106.

Creativity and FLOW

As recounted in Chapter 1, the concept of *FLOW* originated when Csikszentmihalyi (1975) observed male artists working, sculpting and painting, for his doctoral thesis. These artists were totally absorbed in their creative activities, in a state of focused involvement, and intrinsically motivated, as none expected their work to make them rich or famous. These observations became the impetus for the development of Csikszentmihalyi's *FLOW* theory. "Often, the extended engagement with a flow activity like science or art begins with a felt conviction that the object of attention is inherently important" (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007, p. 100). Artists report ongoing, not isolated, *FLOW* experiences in relation to the work they are committed to (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1988a). The concepts of vital engagement and *FLOW* are also relevant for older artists or scientists, the latter being focused on the process of discovery, or finding a solution to a challenging problem (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007).

However, taking a closer look at goal-setting seems to be equally important in terms of well-being, since Ryan and Deci (2000) conclude that attaining personally meaningful goals also satisfy psychological needs. Attaining intrinsically meaningful goals are more important than when even highly efficient individuals accomplish goals that are not psychologically and intrinsically satisfying. The benefits of goal-setting in retirement is discussed next.

2.5.3 Goal-setting

2.5.3.1 The Importance of Goal-setting

According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), Emmons (2006) and Sheldon (2006), people's goals and priorities determine their overall quality of life. Moving towards meaningful life goals and perceived progress towards these goals are vital for continued emotional well-being and experiencing meaning in life, according to Diener, Suh, Lucas and Smith (1999). It thus seems vital to take a closer look at the benefits of renewed goal-setting in retirement, especially since retirees' previous work goals become obsolete after retirement. In this regard, Brandtstädter (2006, p. 149) comments, "People will find it most difficult to disengage from ambitions and goals that are central to their identities or life plans and for which equivalent substitutes cannot easily be found". Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007, p. 62) also emphasise goals as necessary to help people organise their lives to meet "crucial existential, social, personal, and psychological needs". Setting new, meaningful goals in retirement to replace previous goals can contribute not only to successful aging, but also to happiness and *FLOW*, and is essential if one is to avoid "psychic entropy," according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 37).

"Psychic entropy" is the result of personal goals being threatened, of having little control over consciousness on a cognitive, emotional and self-determination level, and this negatively influences the quality of one's life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, pp. 36-37). "Psychic entropy" can be experienced as "fear, boredom, apathy, anxiety, confusion, jealousy, and a hundred other nuances", depending on the nature of the goals that were thwarted (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988b, p. 22). *FLOW*, as an optimal experience, is the opposite of "psychic entropy," and brings order into consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Nurmi and Salmela-Aro (2006, p. 183) hold the opinion that adaptive and satisfying goals that are in line with personal needs make one happy, therefore, “what works” results in happiness. Goal-commitment, controllable goals, interpersonal goals and goals that are perceived to be attainable add to one’s well-being, whereas too much self-focus, which is probably due to too much self-reflection, erodes well-being (Nurmi & Salmela-Aro, 2006).

Diener (1984), in his review of subjective well-being, argues that setting goals and having a need fulfilled in order to experience happiness implies that a person is experiencing a void in his or her life, and therefore the goal that is set must hold important personal significance. Argyle (2001) states that simply having long-term goals of itself adds meaning to life. Most goals are related to cultural values (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and social values, but some goals are genetically and biologically programmed in humans, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002).

2.5.3.2 Goal-setting and Aging

Brandtstädter (2006) observes that the elderly seem to focus more on intrinsic and self-transcending meaningful goals, such as religion, friendship, love and intimacy. Meaningful and attainable goals are good predictors of life satisfaction, but thwarted meaningful and personally important goals may lead to frustration and depression. Brandtstädter (2006, p. 145) further distinguishes between “assimilative” and “accommodative” adaptivity in his dual-process model, which means that personally fulfilling goals and action lead to subjective well-being, but in later years these goals and actions need to be adapted to available resources. Subjective well-being and self-esteem across the lifespan are therefore linked to attainable goals, but well-being is also linked to the adjustment of goals due to age-related decline. As one ages there is a tendency to see goals that are difficult to attain, such as motherhood after menopause, as less important, and this helps with goal adjustment (Brandtstädter, 2006). A decrease in the attractiveness of previously attainable

goals acts as a defence against these losses and promotes subjective well-being, such as in a sense of self-efficacy, enhanced self-esteem and perceived control. In this way, developmental adaptation is promoted by a reorganisation of goals. Well-being and self-esteem are thus dependent on a willingness to adjust goals to changing circumstances without feelings of regret (Brandtstädter, 2006). However, the shift between assimilative and accommodative coping modes is not always easy for all, and some people, dwelling on the negative or grief, may experience depression. By delaying the shift towards accommodation, well-being and personal development are threatened. Loss of control over meaningful goals may foster feelings of helplessness as an inner struggle occurs for “holding on” or “letting go” (Brandtstädter, 2006, p. 150). Paradoxically, these negative moods, however, also have the potential to help the individual make the transition towards accommodative coping modes and disengaging from thwarted goals in favour of flexible adjustment and acceptance of “irreversible losses” (Brandtstädter, 2006, p. 153).

Sheldon (2006) found that as people get older they indeed improve in terms of self-determination, possibly because they become more adept at knowing what causes them to be happy, less focused on others’ approval or materialistic goals and more focused on meaningful interests. Adversity during the life course may also help one to focus on what is important, according to Sheldon (2006). The selection-optimisation-compensation model of successful aging of Baltes and Baltes (1990), which will be fully discussed on page 116, clearly shows that successful aging requires the refining of goals. Extending this theory, Baltes (1997) concedes that the old-old, i.e. those 80 years and older, may find it difficult to compensate for losses due to cognitive decline and increased weakness. Yet many researchers suggest that, in some ways, we do get better when getting older, for example, when generativity emerges during the middle age (Sheldon, 2006; Stevens, 1983).

In the next section, the correlation between setting intrinsically motivating goals, regardless of age, and *FLOW* is discussed.

2.5.3.3 Goal-setting and FLOW

Csikszentmihalyi (2002) advocates that one's whole life should be turned into a unified *FLOW* experience to derive meaning, and that goal clarity is a prerequisite to experience *FLOW*. Long-term goals may follow from the enjoyment of positive experiences as a person finds *FLOW* in an activity and it becomes intrinsically motivating. Challenging and clear goals, therefore, and where one goal logically follows from another, where goals provide significance and ultimately serve the greater good of the community, lead to an intentionally purpose-driven life and to inner harmony (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Thus, an experience is significant when it relates to a person's goals and purpose in life (Ryff, 1989). Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 244) also contends that life is experienced as meaningful "when we have a purpose that justifies our strivings, and when experience is ordered". In a similar vein, Diener, et al. (1999) contend that attaining success through reaching goals that are unrelated with a person's needs, will not enhance subjective well-being. This is consistent with Freedman's (1999, p. 69) view that a life built around meaningless activities can be "vapid, self-indulgent, and ultimately boring" and will therefore not result in psychological well-being as life can easily become void of meaning.

Csikszentmihalyi (1993, p. 34) contends that the mind needs to be ordered and focused, in order to "give consciousness shape". He suggests that the way to accomplish this is by developing personally chosen habits, such as jogging (physical activities), playing a musical instrument (hobbies), writing or reading (mental activities) or being involved in a purposeful activity requiring the use of skills. This is necessary since the unfocused mind tends to dwell on the negative, and this in turn makes happiness indefinable. By contrast, being caught up in a challenging activity that requires concentration, deep

involvement, and that results in a joyous feeling of achievement, is an experience that one cherishes as meaningful. Such a meaningful experience can occur anywhere, provided one is “using psychic energy in a harmonious pattern” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 176).

According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 222), goals are related to self-concept and meaning in the following complexity ascending manner: At the first level, survival-mode, and therefore self-preservation, focuses on self-interest and consequently basic goals alone will supply meaning, since there is no “psychic energy” left for other goals. When basic needs are satisfied, goals will then usually include the family and community, or a religious group. This brings about a “more complex self” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 221). The next level of complexity is “reflective individualism”, with the individual no longer conforming to conventional norms and standards, but focusing on the actualisation of his or her own potential (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). The fourth level brings a turning away from the self and a connection with universal values or a cause benefiting others. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 222), very few people reach the third and fourth levels of complexity in this “alternation between differentiation...and integration,” or a focus on the self and away from the self in a self-transcending manner. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) states that, to overcome the challenges of one’s everyday life, one must learn to become independent of the perceived rewards and punishments of society, and rather reward oneself with personally chosen goals. Having clear and meaningful goals or “self-contained goals” results in *FLOW* and a desire to perpetuate the activity.

To conclude: positive and intrinsic goals motivate, direct and prioritize actions and decisions and structure our time and, in the process, it provides meaning and a sense of accomplishment and well-being (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Emmons, 2006; Sheldon, 2006). By contrast, extrinsic goals pursued for some external reward, like money or popularity, bring with them feelings of anxiety and stress, probably due to competition and control issues (Biswas-Diener &

Dean, 2007). However, Csikszentmihalyi (2002) indicates that both external and internal factors will determine whether a person will discover a worthwhile and meaningful purpose in life. He also considers cultural wisdom, literature, music, art, philosophy, religion and role models to be valuable tools in discovering such a purpose. “How we feel about ourselves, the joy we get from living, ultimately depend directly on how the mind filters and interprets everyday experiences. Each of us has a picture, however vague, of what we would like to accomplish before we die. How close we get to attaining this goal becomes the measure for the quality of our lives” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 9).

2.5.4 Health

Physical and emotional health remains important as one ages (Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2005; Rowe & Kahn, 1999) and in this vein, Rowe and Kahn (1999, p. 66) comment that “we need not hope for just added years – we can, and should, strive for longer, healthier, more productive lives”. Therefore, the concepts of health promotion and disease prevention are particularly important for healthy longevity in order to alleviate suffering, disability and the cost of medical care (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Life-style choices may mean the difference between “sitting on a bike instead of in a wheelchair at age ninety” (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Please refer to page 61 for a detailed discussion of health factors and how these influence aging.

The state of emotional health is sometimes a consequence of the former life experiences of the elderly, which in older age may result in feelings of hurt, anger, conflict, guilt or regret resurfacing (Nauhaus & Nauhaus, 1982). Negative emotional reactions and mental disorders are not the topic of this explorative study with its focus on successful aging. However, specific emotional health factors were touched on under various headings, such as Meaning (p. 81), Personality (p. 85), Resilience (p. 88), Social relations (p. 90) and Subjective well-being (p. 98).

Another factor influencing successful aging is lifelong learning. Several researchers including Friedrich (2001), Hill (2008), Moody (2006), and Rowe and Kahn (1999), comment on its importance for prolonged cognitive health. Lifelong learning will be discussed in the following section.

2.5.5 Lifelong Learning

Can lifelong learning improve mental acuity and delay cognitive decline, which is one of the worst fears of the elderly? Some answers to this question will now be briefly considered here, but the reader is also referred to the passages relating to cognitive decline on page 55 to form a more complete picture of what may happen in the absence of an emphasis on lifelong learning.

The individual who ages successfully has made a life-style choice to nurture psychological well-being, for instance by means of personal growth, lifelong learning and healthy relationships (Hill, 2008; Moody, 2006; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Seeking physical well-being by means of actively trying to preserve or improve health is very important (Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2008; Moody, 2006; Rowe & Kahn, 1999, Ryff & Singer, 2007). Lifelong learning can produce *FLOW* when rewards are intrinsic (such as a desire to know more) rather than extrinsic (such as in obtaining a diploma or a degree), and “to develop a personally meaningful sense of what one’s experience is all about” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.142). The Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964), see an enduring middle age as the best way to hold onto meaning and significance, and remaining influential – by means of further self-development and discovery, lifelong learning, creativity and personal fulfilment (Smith & Clurman, 2007). Csikszentmihalyi (1993) regards lifelong learning as an unceasing seeking out of complexity, which entails perpetual curiosity and interest, skills development, finding new challenges and opportunities to contribute, the promotion of health and physical and spiritual well-being, and relationships with like-minded people.

Lifelong learning may be just as important as finding meaning in the retirement phase of life. As narrated in Chapter 1, feelings of meaninglessness after retirement was a recurring theme in the Creative Retirement workshops, and therefore the concept of meaning deserves some scrutiny and will be discussed in the next section.

2.5.6 Meaning and Aging

2.5.6.1 “Making Meaning” in Aging

The importance of meaningful aging cannot be underscored enough. It is commonly accepted that many people find not only significance and self-worth from their work role, but also derive meaning from it. Once this role is no longer relevant, for instance when one retires, the void left may result in either a search for new meaning or depression and other negative results (Macnab, 1994; Muller & Stevens, 2001). According to Rowe and Kahn (1999, pp. 51-52) and Freedman (1999, p.51) life after retirement can be seen as a “roleless role”. Little is expected from the older person and he or she is left to either create new meaningful roles, such as to volunteer and to foster relationships, or to “age less well” (Rowe and Kahn,1999). In the same vein, Erikson saw that the previous role of the aged, as wise and knowledgeable, now tends to end in “sudden oblivion” and the elderly are left without any significant roles to play in society (Stevens, 1983, p. 54).

The young old, which refers to the Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964), view redeployment and not retirement as the recourse for their future. This is because retirement is regarded as equal to losing significance. There is also a growing realisation that meaning in life is equally important for happiness as money or material things (Smith & Clurman, 2007).

Macnab (1994) states that people over 60 may believe that the best part of their lives is over; they may believe they have done their share for the

community; they may adopt many negative stereotypes of aging; and they may not care to find life's purpose or changing society for the better because of a pre-occupation with health and anticipated decline. However, people over 60 may live another 30 years and "can demonstrate skills of adaptation, coping and mastering hitherto unexplored – some may do their most artistic and creative work in their nineties" (Macnab, 1994, p. 8).

According to McGregor and Little (1998, pp. 505 & 494), there is a relationship between "doing well" and happiness, as well as between "being yourself", or "project integrity", and meaning. In their research they found that project efficacy, i.e. the likelihood of success of a project, is associated with raised levels of happiness. Project integrity, or congruence between projects and "core aspects of the self" resulted in higher levels of experienced meaning, with meaning being characterised as "personal growth, purpose in life, generativity, relationship quality, and autonomy" (McGregor & Little, 1998, pp. 495 & 504).

Csikszentmihalyi (1993) maintains that the normal condition of the mind is chaotic, and that a goal-directed activity, especially a goal on which other goals depend, therefore brings order and a positive mood. Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 244) defines meaning in the following way: "An experience is meaningful when it is related positively to a person's goals. Life has meaning when we have a purpose that justifies our strivings, and when experience is ordered."

Finding meaning in suffering, for example, implies that the suffering must be seen as a possible challenge that will ultimately give meaning to life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). A "discovered" life purpose or theme (*versus* an accepted one) is often a "reaction to a great personal hurt suffered in early life" and especially how one interprets the suffering (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 233). The solution found is then generalised to benefit others, for instance helping others who suffer injustices. Thus, a person suffering injustice as a

child may choose to become a lawyer (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) and so add meaning to his or her life.

"Activity is proposed as essential to successful aging" (Estes, 1979, cited in Biggs, 1993, p. 9). However, activity that is not meaningful will not provide intrinsic satisfaction. "To be an active subject, creative construction of personal projects is essential if the process is to be authentic, in other words, the expression of one's true self" (Biggs, 1993, p. 9). A study of ocean cruising *FLOW* can serve as an example of expressing one's true self and living meaningfully (as subjectively evaluated by the individual): Macbeth (1988, pp. 215-216) found that one of the reasons for choosing this life-style was a rejection of a modern life-style of "material consumption, business organisation, and social control – [which] fosters meaningless goals"....centred around "work schedules, payment schedules, business hours, lunch hours, rush hours..." The new life-style, in contrast, was experienced and described with words such as adaptable, flexible, self-reliant, self-sufficient, resourceful, optimistic, curious, independent, adventurous, nature loving, organised and self-confident. Macbeth makes the point that *FLOW*, although it usually refers to self-rewarding activities, can be extrapolated to a *life-style* of enjoyment as based on the individual's subjective evaluation of an experience. Cruising can therefore be seen as an intrinsically meaningful life-style, without external rewards such as pay or status, offering many challenges, problem solving opportunities and freely chosen goals. Taking this analogy further, those in retirement therefore need to create a new life-style of personally meaningful *FLOW* experiences, as an optimal experience is what we "*make happen*" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 3). Social entrepreneurship may be one such an avenue of "making meaning", and will be discussed later (please refer to page 106). Volunteerism may be another way of transcending the self and aging purposefully. Without a purpose, "even the best-ordered consciousness lacks meaning", warns Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 218).

2.5.6.2 Meaning and FLOW

Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 217) is of the opinion that finding meaning in life is “astonishingly simple,” i.e. “the meaning of life is meaning: whatever it is, wherever it comes from, a unified purpose is what gives meaning to life”. This purpose should unite one’s goals and intrinsically motivate and spur one on to action, resulting in a “unified flow experience”, which bring “harmony... to consciousness”. Inner harmony means that one’s feelings thoughts and actions are compatible (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, pp. 216-217). According to Caprara, et al. (2007, p. 120), older people prefer security and tradition to stimulation and change. This may influence *FLOW* experiences as challenging goals are sometimes exchanged for less demanding ones, but the result will be diminished meaning and harmony in one’s life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2007, pp. 83 & 87) see *FLOW* as one result of “vital engagement” with an object. Vital engagement includes concepts such as focused attention, intrinsic motivation, enjoyment and elevated importance, as a way not only to achieve meaning in life, but also to flourish. Achieving a challenging goal and putting in the effort to get the necessary skills to achieve it, results in a “unified flow experience”, therefore “actions and feelings will be in harmony...and each activity will ‘make sense’ in the present, as well as in view of the past and of the future”, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, pp. 214-215). In such a way, it is possible to give meaning to one’s entire life,” and find purpose. The recognition that our time on earth is limited leads to a reassessment of life and an active re-evaluation of potential (Biggs, 1993).

In the next section, there is a focus on personality, as Caprara, et al. (2007) maintain that personality can play an important role in building on elderly people’s strengths, promoting well-being, adaptation and potential development well into old age, despite setbacks and losses.

2.5.7 Personality

2.5.7.1 Traits and Behaviour

Personality seems to be a well-researched construct as seen in the vast amount of literature available on the topic, and it is only briefly discussed here by focusing on some changes in respect of personality that occur over time. Some aspects of personality such as happiness, resilience and wisdom are discussed separately to highlight their importance for successful and meaningful aging.

Personality is defined as “the complexity of structures, processes and patterns of cognition, affect, and behaviour functioning; a self-regulatory system in the service of adaptation.” As a “construction”, personality is the result of the continuous interaction between a person and his or her environment. As an “agency”, personality refers to the numerous “capacities” to take action that result in a unique identity (Caprara, et al., 2007, p. 104). Families, societies and culture exert an influence on personality development, but within the constraints of genetic factors (Mroczek, Spiro, Griffin & Neupert, 2006). Personality traits are fairly stable patterns of behaviour with some changes over time, such as diminishing extraversion, energy, openness to experience, and an increase in emotional stability (Caprara, et al., 2007). Moraitou and Efklides (2007) found that emotional functioning, for instance inner control, remains stable or improves with age.

The five-factor model of personality, as developed by Costa and McCrae in 1986, namely neuroticism (e.g. obsessive-compulsive thinking, inability to form stable relationships), openness to experience (flexible thinking and behaviour patterns), extraversion (e.g. good social relations, assertiveness, experiencing more positive than negative emotions), agreeableness (friendliness and cooperation) and conscientiousness (duty bound and trustworthy individuals) was found to be predictive of the behaviour of older people in an adaptive or

mal-adaptive direction (Hill, 2005). Mal-adapted older individuals tended to engage in behaviour that compromised physical and psychological health, e.g. heavier drinking patterns were linked to lower conscientiousness, while being more extraverted and less neurotic predicted more subjective well-being (Hill, 2005). According to Hill (2005), there are five maladaptive attributes that are deemed to be important in the clinical literature, namely rigidity, negativity, worry, self-absorption, and regret, which are seen to hamper adjustment in older age. However, "the avoidance of psychopathology, negative behavioural outcomes, or illness is no guarantee that one will also flourish and be well in multiple realms of life" (Ryff & Singer, 2007, p. 27). Nevertheless, according to Diener, et al. (1999), personality is one of the strongest and most stable predictors of subjective well-being.

The relation between personality and happiness seems to be unclear: Argyle (2001), in reviewing the work of Diener, et al. (1999), validates with his own research the work of these researchers, and concludes that personality aspects attributes such as extraversion, optimism, and neuroticism (characterised by anxiety), have a strong influence on happiness. Thus, there is a strong link between personality and subjective well-being, according to Diener, et al. (1999). This influence is even greater than "race, social class, money, social relationships, work, leisure, religion, or other environmental variables" (Argyle, 2001, p.163). According to Diener and Seligman (2002), the difference between very happy and unhappy people in a sample of college students encompassed such attributes as a more extraverted personality and low levels of psychopathology and neuroticism. Some of the most important aspects that contributed to being happy were that very happy people experienced good social relations and mostly positive, but not "ecstatic", feelings, with occasional negative moods. Unhappy people generally had below-average social relationships (Diener & Seligman, 2002). These authors also found that good social relationships, extraversion, low neuroticism and low levels of psychopathology, although important, cannot guarantee high levels of happiness, and "there appears to be no single key to high happiness that

automatically produces this state” (Diener & Seligman, 2002, p. 83). Maintaining good social relationships to enhance successful aging was also a key factor in the research of Hill (2008), Moody (2006), and Rowe and Kahn (1999).

Values also play a role in personality, in terms of which goals are selected and deemed attainable and which ideals and guiding principles are acted upon. Motives, as intrinsic reasons to attain rewards or avoid harm, self-esteem (overall self-judgement), and self-efficacy (beliefs about one’s power to bring about desired outcomes) are important variables in respect of personality and subjective well-being. Subjective well-being consists of a cognitive aspect, i.e. the subjective evaluation of life satisfaction, and an affective aspect, i.e. the level of happiness experienced as a result of the ratio of positive to negative life experiences (Caprara, et al., 2007).

Caprara, et al. (2007) make the point that high self-esteem has an advantageous effect throughout one’s life and into old age, also bearing in mind that older people, despite decline, do not have less self-esteem than younger people do. Men generally tend to have more self-esteem than women (Caprara, et al., 2007).

2.5.7.2 Personality and FLOW

Csikszentmihalyi (1993) observes that people who have more *FLOW* experiences tend to have higher self-esteem. High self-esteem is one of the strongest indicators of subjective well-being, and self-esteem tends to be lower when people are unhappy (Diener, 1984). Csikszentmihalyi (2002) also states that while in *FLOW*, the individual’s self-awareness disappears, but recollections later bring about enhanced self-esteem. Directly after a *FLOW* experience, self-esteem is also higher than at other times. Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 149) describes an “*autotelic*” personality as someone who has the ability to create *FLOW* experiences even in the most harsh working

environments. This means that such individuals have the ability to transform obstacles or limitations into opportunities for expressing freedom and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

A characteristic of personality, namely resilience, will be discussed next, due to its relevance in the face of age-related decline. Resilience is often forged in the face of adversity, according to Ryff and Singer (2007).

2.5.8 Resilience

Resilience, as a human strength, focuses on “being well in the face of difficulty” or still being able to “flourish under fire” (Ryff & Singer, 2007, p. 15). According to Friedrich (2001), resilience entails facets such as compensating for lost abilities in terms of physical, psychological or social abilities, by using other abilities. Resilience is at a lower level for older than for younger people (Friedrich, 2001). However, loss of capabilities can be compensated for by utilising other abilities. Intervention approaches can be either preventative, such as healthy life-style practices that slow down or prevent the rate of deterioration, or remedial (Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2008; Rowe & Kahn, 1999); or strategies such as Selection, Optimisation with Compensation (SOC) can be employed (Baltes & Baltes, 1990).

Resilience theory can have an *outcomes-based focus* or it can look at the *dynamic process*. As an outcome, resilience incorporates the “maintenance, recovery, or improvement in mental or physical health following challenge.” Previously, research on resilience tended to focus on an absence of negative aspects, such as depression or other illness indicators, in the face of adversity (Ryff & Singer, 2007). A focus on the mental and physical aspects of resilience is important in understanding optimal functioning, despite challenges such as relocation, bereavement or age-related decline (Ryff & Singer, 2007). *Mental aspects* of resilience include *inter alia* a good self-image, good social relationships, a purposeful and meaningful life, lifelong learning and managing

one's external environment. *Physical aspects* of resilience include healthy behaviour, such as adequate nutrition and exercise, and an absence of illness, or the avoidance of chronic conditions and disease (Ryff & Singer, 2007; Schaie, 2006).

Viewed as *a dynamic process*, resilience is the "successful engagement with difficult events and experiences", such as experiencing well-being despite the loss of health, a life partner or work, or relocation (Ryff & Singer, 2007, p. 21). Factors that can act as buffers in adversity include meaningful social ties and roles and being able to favourably compare oneself with others, for instance that one is still blessed as compared with others (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Ryff & Singer, 2007), as well as having a flexible self-concept (Ryff & Singer, 2007).

In conclusion, the focus in aging successfully is not on avoiding adversity, but growing through adapting and coping with "new challenges and developmental tasks" which is part of life (Ryff, 1989, p. 38). Shifting one's attention to the gains, according to Ryff and Singer (2007), adversity, suffering or trauma can often increase self-knowledge and self-reliance, enhance self-disclosure and openness to others, encourage more compassion, and increase levels of spirituality. Thus, dealing with emotions more flexibly helps those aged 50 years and older to cope with escalating challenges by adding to their subjective well-being (Moraitou & Efklides, 2007).

The benefits of meaningful social relations will be discussed in the next section.

2.5.9 Social Relations

Rowe and Kahn (1999) report that successful agers from the MacArthur Study who had meaningful, caring and rewarding social ties with family and friends, were more active, felt emotionally safer, and tended to be healthier and also

live longer than elderly people who were lonely. Good social ties with significant others are therefore extremely important for successful aging.

Supportive social relationships act as a buffer against stress or depression, and in the process promote healthy life choices, from avoiding excessive alcohol consumption to adhering to sound medical advice (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Social support consists of a socio-emotional component, such as expressing love, respect or liking, which is very important for successful aging, and an “instrumental component” that offers practical help with activities such as transport, chores or financial aid (Rowe & Kahn, 1999, p. 158). A supportive inner circle is of the utmost importance to age successfully, as is social contact on different levels, such as participation in religious activities, or attending meetings, or even just phoning neighbours. This, according to Rowe and Kahn (1999, p. 163), results in “robust aging”, which is an “index of overall well-being that includes involvement in productive activity, emotional and mental status, and functional level”. On the other hand, unwanted or unnecessary support could result in lowered levels of perceived self-efficacy, or “learned helplessness”, and promote “functional decline” (Rowe & Kahn, 1999, p. 166).

The next section proceeds from “learned helplessness” to the importance of using one’s strengths.

2.5.10 Strengths

In Gallup’s research into human potential, stretching over a period of 30 years and generating two million interviews, it was found that one will be more successful by focusing on one’s strengths than by improving one’s weaknesses. Thus cultivating one’s talents or one’s natural competencies will yield more successful outcomes than trying to build up weaknesses (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007; Winseman, Clifton & Liesveld, 2004).

Research with regard to strengths has yielded different foci and areas of classification. A *strength* is defined by Winseman, et al. (2004, pp. 3-4) as: ...“the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity,” which is a “productive combination of talent, skill, and knowledge” (Winseman, et al., 2004, p. 3). *Strengths* need to be present in thoughts, actions or feelings, contribute to advantageous outcomes, be morally acceptable, contribute to personal effectiveness and benefit others as well. Strengths are not divisible into other strengths. For example, tolerance is a blend of fairness and open-mindedness, and therefore not a strength in the light of the last criterion. *Talents* are viewed as “naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behaviour that can be productively applied” (Winseman, et al., 2004, p. 4). A talent is not acquired, like a skill or knowledge, but is seen as inborn and instinctive, and using a talent brings pleasure and joy. Focusing on talents usually results in performing tasks and roles effectively (Winseman, et al., 2004). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1993), talent development is dependent on the frequency of *FLOW* experiences, while more objective measures of talent development, such as cognitive ability, personality traits, parental status or income, are less important. *Skills*, according to Winseman, et al. (2004, p. 5), are viewed as “the abilities to perform the steps of an activity” and therefore can be learnt, for instance parallel parking or using computer software for a presentation. Peterson and Seligman (2004) formulated the following criteria to distinguish between skills, talents and strengths.

Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007) classify strengths into two categories: intrapersonal or hidden personal resources, such as creativity, intelligence, curiosity, and resilience, and interpersonal resources, such as maintaining effective social relationships. Peterson (2006, pp. 32-36) has a slightly different perspective on strengths: he maintains that finding and using one’s strengths constitutes optimal functioning and he hypothesises that an absence of character strengths can be seen as a “real psychological disorder”. Peterson (2006) distinguishes between six categories of character strengths:

- *Wisdom and Knowledge*, as seen in cognitive strengths, creativity (not limited to art), curiosity and interest in the world, as well as judgement and critical thinking, love of learning and perspective (or wisdom);
- *Courage*, an emotional strength which includes bravery, persistence, authenticity or honesty, and vitality;
- *Humanity*, an interpersonal strength which includes love, intimacy, kindness, social intelligence and emotional intelligence;
- *Justice*, which includes the civic strengths of citizenship, fairness and leadership;
- *Temperance*, which includes protection against excess, such as the strengths of forgiveness, mercy and refraining from revenge, and also comprises humility or modesty;
- *Transcendence*, a strength that fosters a connection to the larger universe and to meaning, such as the appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humour and spirituality (which encompasses beliefs about meaning and purpose).

A lack of creativity, according to Peterson (2006, pp. 38 - 40), constitutes a “disorder” of wisdom and knowledge, which leads to conformity and unoriginality (the opposite of creativity) or, if exaggerated, to eccentricity. In the same vein, an absence of curiosity leads to disinterest and boredom, and nosiness, if exaggerated. A “disorder” of transcendence can lead to a feeling of alienation, or fanaticism, if exaggerated. These “disorders” exist along a continuum of behaviour and can be seen variously in thoughts, feelings and actions as the “abnormality” translates into the offenders’ being “annoying, alarming, or offensive”.

By focusing on strengths, the individual is helped to develop or maintain a more positive self-image, as self-efficacy is directly related to life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Friedrich, 2001), and this focus also boosts confidence and optimism (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007). Fernández-Ballesteros, et al. (2007a, p. 219) remark that older people’s strengths must

not only be actively reinforced but should also be promoted as a social resource, which is one of the objectives of my Creative Retirement workshops.

It appears that finding and using one's strengths are important tasks that promote the experience of *FLOW* and optimal and successful aging.

2.5.11 Spirituality and Religion

In this section, the role of spirituality and religion and their influence on successful aging, meaning and *FLOW* are explored.

It is important to explore the concepts of spirituality and aging, since it is mostly overlooked in the literature on successful aging (Sadler & Biggs, 2006), and spirituality is a resource for many to help them adjust to the challenges of aging and to support the well-being of the elderly (Argyle, 2001; Duay & Bryan, 2006; Moody, 2002, 2006; Sadler & Biggs, 2006; Steger, Frazier, Oishi & Kaler, 2006). Meaning and spirituality will have different interpretations in different religions, and religiousness can be defined in many different ways. Yet, across different studies, "religious variables" are positively associated with well-being (Steger, et al., 2006, p. 574).

Research on religion and spirituality (historically, the terms were not distinguished from each other) has been vast and varied, as demonstrated by the almost limitless information available on these subjects (Emmons, 2006). Even so, Sadler and Biggs (2006) have found very few studies exploring the link between spirituality and aging.

Universally accepted definitions for the concepts of spirituality and religion do not yet exist (Emmons, 2006). According to Emmons (2006, pp. 63-64), *spirituality* is a general attribute in which individuals differ, as a motivational factor for realising "personal goals and intentions", or as emotional responses such as gratitude, love and hope. Emmons (2006, p. 64) views the term

“spirituality” as implying that something is spontaneous, informal, creative, universal, and it also refers to an authentic inner experience, to seeking, and to religious experimenting. Sadler and Biggs (2006, p. 270) define *spirituality* as “a personal search for meaning and purpose in life,” and *religion* as “an organized system of beliefs” (based on the research of Koenig, George & Titus, 2004). Religion, according to Emmons (2006, p. 64), is “rooted in authoritative spiritual traditions” that go beyond the person and indicates the existence of a bigger kind of reality.

Moody (2002, p. 394) distinguishes “formal religious behaviour”, such as attending a church service, from an “inner attitude of spirituality”. Church attendance seems to drop with aging, possibly due to age-related decline (Moody, 2006) and this phenomenon is called “multidimensional disengagement” (Moody, 2002, p. 395). However, according to Moody (2002), those elderly individuals with a higher involvement in religious activities report more satisfaction with life. Nevertheless, despite lower church attendance by many elderly people, there is an increase in personal religious practices such as Bible study, listening to or watching religious programmes on the radio or TV, and a stronger focus on the inner life, such as an increase in the frequency of daily prayer (Moody, 2006). The frequency of personal prayer is a strong indicator of well-being, and a close relationship with God is equally beneficial in terms of general happiness, according to Argyle (2001). Lifelong religious involvement is a strong indicator of high religious practices in older age, therefore age does not “cause” elders to become more religious (Moody, 2002).

According to Emmons (2006), religious and spiritual people tend to feel more gratitude, awe, reverence, wonder and forgiveness than non-religious or non-spiritual people do. Spiritual and religious goals focus on purpose, meaningfulness, and finding God’s will for one’s life. These goals result in greater life satisfaction than a pursuit of material and self-focused goals (Emmons, 2006). A strong positive relationship between intrinsic religion (not

using religion to get social support), spirituality and meaning was also found by Steger, et al. (2006), with higher levels of life satisfaction for those who have higher levels of religious commitment (Moody, 2006).

Frankl contends that to ask oneself what the meaning of life is, already implies that one is religious (Deist, 1980). In the same vein, research by Steger and Frazier (2005) confirmed that religious people feel that their religion adds greater meaning to life, as experienced in attending church services, meditating, or reading spiritual matter. Experiencing more meaning in life results in healthier habits and life-styles (Argyle, 2001; Sadler & Biggs, 2006; Steger & Frazier, 2005; Steger, et al., 2006). Religion not only has a positive influence on physical health, but also on mental health, according to Argyle (2001) and Sadler and Biggs (2006). In Argyle's (2001) opinion, these positive benefits are more pronounced for those who are more involved in religious activities, for the elderly and for religious fundamentalists, due to the certainty of that which they believe in. Some reasons for these benefits are strong church support, such as social relations, emotional and practical help as well as a connectedness through prayer and a relationship with God (Argyle, 2001). Religion not only provides meaning, but also promotes higher levels of adjustment and stress relief in times of bereavement or chronic illness (Argyle, 2001; Moody, 2006). Some reasons for these feelings of added meaningfulness are that most religions focus on how to lead a purpose-driven life, provide social support or coping resources, and build up a person's self-worth (Steger & Frazier, 2005).

Argyle (2001) observes that purpose in life strongly correlates with happiness and religion. Religion, work or career, voluntary work, family obligations and long-term goals are all seen as sources of purpose that have many beneficial consequences for subjective well-being (Argyle, 2001). Apart from adding meaning to life, spirituality in its various forms brings harmony among conflicting goals and reduces "entropy in consciousness" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 239). However, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1993), religious values

and moral guidelines are on the decline in our modern society. People turn to religion to find meaning, but “religions are only temporarily successful attempts to cope with the lack of meaning in life”, and therefore Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 14) views religion as being unable to provide permanent solutions to leading a meaningful and purposeful life. Nevertheless, Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 244) regards religion as a “shield against chaos,” and acknowledges that the practice thereof results in higher levels of satisfaction with life. Both men and women reported finding *FLOW* in religion (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Despite age-related decline, people find meaning in old age by focusing on the positives in their lives, on “their assets as a source of meaning”, as Hill describes it (Hill, 2008, p. 9). Creating meaning, therefore, is unique to each human being (Hill, 2008; Steger, et al., 2006). Many people regard their faith as a meaningful anchor, and formal and private expressions of faith act as a buffer against stress and improve adjustment levels in older people (Moody, 2002). Argyle (2001) found that measures of purpose in life correlate strongly with happiness. The effect of religion on happiness, although a measure of purpose in life, was definite, though weak to modest in general surveys in European and American samples. The positive effect of religion on happiness was found to be greater for Blacks, older people, women, Protestants, and the socially isolated. A belief in the after-life was also found to be most beneficial for the elderly, the sick and those in danger (e.g. in a war situation) in terms of feelings of well-being, meaning and purpose (Argyle, 2001).

Religion is a source of meaning for many, especially in terms of having a mission or purpose and believing one’s life is significant (Steger, et al., 2006). Munsey (2008, p. 39) in this vein refers to “legacy” – the part of one’s life that “spills over” into the next generation, the part that will remain when one’s life is over. “How you live and what legacy you leave will determine the true worth of your life” (Munsey, 2008, p. 5).

Moody (2002) observed nearly a decade ago that organised religion often focuses on the contributions of the younger members of the congregation, largely ignoring the untapped resource in older people searching for a deeper meaning in life, for example through volunteering. Sadly, this seems no less true of the present. Organised religion, in my experience, has still not discovered the volunteering potential of its “grey” resource. However, hopefully there will be a new drive, where aging is defined “more by a desire to leave a legacy than to lead lives consumed by leisure” (Freedman, 1999, p. 74).

Leaving a legacy may be part of being “happily retired,” but the characteristics of happiness and well-being need to be explored further to understand more about being “happily retired.” This is the focus of the next section.

2.5.12 Subjective Well-being and Happiness

2.5.12.1 Introduction

Is happiness important? Do (all) people seek happiness? Popular psychology, writers and “self-help gurus ...have claimed that one can gain happiness via a myriad of ways – through the power of positive thinking, by finding one’s inner child, by becoming one’s own best friend, by not sweating the small stuff, or by not loving too little or too much” (Lyubomirsky, 2001, p. 245). Therefore, the following questions seem relevant: *What is happiness? More importantly, is it something one “gets”, inherits, or cultivates? How does a retiree experience happiness in retirement?*

As one of the results of *FLOW* is happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002), it is important to find some answers to these questions. Thus, I shall start with an overview of the theories of happiness and well-being, bearing in mind that the two words, happiness and well-being are often used interchangeably in the literature (e.g. Lyubomirsky, 2001; Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Snyder and Lopez (2007, p. 140) use the following equation to explain the relation between

happiness and well-being: "HAPPINESS + MEANING = WELL-BEING". According to Lyubomirsky (2001), qualities such as joy, contentment, well-being and meaning are almost universally included in the concept of happiness, but Argyle (2001, p. 148) is of the opinion that "different measures of well-being, satisfaction, happiness and positive affect all correlate quite strongly together, and produce a clear general factor".

According to Diener (1984), subjective well-being is, as the name suggests, subjective, as is happiness, and Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007) point out that these concepts are open to interpretation. Thus, there is a prolific amount of literature on these subjects. It is also important to note that subjective well-being usually focuses on a person's whole life and not only on an isolated part (Diener, 1984). Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007, p. 39) comment on the difficulty in defining *happiness* as it is not the result of one isolated factor. Happiness is influenced by many variables, such as personal values, genetics, personality and even good choices: it sometimes has the meaning of "joy, or cheerfulness, naïveté, or contentment ... internal peace ... cheerfulness ... complacency... [and] ... an invigorating and energetic feeling." According to these researchers, "[h]appiness is not the absence of sadness, nor is it the soaring emotional heights of ecstasy. Instead, happiness is much simpler: It is mildly pleasant, common but not permanent, and includes some (but not complete) satisfaction with most (but not all) aspects of life..." (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007, p. 85).

To answer some of the above questions, I shall start with an overview of the happiness theories, which will be followed by enhancing happiness in retirement, the relation between happiness and aging and lastly, the relation between *FLOW* and happiness.

2.5.12.2 Well-being and Happiness Theories

According to Diener (1984), the definition of subjective well-being (including happiness, life satisfaction, and positive affect) can be grouped into three broad categories: firstly, by external criteria that focus on what is desirable, especially in a given culture; secondly, by a subjective evaluation of a good life, and thirdly, by looking at the ratio of pleasant emotional experiences or positive affect to negative emotional experiences or negative affect. Argyle (2001), views happiness as comprising of three partly independent factors, namely satisfaction with life, positive affect and negative affect. However, certain biases, such as immediate mood and local customs, may play a confounding role. Another way of measuring well-being is by using subjective and objective measures, but selecting appropriate measures makes this difficult (Argyle, 2001).

Lyubomirsky, et al. (2005) distinguish three categories for predicting happiness: firstly, life circumstances and demographics; secondly, traits; and thirdly, intentional behaviours. The authors conclude that life circumstances, such as income or where one lives, have surprisingly little impact on happiness. Although personality “is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of subjective well-being”, the estimated impact of genes or heritability on subjective well-being differs across studies (Diener, et al., 1999, p. 279). It should also be kept in mind that “traits alone do not fully account for levels of happiness” and furthermore, according to Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006, p. 221), we are not genetically programmed to experience a set amount of happiness.

Theories of happiness abound: there are the Bottom-Up theories or state theories, which postulate that happiness is the accumulation of many small pleasures and happy moments, and the Top-Down theories or trait theories, that argue that certain personality traits predispose a person to react to situations in positive ways (Argyle, 2001; Diener, 1984; Lyubomirsky, 2001).

Happiness can be defined either as a personality trait or as a state, such as when a goal or need is met (Diener, 1984).

Diener (1984), a leading expert on subjective well-being, maintains that happiness has an affective as well as a cognitive component (i.e. an emotional as well as an evaluative component). According to Caprara, et al. (2007), subjective well-being entails a subjective assessment of life satisfaction. Subjective well-being does not comprise only the absence of negative factors, since positive and negative affect functions nearly independently from each other, and a lack of negative affect is not equal to the presence of positive affect. Therefore, happiness depends on reducing negative affect as well as enhancing positive affect, i.e. experiencing relatively more positive than negative emotions (Argyle, 2001; Argyle & Martin, 1991; Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007; Caprara, et al., 2007; Diener, 1984; Diener, Sandvik & Pavot, 1991). The absence of distress or negative affect is therefore seen as only one dimension of subjective well-being: "Frequent positive and infrequent negative affect correlate much more strongly with happiness measures than does the intensity of positive affect... relatively frequent positive affect is both necessary and sufficient to produce high scores on a variety of happiness measures" (Diener, et al., 1991, p. 123). According to Argyle and Martin (1991), both frequency and depth of positive affect are important. Joy, a general way of defining happiness, is seen as the "emotional side of happiness" and satisfaction with life as the "cognitive side" (Argyle & Martin, 1991, p. 23).

Csikszentmihalyi and Graef (1975) come to the conclusion that it is people's positive perception and interpretation of an activity (rather than objective criteria) that make an activity enjoyable. Objective criteria, such as health or wealth, are thus not necessarily that important. One's subjective evaluation of health or wealth, for example, is a stronger predictor of subjective well-being than objectively rated health (such as by a medical doctor) or income (Diener, 1984; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade, 2005; Rudinger & Thomae, 1990), because subjective well-being depends on cognitive processes and people's

expectations (Argyle, 2001; Argyle & Martin, 1991). Wealthier people tend to be happier than those less fortunate, but as the overall income increases, happiness does not rise exponentially (Diener, 1984). The same holds true for wealthier nations (Argyle, 2001). Positive affect, which seems to correlate strongly with extraversion, also seems to have a big effect on health, mental health, work and creativity. Positive affect is less stable over time and fluctuates with situational factors, while negative affect seems to correlate with neuroticism, and is more stable over time (Argyle, 2001).

In his review of different variables related to well-being, Diener (1984) reports *inter alia* on the following: *Age* plays a role in subjective well-being, with younger people experiencing more intense joy, but older people evaluating their lives more positively. *Gender* does not seem to play a significant role, and there are so many variables at play in respect of *race*, such as education, income, or where people live, that results seem inconclusive for the USA-population. Generally speaking, *unemployment* seems to have adverse effects on well-being, while a *good education* does not promise more subjective well-being. There are mixed results in terms of the importance of *religion* for subjective well-being, with more agreement that *marriage* and other *social relations* are good indicators of subjective well-being. *Positive life events* have a marginal impact on subjective well-being, with a feeling of being in control of an event playing a bigger role. *Active engagement in life* as popularised by activity theory, is activity-specific in its importance in terms of subjective well-being and therefore happiness is the result more of behaviour than of goal-setting. *High self-esteem* was found to be a strong predictor of subjective well-being, and “*internality*”, or an *internal locus of control*, may enhance happiness, but this is culture-specific and also related to a feeling of having control over one’s life. An *internal locus of control* refers to people who believe that their destiny is in their own hands, while people with an external locus-of-control believe that external factors beyond their control influence their lives (Moody, 2006). Tentative results indicate that *intelligence* (as measured by IQ-tests) does not directly influence happiness (Diener, 1984).

In his critique of various research results in respect of subjective well-being and happiness, Diener (1984) advises that more sophisticated theories on happiness are necessary, that also offer more differentiation, not only in terms of state *versus* trait theories, but also of types of subjective well-being.

2.5.12.3 Enhancing Happiness

According to Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007), happy people are more helpful, creative, social, altruistic, have better health habits (and live longer) and healthier thinking styles (including creativity), and tend to foster social relationships, including altruism. Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007), also contend that happiness is functional in that society needs happy people to flourish, explore, take risks and seek social relations. Thus, if happiness has so many benefits, can happiness be enhanced?

According to Lyubomirsky, et al. (2005), the effects of happiness strategies are not always long lasting, although some strategies, such as cognitive and behavioural strategies, have a more lasting impact. In their research, Lyubomirsky, et al. (2005) found that doing good deeds (a behavioural strategy) to others was more beneficial to well-being if the activities were performed over a brief period of time rather than over an extended period of time. This is an important finding as it could have an impact on volunteering activities, which will be discussed on page 104.

Lyubomirsky, et al. (2005) also recommend that those seeking happiness must actively and intentionally pursue activities that fit their values and interests, since intentional activity accounted for 40% of sustained well-being. This concurs with Csikszentmihalyi's (2002, p. 3) observation that an "optimal experience is thus something that we *make* happen". Additionally, according to Lyubomirsky (2010) and Lyubomirsky, et al. (2005), 10% of people's happiness is due to circumstances and the remaining 50% is due to an emotional set-point. There seems to be an individual baseline for happiness to

which people return (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007; Lyubomirsky, 2010; Lyubomirsky, et al., 2005), a “natural emotional set-point” (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007, p. 49) which is usually in the mildly positive range. Other happiness enhancing strategies include investing in social relationships, managing stress and trauma, living in the present, committing to goals and following a healthy life-style and practising religion and/or spirituality (Lyubomirsky, 2010).

Values such as gratitude, forgiveness and doing good deeds were found to enhance happiness as well (Lyubomirsky, et al., 2005). According to Lyubomirsky, et al. (2005) and Hill (2008), practising gratitude is a cognitive happiness-increasing activity. However, optimal timing and variety in practising an intentional activity are important in terms of maintaining the behaviour (Lyubomirsky, 2010). Gratitude deserves special mention and will be discussed briefly, since “experiences of gratitude might be associated - perhaps even in a causal fashion - with happiness and well-being” (Emmons & McCullough, 2003, pp. 378-388). Additionally, Hill (2008) views gratitude as facilitating adaptation in society and as a positive aging strategy through reframing challenging circumstances to meaningful ones. According to Emmons and McCullough (2003), gratitude has been categorised as an emotion, an attitude, a virtue, a habit, a trait and a coping mechanism, and according to Hill (2008), as a developmental construct. Research results indicate that practising gratitude increases positive emotions and reduces negative emotions, improves the quality of sleep, promotes feelings of well-being and life satisfaction, and also produces greater optimism and motivation for people to reach out to others. Accumulated gratitude is seen as increasing well-being since it builds psychological, social, and spiritual resources, such as strengthening social relationships that can later be a source of social support, and promoting flexible and creative thinking (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Emmons and McCullough (2003) caution that gratitude research does not indicate how long the effects of gratitude last and whether it is enduring over time. Experiencing gratitude helps to maintain close connections to others and

results in increased happiness and hope (Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Hill, 2008). Nevertheless, counting blessings once a week, as opposed to more frequently, was found to be more beneficial, perhaps due to the boredom induced by repetition (Lyubomirsky, et al., 2005).

Argyle (2001, p. 162) reports a strong relationship between happiness and “internal control, self-esteem, optimism, and purpose in life.” According to Moody (2006), some elderly nursing home residents become despondent or depressed due to perceived loss of control in their circumstances, having lost control over basic choices such as mealtime or bedtime. Argyle (2001) believes that work, satisfying social relationships and leisure activities all contribute to happiness and these activities can be controlled by the individual.

Purpose in life depends on goal commitment and realistic and attainable goals (Argyle, 2001). Personal choices, such as goals, emotional reactions and the events that people choose to focus on, are well within the control of most people (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007). By choosing the right goals, socialising, and developing positive thinking habits one can maximise subjective well-being and therefore making “smart choices” can produce happiness (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007, p. 61).

The correlation between happiness or well-being and education is weak for most first world countries such as the USA and Japan, and stronger in poorer countries, such as Mexico and Nigeria (Argyle, 2001).

2.5.12.4 The Relationship between Happiness and Aging

Happiness is important for successful aging as positive emotions have been shown to enhance and build people’s emotional and physical well-being and lead to healthy longevity (Frederickson, 2006). According to Frederickson’s (2006), *broaden-and-build theory*, happiness promotes optimal functioning in the present as well as in the longer term. These resources can act as a buffer during hard times: “Put differently, to the extent that the broaden-and-build

effects of positive emotions accumulate and compound over time, positive emotions carry the capacity to transform individuals for the better, making them healthier and more socially integrated, knowledgeable, effective and resilient” (Frederickson, 2006, p. 98). Therefore, positive emotions can improve psychological resilience and well-being, and build personal resources that lead to “flourishing and healthy longevity” (Fredrickson, 2006, p. 98).

Research on aging and on subjective well-being report a “paradox of well-being”, since despite the difficulties of aging, such as physical deterioration or loss of friends and relatives, older people do not report a severe decline in well-being (Caprara, et al., 2007). It seems that people actually get happier until they reach the age of 75 after which their happiness starts to decline (Lyubomirsky, 2010). Although the elderly cannot disregard the obstacles and decline associated with aging, previous life experiences may ameliorate this decline and act as a frame of reference to handle age-related challenges (Caprara, et al., 2007). However, Diener (1984, p. 554), in his review of research from 1965 to 1983, reports mixed results on the relationship between chronological age and happiness and, as previously stated, he comes to the conclusion that younger people experience both positive and negative emotions more “intensely” whereas older people “tend to judge their lives in more positive ways”. The most encouraging finding from Lyubomirsky’s (2010) research is that it is possible to enhance happiness, no matter one’s age, through intentional activities despite one’s happiness set point or circumstances, as described in the previous section.

2.5.12.5 FLOW and Happiness

FLOW is seen as very important for well-being and happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi & Wong, 1991). Happiness is also a result of *FLOW* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Joy, which is related to happiness, is predominantly caused by social contact and close relationships, sexual activity, achievement, physical activity, nature, reading, music, food and alcohol. Joy can also incorporate *FLOW*-experiences. Another source of joy and happiness is leisure activities, especially where challenges need to be met which can result in intrinsic satisfaction and *FLOW*. Other intrinsically motivating activities include sport, hobbies, clubs, voluntary work and activities done in and around the home, such as gardening or sewing (Argyle & Martin, 1991). According to Lyubomirsky (2010, p. 190), it is important to find and “multiply” opportunities for experiencing *FLOW*, thus increasing happiness and meaning, making the present moment more enjoyable, feeling more in control of one’s life (*versus* feeling helpless) and increasing feelings of worthiness.

Several researchers have demonstrated that *FLOW* is “a universally prized subjective state” and not only an American cultural value (Csikszentmihalyi & Wong, 1991, p. 196).

Csikszentmihalyi (2002) sees self-transcendence as one prerequisite for happiness and growth of the self. Self-transcendence will be discussed next.

2.5.13 Transcending the Self

2.5.13.1 The Value of Self-transcendence

Transcending the self, as stated in Chapter 1, means “using one’s unique potentials” or “creative strivings” not only for oneself, but also for the common good (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, pp. 235-238). Selfishness, and focusing on one’s unique individuality rather than the broader community, defies a meaningful and purpose-driven life, “at a time when we are capable of destroying ourselves and the environment...” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 237). Pride in one’s uniqueness should therefore be “balanced” with an interest and concern for the wider community (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 238).

Seligman (2006, p. 234) distinguishes three kinds of happiness, in an increasing order of significance: pleasure (including feelings like rapture and thrills); the engaged life; and a meaningful life (attaching significance to something greater than oneself). For him, an “engaged life” consists of finding key personal strengths and qualities and using these as much as possible in everyday life, which then brings about *FLOW* and curbs the fear of personal insignificance.

Volunteering, as a means of possibly finding significance or meaning in retirement, is discussed next.

2.5.13.2 Volunteering as a Source of Meaning

“Although the concept of utilising volunteerism as an intervention to enhance well-being has been recommended by self-help authors for decades and theological scholars for centuries, a specific counselling strategy that engages help-giving as an intervention for promoting positive ageing of the helper has not been articulated in the treatment literature. The impact of altruistically motivated help-giving, as a way of developing peace of mind, can be foundational in moving the focus of psychological resources from self-concerns to a more outward concern for the welfare of others” (Hill, 2005, p. 169).

Usually, volunteers, whether they be former professionals or unskilled workers, who devote their time, experience and involvement to projects or people are the ones benefitting most from helping those in need; they experience a sense of fulfilment, rejuvenation, a new beginning, idealism and a sense of new possibilities and meaningful accomplishments (Freedman, 1999). Freedman (1999) maintains that the leisure ideal, disengagement and age segregation, invented as a money-making scheme has outlived its usefulness. Therefore, volunteering seems to be a valuable tool in meaningful aging, and the reasons behind this thinking are now further explored.

Muller and Stevens (2001, p. 15) see retirement and the resultant loss of meaningful work, social status and a decline of income leading to premature death, substance abuse and marital conflict. Early institutionalisation, loss of a meaningful role in society and frustration due to this role loss, excessive criticism and a lack of stimulation may even lead to early senility (Muller & Stevens, 2001). In this vein Hill (2005) suggests further research on utilising volunteerism as a strategy to enhance well-being and positive aging.

The Austrian psychologist, Victor Frankl, said that happiness is the unintended result of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself and that finding meaning is unique to each individual (Deist, 1980). In the same vein, it is declared necessary to move away from a pre-occupation with the self to a concern for the well-being of others to enhance one's own happiness (Hill, 2005). Thus, Piliavin (2007) concludes that the more an elderly person volunteers, the higher is his or her life satisfaction. Volunteering sometimes even improves physical health and longevity and acts as a buffer against stress. The volunteers often learn new skills in helping those in need, which results in personal growth, health benefits and a sense of accomplishment (Freedman, 1999). Other benefits include having structure in one's day and expanding social networks (Freedman, 1999).

Nevertheless, the number of older adults volunteering is on the decline, according to a Gallup survey in 1996, and this group also volunteers less than any other age group in the USA (Freedman, 1999). Freedman (1999) states that these American seniors have 50 % more leisure time than the rest of the population, but half of this time is spent in front of the television, followed by housework. Freedman (1999) identifies the following contributing factors that keep older adults from committing to volunteer work:

- Lack of vision, ideas or purpose for retirement.
- A focus on staying young as long as possible (confirmed by Daatland, 2007; Smith & Clurman, 2007).
- A portrayal of retirement as a time for endless relaxation and pleasure.

- A lack of organised institutions where volunteers can present themselves and where there is a fit between volunteering needs and someone's interests.
- Retirement communities often existing as places "not of creation, but of recreation and vegetation" (American historian Daniel Boorstin as cited in Freedman, 1999, p. 22).
- The need for a new focus on the potential contributions of older adults and not only on frail or poor elderly people.

In this vein, Rowe and Kahn (1999) suggest that voluntary organisations have not yet realised the untapped potential and contributions that retirees could make, and therefore do not reach out to them. Alter (2006) says that a feature of social entrepreneurship is the ability to join social concerns with business principles to bring about needed social change. The next section explores the possible importance of combining volunteerism and business with the expertise of retirees.

2.5.13.3 Social Entrepreneurship

In this section, the term "*social entrepreneurship*" and its possible impact on successful and meaningful aging are explored. A new vision of social contribution, using the experience, knowledge and know-how of retirees to benefit society, is advocated by Freedman (1999). Retirees can combine the extra freedom of retirement with an opportunity to make some of their most important contributions to improve society (Freedman, 1999).

The term "*entrepreneur*" was used in France as early as the 17th and 18th century, for someone who accepts an obligation, task or enterprise and finds new ways to stimulate economic growth (Dees, 2001). Jean Baptiste Say (a French economist) was presumably the first person to use the word (Dees, 2001). The term "*social entrepreneur*" was first used by William Drayton, who

is currently the CEO and founder of ASHOKA, a global social entrepreneurship enterprise (Davis, 2002).

Social entrepreneurship entails transforming society for the better or, in the words of Drayton (2000, p. 2):

“The job of the pattern-change social entrepreneur is to recognize whenever a part of society is stuck in an inefficient or harmful pattern, to conceive a better and safe alternative, to make that vision realistic and then a refined reality, and then to persuade his or her entire society to make the leap to this new way. Spotting and solving these problems requires the entrepreneur because only (s)he is married to a vision and cannot rest until it has transformed all of society.”

According to Young (2006, pp. 66-67), a common thread running through social entrepreneurial activities is the creation of socially added value, resulting in sustained improvement in the social or economic situation of a disadvantaged group. According to Yunus (2006, p. 44), “social business entrepreneurs can use market mechanisms to significant effect and make the market an exciting place for fighting social battles in ever more innovative and effective ways”. In order to fund social missions, social entrepreneurs may work with government, philanthropic organisations, banks or the private sector (Dees, 2001; Nicholls, 2006) and may use “for-profit, not-for-profit, and hybrid organisational forms (or a mix of all three) to deliver social value and bring about change” (Nicholls, 2006, p. 13). Dees (2009) sees social enterprise business models as running along a continuum from being wholly philanthropic or having to rely on government subsidies, to being fully commercial. Sustainable business ventures, according to Yunus (2006), are very important for financing social change. The focus is more on making a difference than profit maximisation. In fact, Yunus (2006) makes mention of four types of financing for social endeavours, i.e. no cost recovery, some cost recovery, full cost recovery and more than full cost recovery (the last two by business

people). Grenier (2006) understands social entrepreneurs to function on two levels: firstly, as individual leaders, reformers and innovators who introduce new ways of solving social problems, usually in the not-for-profit or non-governmental fields; and secondly, as those involved in commerce with a view to financing a social goal or combining social needs and profit goals. However, Dees (2001) has a different view and distinguishes between social entrepreneurs and business entrepreneurs, concluding that social entrepreneurs are more focused on mission possibilities, whereas business entrepreneurs are most active in the field of wealth creation.

Drayton also emphasises the innovative and visionary aspect of entrepreneurship, i.e. creative solutions to society's problems that bring about social change (Drayton, 2000). Creative thinking is therefore important, as social innovation often springs from "combining existing elements in new ways" (Young, 2006, p. 69), e.g. eBay bringing together small traders and home hobbyists. However, according to Nicholls and Cho (2006), not all social entrepreneurial ventures are by nature innovative since some are more socially or market orientated, or a combination of all these elements, e.g. hospice or palliative care that has a social and innovative element, but is not market orientated.

Who is the social entrepreneur?

According to Grenier (2006, p. 132), the social entrepreneur is a "change-agent" who usually acts upon his or her own values and ethics and/or may be inspired and motivated by his or her own or others' suffering, lack or need. The social entrepreneur also seems to have a kind of perseverance in the face of obstacles and financial hardship to implement his or her vision for a better society. Social entrepreneurs also tend to be non-traditional and pioneering. (Grenier, 2006; Nicholls & Cho, 2006). Social entrepreneurs define success in two ways, as profit and as improving people's lives (Skoll, 2006, p. v). Susan Davis (2002) comments that Bill Gates (Microsoft) and Anita Rodick (Body

Shop) are more well-known than many heads of state. Therefore, she concludes that entrepreneurs can have a big impact on the economy, politics, society, the environment, culture and even globalisation.

2.5.13.4 The Necessity for Additional Income in Retirement

Minichiello and Coulson (2005) hold the opinion that retirement is becoming an increasingly more complex life transition. Predicted longevity (with estimates of up to 120 years) will put a strain on pension resources and people may outlive their pensions (Muller & Stevens, 2001). Poverty levels are higher for the elderly living alone than for those living in families (Neuhaus & Neuhaus, 1982). In this vein, Macnab (1994) advocates more careful financial planning since many elderly people have a fear of longevity, not knowing whether a longer life would be affordable. Therefore, according to Muller and Stevens (2001), retirement should never be an end, but rather a life transition to a new beginning. In the USA, the “Grey Wolves”, for example, are entrepreneurs who started small businesses after retirement, using skills and networks previously acquired. In their summary of personality research, Caprara, et al. (2007) make the point that high self-esteem has an advantageous effect throughout one’s life into old age, also bearing in mind that older people, despite experiencing decline, do not have less self-esteem than younger people. Therefore, it would seem advisable to “invest” in meaningful endeavours after retirement to build self-esteem and enhance financial resources as advocated by Muller and Stevens (2001). The Gas survey of 1991 in the UK, for example, found that 45% of respondents indicated some form of financial difficulty in retirement (Biggs, 1993). In the USA, the placement of workers older than 50 is a lucrative business for employment agencies, since the expertise and experience of Boomers are in demand. Work is mostly found to be meaningful (Smith & Clurman, 2007). Freedman (1999) comments on Senior programmes in the USA that provide an income for poor elderly people (below the poverty line) for their community work, e.g. in hospitals, schools, or care centres. This

income is used for medicine, food and other necessities or for small luxuries. Still others use the money to buy essentials for those they are caring for.

In view of South Africa's large numbers of unemployed youth, the responsibility rests on retirees to help themselves while helping others at the same time. According to Smit (2008), the number of whites older than 66 years in the latest South African census was 600 000, and a strong correlation was found between growing old and poverty, with 4% of the white elderly being classified as poor. In an open letter to the President, Solidarity Helping Hand (a South African trade union) declared the following, quoted directly as received from Solidarity upon request (personal communication, June 10, 2010):

- "Research by Helping Hand has shown that 63% of the residents in the 77 white squatter camps in Pretoria are 60 years and older.
- There is currently only one social worker for approximately every 4 000 South Africans.
- Social work has been classified as a scarce skill for the first time in history.
- Because of the shortage of social workers, the needs of poor children and the elderly in particular can no longer be looked after.
- A total of 2 100 poverty cases are currently being investigated by the Centurion Council for the Elderly.
- According to Pretoria Elderly Care, approximately 1 000 cases of elderly neglect are reported to the organisation each month.
- The former Umsobomvu Youth Fund, now known as the NYDA (National Youth Development Agency) launched an independent investigation and found that the access to disability grants is much lower in the impoverished white communities than in the impoverished black communities. According to this report, it is extremely difficult for impoverished whites to get access to disability grants.
- Most impoverished black communities have access to satellite offices of the Department of Social Development. These offices handle applications for grants that are then directed to the head office of the Department. No such service is available in impoverished white communities."

It would therefore appear of the utmost importance for retirees in South Africa to generate their own extra income, or do volunteer work in a way meaningful to them if adequate financial provision for retirement already exists. Social entrepreneurship may be a valuable tool to alleviate poverty. Social entrepreneurship may thus be a useful concept to benefit self (generating extra income) and help others (transcending the self).

Financial prudence can be considered wise, and in this vein wisdom will be discussed in the next section as the last building block for successful aging.

2.5.14 Wisdom

“Other than wrinkles, there may be few inherent changes with age”, declare Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 190). This forces the question of why some older people age successfully and are recognised as wise, and others not. Wisdom is the last building block for successful or positive aging to be discussed (the others being creativity, goal-setting, meaning, personality, resilience, social relations, strengths, well-being and happiness, and transcending the self). Applying wisdom leads to satisfaction with life and to happiness, according to Kunzmann (2007), and thus it is important to explore this concept further.

According to Erikson (in Schlein, 1987), the conflict between *generativity versus stagnation* is the second last stage of the hierarchical psychological development tasks of adulthood. The last task to be mastered in older age is *integrity versus despair* (Schlein, 1987). *Generativity* is the task of guiding and caring for the next generation and it is a “psychosocial” task that, when or if it fails, results in stagnation, boredom, and selfishness (Schlein, 1987). The conflict between ego-integrity and despair, i.e. “accepting one’s life *versus* feeling hopeless and depressed about the limited time remaining” (Moody, 2006, p. 6), results in the attainment of wisdom, if successfully negotiated (Schlein, 1987). The development of wisdom is therefore seen as not due to the passage of time, but due to life experiences and how one reacts to these experiences (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Perspective is seen as a synonym for wisdom by some. Academic intelligence and personality traits or chronological age *per se* does not play an important role in the gaining of wisdom-related knowledge (Kunzmann, 2007).

To complicate matters more, wisdom is not seen as the exclusive domain of the elderly. Research demonstrates that under certain conditions, wisdom can be cultivated even at an early age (Fernández-Ballesteros, et al., 2007a), as early as adolescence (Pasupathi, Staudinger & Baltes, 2001). In this section, an overview of some research is given to come to some sort of understanding of what is meant by aging wisely.

Wisdom (or perspective), as an aspect of successful aging, is listed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as both a forecaster and a result of successful aging):

- The concept of wisdom is not the same as that of intelligence.
- Those with wisdom have an outstanding ability to apply knowledge and judgement and give advice about, *inter alia*, the meaning of life.
- Wisdom implies that one is concerned about the well-being of oneself and of others.

Research into Wisdom is usually focused on the nature of a wise person, and can be based on personality or motivational, intellectual and emotional qualities (Kunzmann, 2007). Wisdom can also be viewed as a highly developed (cultural) knowledge base, for developing one's own and other's potential, i.e. being other-oriented, and therefore it is inconsistent with a life-style that is focused solely on one's own pleasure and comfort (Kunzmann, 2007). Wisdom rather seeks to combine individual and communal well-being, which results in happiness and well-being for those who make this choice to aid the common good (Kunzmann, 2007). Adults with high wisdom-related knowledge showed diminished interest in values aimed at a more self-indulgent, pleasurable and comfortable life-style and rather preferred personal growth and insight (Kunzmann, 2007). Being other-focused was equally important, e.g. with a focus on environmental protection, societal needs and well-being as well as on meaningful social ties, on cooperation rather than conflict (Kunzmann, 2007).

The Berlin Wisdom model, developed by Baltes and several colleagues, including Kunzmann, established five wisdom criteria (Kunzmann, 2007, p. 228). Expert knowledge (in terms of the meaning of life and demonstrated in behaviour) approaches wisdom if it meets two basic criteria, namely

- extended factual knowledge about human nature and the life course;
- a highly developed level of practical knowledge about dealing with life problems.

The remaining three criteria (also seen as universal criteria), are unique wisdom-related criteria, namely

- understanding the many contexts of life, how they interconnect and change over the natural life span;
- understanding and accepting cultural, social and individual differences in values and things considered important;
- being able to cope with uncertainty, including the boundaries of personal knowledge.

Summarising the research results, Kunzmann (2007, p. 229) reports that few adults reach a high level of wisdom-related knowledge, although many are *en route* to wisdom. Nevertheless, wisdom-related knowledge seems to remain stable over the adult years, even beyond 70 years, if pathology is absent. Many factors bear influence: *inter alia*, a stimulating social environment, access to good education and a supportive family. Interaction between “facilitative contexts” (e.g. gender, culture), “expertise-specific factors” (e.g. life experience, mentorship) and “person-related factors” (e.g. intelligence, personality traits) influences the development of wisdom-related knowledge and people’s way of life, such as life planning and life management (Kunzman, 2007, p. 229). However, according to Kunzmann (2007, p. 231), wisdom is not only “an expert knowledge system about the meaning and conduct of life”, it also includes emotional factors, such as the presence of emotional balance, empathy and motivational factors and the absence of impulsivity and neuroticism.

Baltes and Baltes (1990, p. 6) caution that subjective criteria for successful aging, such as measures of life satisfaction, self-concept, self-esteem and personal control, may be over-emphasised and even misleading. According to Baltes and Baltes (1990), more objective criteria for the later years would be those of Erikson, who used personality developmental outcomes (“generativity” and “wisdom”) as criteria in this phase. These values may, however, reflect the norms of the middle and upper class, according to Baltes and Baltes (1990). *Generativity*, in the words of Hill (2008), means to promote growth in those younger than oneself. According to Erik Erikson (1968), the last stage of “psychosocial adaptation”, namely integrity *versus* despair, should result in wisdom as a “psychosocial strength”, according to Schlein (1987, p. 600), or in “virtue” according to Stevens (1983, p. 41). Wisdom, according to Schlein (1987, pp. 608-609), entails “ripened wits, accumulated knowledge, inclusive understanding, and mature judgement”, and wisdom is seen as “a detached and yet active concern with life in the face of death”.

Caprara, et al. (2007, p. 120) theorise that older people may manage negative emotions better and gain more from expressing positive thoughts and feelings than younger people due to “the wisdom associated with experience, self-knowledge, and better understanding of one’s own emotions”. Fernández-Ballesteros, et al. (2007a, p. 216) also argue that wisdom develops as a result of handling problems, tasks and challenges responsibly throughout different phases of one’s life, and therefore the emphasis is on the development of a person and not so much on the acquisition of expert knowledge or skills.

In the previous sections, the thirteen building blocks for successful aging were discussed, and in the section that follows, the relationship between *FLOW* and successful aging is explored.

2.6 Successful Aging and FLOW

Why do so many older people feel that retirement does not live up to their expectations?

Csikszentmihalyi (2002) comments that despite vastly improved living conditions, good health, and astounding scientific breakthroughs to enhance well-being, “people often end up feeling that their lives have been wasted, that instead of being filled with happiness their years were spent in anxiety and boredom” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 1). Macnab (1994, p. 12) argues that elderly people, in accordance with their cultural expectations, often anticipate irreversible decline and many live this self-fulfilling prophecy. Macnab (1994) consequently proposes that people over 60 years of age should think about their objectives and goals for the later years, as it influences their sense of achievement, involvement in worthwhile purposes and activities and their sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) found clear indications in his research that the *FLOW*-experience is not limited to any particular cultural group, whether affluent or not, young or old, male or female. Happiness is seen by Csikszentmihalyi (2002) to be the result of *FLOW* and therefore *FLOW* could benefit any age group, including retirees.

Logan (1988, p.172) views *FLOW* as a possible solution for successfully coping with life’s challenges, since *FLOW* is “the vehicle for linking the psychology of successful coping with the psychology of enjoyment.” Diener (1984) agrees that people’s lives will be happier if they become involved in *FLOW*-activities that provide interest and involvement. Logan (1988) regards successful coping as the ability to create *FLOW* experiences for oneself. One of the pre-requisites of being engrossed in a mental or physical activity is not to focus on oneself (loss of ego, or not being self-conscious). Logan (1988), referring to lonely people or those who see themselves as victims, suggests that people who focus overly on themselves may benefit most from *FLOW* experiences in order to compensate for this over-emphasis on the self.

Therefore, Logan (1988) understands *FLOW* to be a coping mechanism even under adverse circumstances.

Nevertheless, *FLOW* experiences are rare, due to what Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988) describe as a mismatch of abilities and opportunities to act, as well as distractions like worry or boredom or social or cultural circumstances, which hinder the intense concentration needed for a *FLOW* experience.

2.7 Successful and Positive Aging Theories

In this section, I take a closer look at the theories underpinning the practicalities involved in successful and positive aging. The Selection, Optimisation with Compensation (SOC) theory by Baltes and Baltes (1990) is discussed as an example of an older successful aging theory. The second type of aging strategy (Hill, 2005, 2008) consists of guidelines for positive or optimal aging as spawned by the rise of positive psychology, especially as advocated by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (e.g. 2000).

Duay and Bryan's (2006) research confirmed the importance of Baltes and Baltes' (1990) Selection, Optimisation with Compensation model. SOC and Hill's (2005, 2008) strategies will be discussed next as complementary examples of the fields of successful and positive aging, i.e. from older research theories to more consumer friendly, self-help literature on successful or positive aging.

2.7.1 Successful Aging and SOC

Freund and Baltes (2007, p. 25) confidently declare, "Empirical evidence supports SOC as a theory of successful aging". According to Sadler and Biggs (2006), this is a theory of adaptation to the growing challenges of aging, but the difficulty in measuring "adaptation" has resulted in limited empirical

support. The theory is important because “encouraging older people to focus on compensation and maintenance of functioning, rather than primarily aspiring for new gains and growth, might help them to invest their resources wisely” (Freund & Baltes, 2007, p. 251). According to Sadler and Biggs (2006), criticism of the theory includes ambiguity over what exactly should be measured.

Baltes and Baltes’ (1990) Selection, Optimisation with Compensation (SOC) model of successful aging advocates that successful aging requires the refining of goals, the optimising of functional capabilities and compensating for losses. Successful aging can thus be seen as a process that promotes gains and compensates for losses. It is an adaptive process which continues throughout life, but is particularly relevant when there is a loss of “biological, mental, and social reserves” (Baltes & Baltes, 1990, p. 21). The process is therefore called “adaptive potential” or “plasticity” (Baltes & Baltes, 1990, p. 22) making use of the reserve capacity in older age to compensate for age-related decline. “*Selection*” means that there is a narrower focus on fewer areas of life, e.g. more time and energy are invested in fewer domains to conserve energy or enhance chosen behaviours. “*Optimising*” means that specific selected behaviour is maximised. “*Compensation*” means that, when certain behavioural functions are reduced or lost, the mind or technology can compensate for this to enhance overall functioning of the individual, e.g. mnemonic strategies (memory aid) or a hearing aid (technology). Baltes and Baltes (1990, p. 26) illustrate the theory by using the aging pianist Rubenstein as an example: he played fewer pieces (selection), practised these more (optimisation) and slowed down his playing speed before fast movements to create the illusion of speed during the fast movements (compensation). Hill (2008, p. 12) regards SOC as a tool for managing decline in order to keep on finding “well-being and satisfaction” in the later years.

SOC-principles are described as “universal processes of developmental regulation” in aid of “adaptive functioning across domains of functioning, age

groups and cultures” (Freund & Baltes, 2007, p. 242). The domains of functioning can be social, cognitive and physical, e.g. setting personally and socio-culturally important goals, taking action towards these goals and compensating when there is functional loss by adapting goals or setting new goals. Non-conscious goals, however, or action taken almost automatically, also have an influence on behaviour and on development as well. Flexible goals lead to better levels of overall functioning.

In other research, Baltes and Freund (2007) integrated SOC and Wisdom: ...”wisdom defines...ethically, and morally appropriate goals... associated with the conduct and meaning of life...SOC, on the other hand, is basically value neutral...[t]he SOC model outlines an ensemble of behavioural strategies by which goals and means can be pursued and attained. In this sense, the SOC model specifies ways of implementing wisdom. A successful life, then, is enhanced by a joint consideration of wisdom and SOC” (Baltes & Freund, 2007, p. 250).

Baltes and Baltes (1990, pp. 9-10) have contributed seven propositions with regard to human aging:

1. There are vast differences between normal aging (aging without illness), optimal aging (aging under the best possible environmental and potential developing circumstances) and pathological aging (characterized by illness, such as dementia).
2. There is variability in aging due to genetic factors, individual and cultural differences, and pathology.
3. There is a reserve capacity, latent potential or behavioural plasticity in the aged that can be accessed via lifelong learning or training. However, the social environment of seniors tends to reinforce dependent rather than independent and new learning behaviour. Nevertheless, “behavioural optimisation and corrective compensation” (Baltes & Baltes, 1990, p. 10) are possible.

4. Despite this reserve capacity, there seem to be age-related limits to our reserve capacity. In terms of declined reaction time and memory skills in seniors, older people, for example, have less cognitive reserve capacity than younger people, despite training or practice.
5. Crystallised cognition, or knowledge-based pragmatics and technology, such as enhancing memory by the use of memory aids like mnemonics, can compensate for losses in fluid intelligence and therefore bring about successful aging.
6. As one ages, losses become more and gains become less; this is true for subjective expectations, as well as objective behavioural assessment.
7. Resilience and subjective life satisfaction remain a part of old age, which may be the result of adjusting personal goals or the finding of new reference or comparison groups (e.g. comparing oneself to people with the same level of functioning) and having a flexible self-definition.

Baltes and Baltes (1990, pp. 19-21) suggest the following strategies for successful aging:

- Choosing a healthy life-style in order to minimise pathological aging (proposition 1).
- Promoting social and individual flexibility and using available opportunities (proposition 2).
- Strengthening physical, social and mental reserve capabilities (proposition 3).
- Using compensatory knowledge and technologically based support (proposition 5) due to limits in reserve capacity (proposition 4), such as prosthetics.
- Setting more realistic goals for fulfilling desires (proposition 6).

2.7.2 Hill's Positive Aging Strategies

Hill (2005) suggests that there are four characteristics for positive aging that optimise a longer life span and result in leading a better quality of life:

- A positive ager can mobilise resources, such as using aids (e.g. reading glasses or a magnifying glass for reading), or alter his or her attitude towards a goal when it is no longer possible to perform a particular task to cope with age-related decline.
- A positive ager makes a lifestyle choice to foster psychological well-being, such as personal growth, life-long learning, and relationships; and physical well-being, such as actively seeking ways to preserve or improve health.
- A positive ager practices flexibility over the life span to foster meaning and optimism in the presence age-related decline. In practice, this entails forgiving others and self, adapting personal goals to foster well-being despite decline, and reaching out to help others.
- A positive ager focuses on the positive and meaningful aspects related to aging, including gratitude and thankfulness.

The above four characteristics were elaborated further in Hill's (2008) list of the seven strategies for positive aging:

- Seeking personal meaning in the older years by maximising assets and resources and deriving meaning from this, rather than a fixation on deficits or decline.
- Pursuing life long learning.
- Seeking wisdom.
- Strengthening relationships.
- Giving to others and receiving from others.
- Forgiving yourself and others.
- Practicing gratitude.

2.8 Gender and FLOW

Muller and Stevens (2001) are of the opinion that no physiological reason exists for females to outlive males, yet this is precisely what happens. Women tend to outlive men by 4 years (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). One possible reason is that women tend to retire gradually, first as a mother, then as an employee or a worker, and then possibly as a wife. For women, therefore, life continues more or less normally after retiring from work (Muller & Stevens, 2001). Carlisle Duncan (1988) concludes that working women do not seem to compartmentalise work, leisure, and home life in the same way as men tend to do. Men tend to identify fully with their work role and experience a huge loss of meaning when they retire, and this often leads to an existential crisis (Muller & Stevens, 2001).

Argyle (2001) found in his evaluation of gender research that happiness increases with age, for men more so than for women, despite decline. Generally speaking, women, however, tend to be a little happier than men and women tend to experience more positive affect and life satisfaction (Argyle, 2001). Women, tend to suffer more from depression, anxiety or neurosis and every-day negative emotions than their male counterparts (but the depressed women are a small number in terms of the total). Women also experience stronger emotions than men do, possibly due to being more expressive or more socially active. Overall, married people seem to be a little happier than single people. Men's happiness is affected by their jobs, finances, and themselves. Women's happiness is more affected by their children, their family's health, chronological age and physical attractiveness since those over 45 years of age are deemed to be less attractive. Gender differences are influenced by culture (Argyle, 2001; Csikszentmihalyi & Graef, 1975) and according to Caprara, et al. (2007), culturally accepted gender roles tend to remain stable over time. Cultural *FLOW* activities are influenced by adherence to cultural gender role stereotypes (Han, 1988).

2.9 Conclusion

In Chapter 2, the building blocks and strategies to ameliorate some aspects of age-related decline were reviewed, for example through life style choices, and enhancing one's chance to age successfully, happily and in *FLOW*. "Our main message is that we can have a dramatic impact on our success or failure in aging", is Rowe and Kahn's (1999, p. 18) inspirational suggestion. In the same vein Ryff (1989, p. 38) advocates the "possibilities of continued growth and development in the later years". Not only physical well-being was researched, but also emotional and spiritual well-being, with a focus on finding meaning in retirement through self-transcendence. A new vision of social contribution using the existing underutilised experience, knowledge and know-how of retirees to address pressing needs in society, is propagated by Freedman (1999). "In fact, [retirement] has the potential of becoming the best stage of all, an age of liberation when individuals combine newfound freedoms with prolonged health and the chance to make some of their most important contributions to life" (Freedman, 1999, p. 245).

The Methodology of this study will now be presented in Chapter 3.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The *research methodology* focuses on the research process and the procedures that will be used to investigate *FLOW* in retirement. According to Leedy (1997, p. 5), research methodology is “a process through which we attempt to achieve systematically and with the support of data the answer to a question, the resolution of a problem, or a greater understanding of a phenomenon”. The aim of choosing a research methodology is to control and plan for how and where the data should be gathered and organised, and how the raw data should be refined, in order to interpret the data in a meaningful way so that possible conclusions can be drawn from it (Leedy, 1997).

Babbie and Mouton (2006, pp. 75-78) distinguish between research methodology and research design as follows:

- **Research methodology** focuses on the *research process* and the procedures that need to be used, e.g. type of data collection, which in this research will be by means of the case study approach (to be fully discussed on page 135), i.e. using primary data as opposed to analyzing existing text data, such as textual criticism or numeric data (secondary data).
- **Research design** focuses on the kind of study and on *the type of evidence needed to answer the research questions*. According to Babbie and Mouton (2006, p. 72), “research design...addresses the planning of scientific inquiry – designing a strategy for finding out something.” The research design for this explorative study is mainly of a qualitative nature or an “insider perspective on social action” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 53), i.e. the *FLOW* experiences of the nine participants as they relate to retirement.

In this chapter, three main research approaches (the qualitative approach versus the quantitative approach, and the mixed methods approach) and four main research designs (case study, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology) will be discussed. The rationale behind choosing the case study design will be explained. As background to this discussion, the philosophical roots or theoretical underpinning of these designs will also be discussed. Issues pertaining to reliability, validity and triangulation will be examined as part of the case study praxis, before continuing to the quantitative questionnaires and the reasons for including them in this research study. A brief discussion on ethics will conclude this chapter.

Before proceeding to these discussions, the focus needs to return to the research questions as delineated in Chapter 1. Finding answers to research questions motivate the use of certain specific research approaches and methods, which will be introduced in this chapter. The research questions are thus the rationale behind the methodology, as they are the first step in attempting to find answers, which will culminate in presenting the findings in the next chapter.

3.2 Research Questions and Purpose

The research questions used to answer the research objectives were exploratory in nature, and the questions helped to focus and limit the research scope (Yin, 2003):

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?
- Can knowing one's *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society's needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-matric training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

In a qualitative study the research purpose is to describe, explore, explain or build a theory in a process-oriented and inductive way, with small samples of participants (Leedy, 1997). A qualitative study also entails using inductive analyses and reporting in a personalised narrative style. Inductive reasoning is used when specific cases are studied to understand more of a phenomenon, in this case *FLOW in Retirement*, and its possible application areas, such as social entrepreneurship. Findings can only be generalised to a class of the same type of cases (Leedy, 1997). A quantitative study on the other hand, predicts, explains and tests a theory in an outcome-oriented and deductive fashion to generalise the information to the population using an objective and scientific style (Leedy, 1997). Deductive analysis entails reasoning from a general theory or hypothesis to a specific conclusion, which is then generalised to the population (Leedy, 1997).

According to Babbie and Mouton (2006, pp. 79-81), three of the most used means of doing social research are through exploration, description, and explanation. Description aims to observe and then describe “situations and events.” Explanation addresses the question of WHY things happen or exist, therefore to “indicate causality between variables or events”. Exploration can be done for various reasons, such as to determine priorities for future research or to develop a new hypothesis about the research topic. In this study, however, the main aim is to examine or explore the topic (Babbie & Mouton, 2006), in this instance, *FLOW* in retirement, to gain a better understanding thereof, and to explore possible fields of application, such as volunteering and social entrepreneurship. The aim is to ascertain how this can benefit successful aging, or adapting successfully to retirement, and living meaningfully in the post-retirement years.

3.3 Epistemological Background

Before proceeding to depict the research approaches and designs, it would be appropriate to describe the roots of qualitative and quantitative research briefly. According to Leedy (1997), these roots are primarily found in the fields of anthropology, sociology, psychology, medicine, law and philosophy, or categorised differently, the fields of arts, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). According to Babbie and Mouton (2006, p. 8), the word “epistemic” comes from the Greek word “episteme” which means “truthful knowledge,” thus Epistemology can also be described as the scientific search for truthful or valid knowledge. Epistemology “investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge” (dictionary.reference.com). The methodologies involved are inter alia quantitative and qualitative approaches to research (Babbie & Mouton, 2006).

Critical consideration about the character of scientific investigation or the “metatheoretical tradition” of the social sciences can be divided into three main schools of thought, namely positivism, phenomenology or the interpretivist tradition, and critical theory (Babbie & Mouton, p. 28). The term “metatheory” is used as a synonym to “philosophy of science”, “metascience” and “epistemology of science” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. xxiv).

3.3.1 Positivism

Positivism follows the quantitative methodology of the natural sciences which focuses on biology, physiology, and the medical perspective (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). Positivism focuses on the similarities between the natural and social sciences (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). Auguste Comte (1798-1857) developed the crux of the positivist theory between 1826 and 1829, and is regarded as the father of positivism (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). Two assumptions underlie this tradition: 1) the natural sciences are more developed than the social sciences due to a superior methodology and 2) there are

adequate similarities between the social and natural sciences and therefore the methodology of the natural sciences can be applied to the social sciences. The objectives of the two research areas are comparable, and because natural and social phenomena are very similar, similar methodologies can be used. Other important standpoints are inter alia a focus on doing research in an objective way, and without taking social values into consideration.

Positivist, traditional, experimental or empiricist research is the research of choice for quantitative studies, and are in essence used as synonyms, according to Leedy (1997). This research is rooted in the belief in an objective reality that can be described by using numbers and statistics to answer questions about measured variables and their relationship to other variables (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Leedy, 1997). The methodologies related to this approach are inter alia descriptive surveys, and non-experimental and experimental research (Leedy, 1997, p. 104). These will not be discussed, as they are not relevant to this study.

3.3.2 Phenomenology

The *phenomenological* or the *interpretivist* tradition, which provides the context for this research study, focuses on the differences between the natural and social sciences, and therefore the purpose is to understand (“Verstehen”) and describe human behaviour from an “insider perspective” (emic perspective), and not to explain or predict human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, pp. 28 & 53). Thus, the essence of this type of research is to understand and describe human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2006).

People are viewed as constantly trying to understand themselves and humankind: “We continuously interpret, create, and give meaning to, define, justify and rationalize our actions” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 28). The interpretations people are constantly making about their lives should receive prominence when doing social science research (Babbie & Mouton, 2006).

Phenomenology owes many of its premises to the writing of Alfred Schutz in the 1940's. Schutz tried to analyse and understand everyday realities and also emphasised self-understanding (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). The qualitative research approach is also known as the interpretive, the naturalistic, the constructivist and the post-positivist approach, according to Leedy (1997).

3.3.3 Critical Theory

Critical theory originated with the work of Karl Marx in the nineteenth century with his critical assessment of the capitalist society. He was in favour of the "scientific study of society" (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 34), as merely understanding human behaviour is not the same as adding value to the lives of ordinary people. The aim of this theory is therefore to bring about social change in society, focusing on empowerment, especially of those who are marginalised, so that people can be liberated, e.g. the feminist drive of the 1970's (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). Thus, critical theorists make use of positivism as well as phenomenology, but in a pragmatic way (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). The methodology of choice for critical theorists is usually participatory action research (Babbie & Mouton, 2006).

The epistemology underlying this research is of an explorative nature. According to Leedy (1997) and Babbie and Mouton (2006), many people see a positivist approach as opposing the explorative approach, but they can in fact be, and are used in complementary ways, as in this research study. These research approaches will now be briefly discussed.

Leedy (1997) believes that both types of research traditions provide valuable, yet different, answers to research questions, and both approaches can culminate in meaningful research.

3.4 Research Approaches

There are four main research approaches that can be employed to collect and analyse data and answer research questions in the social sciences, namely a quantitative approach, a qualitative approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, Creswell, 2003; Leedy, 1997), a mixed method research approach (Creswell, 2003), and a participatory approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). The latter refers to the involvement of participants and politics in social research (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). The type of data will determine which research approach to use: “The data dictate the research methodology” (Leedy, 1997, p. 104). Thus, only the three most relevant approaches to the case study design that was used for this research study will now be briefly discussed, namely the quantitative, qualitative and mixed method approaches.

3.4.1 The Quantitative Approach

A quantitative approach is appropriate to test the implications of a pre-formulated hypothesis “to answer questions about the relationship among measured variables” with the aim of explaining or predicting an outcome by isolating relevant variables, and controlling for unrelated or irrelevant variables (Leedy, 1997, p. 104). Data are collected from a large sample of randomly selected participants, and analysed in order to confirm or not confirm the original hypothesis. The method of reasoning is deductive analysis, which means that reasoning moves from a general theory or hypothesis to a specific logical outcome (Leedy, 1997). The conclusions drawn can then be generalised to similar populations or situations (Leedy, 1997).

3.4.2 The Qualitative Approach

This approach is preferred when the aim of the study is to “describe” and “understand” observable occurrences or phenomena from a more subjective point of view, such as through the eyes of the participants (Leedy, 1997, p.

104). Therefore, qualitative research begins with questions that are more general, includes a smaller number of participants, contains a collection of verbal data, and describes the findings to reproduce accurately that which was investigated (Leedy, 1997). The method of reasoning is inductive analysis, which means that reasoning moves from the specific, such as the observation of certain cases, to the more general, that is a class of the same type of cases, in order to gain more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Leedy, 1997), in this instance retirees' experience of *FLOW*. Therefore, the knowledge gained is related to the particular situation under investigation, but does not have a high predictive value (Leedy, 1997).

3.4.3 A Mixed Method Approach

This method combines data collection methods from both qualitative and quantitative research in a single study in a bid to better understand a problem (Creswell, 2003).

3.4.4 Choosing an “Appropriate” Approach

According to Yin (2003), however, the distinction of qualitative and quantitative type data is not the crucial factor in selecting a design. More importantly, the question that needs to be answered is if a specific design, such as a case study design, that uses both quantitative and qualitative data, is appropriate or inappropriate, and not whether a qualitative or quantitative approach should be followed. Nevertheless, case study research often makes use of tables, figures, and matrices to present the results, and this in essence is the application of a quantitative method (Leedy, 1997).

This research study, *Exploring FLOW in Retirement*, makes predominantly use of a qualitative research approach consistent with Leedy's (1997, p. 109) recommendation that when research consists of “multiple constructed realities” and the research questions are “exploratory or interpretive” in nature, a

qualitative approach is recommended (Leedy, 1997, p. 109). The goal of qualitative and explorative research therefore is to understand (“Verstehen”) and describe human behaviour instead of explaining or predicting behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 53) as previously stated. The selection of a predominantly qualitative research approach was also used in this investigation due to the following features that could be meaningfully applied to an exploratory study:

- Describing in detail (“thick description”, Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 272) the observations of the participants, but also seeing through his or her eyes (“emic” perspective) and trying to understand his or her actions, decisions, behaviour, practices and rituals in terms of his or her own context or beliefs (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 271);
- using a small number of cases;
- using a multi-method approach such as tri-angulation; and
- using flexible design features.

According to Leedy (1997), a qualitative study describes, explores, explains or builds theory in a process-oriented way with small samples of participants. Quantitative research on the other hand predicts, confirms, validates, tests theory and is focused on the outcome, typically using larger samples of people (Leedy 1997). Qualitative research usually results in “tentative answers or hypotheses” about observations, and a quantitative study with “confirmation or disconfirmation of the hypotheses that were tested” (Leedy, 1997, p.105). A mixed method approach is fairly new in the social sciences, according to Creswell (2003). Both types of data are collected: qualitative data is collected to explore a phenomenon or topic, and quantitative data is collected from a large, usually representative, sample to enhance the researcher’s understanding of the topic (Creswell, 2003). Priority can be given to either the quantitative or qualitative data, in which case the data will be skewed to either side, or the priority given can be equal, according to Creswell (2003).

The most appropriate research design for this explorative study is a multiple case study design that predominantly uses qualitative data, however, quantitative questionnaires will also be used as part of triangulation. In this research study, the personal experiences of the nine participants in terms of their experiences of *FLOW*, *non- FLOW* or *micro-FLOW* in retirement are delineated.

3.5 Research Design

3.5.1 Types of Design

Within the field of qualitative approaches, four major research designs are mentioned by Leedy (1997): a Case study approach, an Ethnographical, a Phenomenological, and a Grounded theory approach.

Ethnography, initially developed by anthropologists, but now also used in the social sciences, focuses on the in-depth study of cultural groups and their behaviour in their natural location, predominantly through fieldwork over a longer time period (Leedy, 1997). Fieldwork and data collection includes participant observation and interviews to find out more about the meanings the participants attach to certain events. Thus participants are usually chosen with the purpose of gaining the specific knowledge the researcher needs, by using more structured interviews. Personal documents, official documents, and objects such as posters, artwork or logos can augment the fieldwork, field notes and interviews, according to Leedy (1997). The explorative nature of this study, although consisting of only the Afrikaans speaking cultural group, dictated that an ethnographic design was not feasible, as the main focus is not on understanding the relationship between behaviour and culture.

A **Phenomenological** research approach focuses on the subjective creation of meaning, as experienced by the participants, in terms of such phenomena as events, relationships, emotions or programmes, as opposed to the “the phenomenon as it exists external to a person” (Leedy, 1997, p. 161). However, phenomenology can be used as either a method or the term can refer to a philosophy (Creswell, 2003; Leedy, 1997). As a method, the aim is to understand an experience by “describing it as it is found in concrete situations and as it appears to the people who are living it.” A phenomenological research design focuses on recounting a situation or experience that happened or in this instance hopefully regularly happens (*FLOW*) from a subjective perspective, i.e. the participant’s perspective and the meaning he or she derives from the experience or situation (Leedy, 1997). The emphasis is on describing and understanding an experience rather than explaining an experience (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). Since all human beings continuously interpret, create, and give meaning to, define, justify and rationalise their actions, phenomenologists emphasise that we are always engaged in the process of making sense of our “(life) worlds” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 28).

Phenomenological researchers are often personally interested in the phenomenon or topic to be researched. In-depth interviews with small samples (usually 5-10 people) are the preferred method of data-collection, in order to look for shared themes, characteristics or qualities, and patterns. The main focus is on *meaning* (Leedy, 1997) and the “*essence of human experiences*” (Creswell, 2003) to understand “social realities” from the participant’s perspective (Leedy, 1997, p. 161). Categorising people is usually not done, as the focus is on *meaning*, and therefore a phenomenological route was not the best way to further this study’s research aim. However, certain aspects of this design, such as its emphasis on meaning (Leedy, 1997; Babbie & Mouton, 2006), will be incorporated in the design of choice, namely the case study design, which will be discussed later.

Grounded theory focuses on contributing to and developing theory from the data collected (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Creswell, 2003; Leedy, 1997) by posing general research questions that can be explored in-depth (Babbie & Mouton, 2006), usually in an action-oriented and flexible fashion (Leedy, 1997). Grounded theory can also be seen as “a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study” (Creswell, 2003). It aims to link the “participants’ perspective to general social science theories” (Leedy, 1997, p. 166). In this sense it can be seen as a set of procedures for analysing data that is not “discipline bound” (Leedy, 1997, p. 163). Data-collection can be done through interviewing, observation, and documentation. This theory is also sometimes referred to as a multi-case study, according to Leedy (1997), to focus on differences and shared characteristics or similarities of the different units (Creswell, 2003; Leedy, 1997), which is the case in this research study. “The theory is ‘grounded’ in that it is developed from the data, as opposed to being suggested by the literature; that is theory is an expected outcome from, rather than a starting point for, the study” (Leedy, 1997, p. 163). According to Creswell (2003, p. 14), the theory is “grounded” in the opinions of the participants. Grounded theory is the study of a social phenomenon, usually without a definite theory. The theory is then slowly built up. In this research study however, the theory is in fact “suggested by the literature,” (Leedy, 1997, p. 163), and therefore only certain procedures from the Grounded theory design will be used, such as data collection through interviews, the focus on differences and shared characteristics or similarities of the different units (Creswell, 2003; Leedy, 1997) and its focus on categorising results during the analysis of the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Leedy, 1997). Data analysis for the grounded theory approach is done through coding, that is analysing and labelling segments of the data, sorting and comparing the segments, and then putting together again the content of the interviews (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Charmaz, 2006; Leedy, 1997) to search for patterns and categories (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Leedy, 1997) and analytic interpretations (Charmaz, 2006). This is achieved by using open-ended, yet directed questions, which narrows down

the range of interview topics (Charmaz, 2006), which is also the case in this research study.

The reason for not selecting the previous approaches, but settling on the case study design, will be described next.

3.5.2 Case Study Approach

The case study approach has only recently overcome its negative image (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). This “bad press” is possibly due to the Freudian psychoanalytic use of the case study, where the analyst was viewed as the authority on the patient’s life, knowing more about him or her than the patient him or herself. This was due to the motivations of the patient that were seen as being subconscious (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). This led to the case study being evaluated as unscientific. This slowly changed as more knowledge about rival hypotheses, the limits of generalisability, and using more than one method became available (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). The exact origin of this approach, however, is not clear, but Yin (1994) and Stake (1995) are seen as modern day pioneers in the use of the case study approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2006).

The case study approach will now be discussed in terms of the reasons for selecting this design, the unique characteristics of the design, reliability and validity issues, and the way in which the findings can be generalised.

3.5.3 Rationale for choosing the Case Study Approach

A Case study approach was chosen for this investigation rather than an Ethnographical, a Phenomenological or a Grounded theory approach, despite Yin’s (2003, p. xiii) warning that a case study approach is often stereotyped as “having insufficient precision”. This means that it cannot be quantified sufficiently, due to being insufficiently objective. It is, however, extensively

used in the social sciences (Yin, 2003, p. 1), especially when “how” or “why” questions need to be answered (explanatory research), or when the study is exploratory in nature and the “what” question dominates, which applies to this study. It is used when the researcher has little control over a modern-day occurrence, and when “the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.” The reason for the case study approach’s popularity is given by Yin (2003, p. 1) as a “desire to understand complex social phenomena”. Another benefit is that the case study method is flexible, and can be used in an exploratory, descriptive or in an explanatory fashion (Yin, 2003). It can also be used to describe or illustrate a topic or to evaluate an evaluation study (“meta-evaluation”) as well as when the aim is to generalise, based on the evidence collected by a case study approach (Yin, 2003, p. 9, 14). This approach was therefore found to be the most appropriate to answer the research questions in a satisfactory way.

As mentioned, Yin (2003) advocates that a case study approach is advisable when the researcher has little control over a modern-day occurrence, and as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 the concepts *FLOW*, *SUCCESSFUL AGING* and what *SELF-TRANSCENDENCE* in retirement could mean, are highly subjective topics with no clear-cut answers.

The use of the “what” question as an indicator for using the case study approach in an explorative study is briefly delineated, in accordance with Yin’s (2003) recommendation, stated previously:

- Can finding *FLOW* result in aging successfully and meaningfully? -
Or: *What can be learnt by researching FLOW in retirement? Can this knowledge, i.e. the principles or themes extracted, be used to adapt more successfully to retirement?*
- Can knowing one’s *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society’s needs and challenges in a sustainable way, such as through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

Or: *What could inspire one to self-transcendence? Could FLOW be a factor?*

- Are retirees with a tertiary education or training better equipped to utilise *FLOW* to help find solutions for society's needs and problems?

Or: *What can a retiree contribute to help find solutions for some of society's problems? Could an academic background linked to FLOW play a role or be helpful?*

An explorative multiple case study approach was chosen to examine *FLOW* in retirement: A case study approach as previously stated can be descriptive, exploratory or explanatory in nature, and depending on the type of research questions, the degree of control over "behavioural events", and whether the focus is on existing or historical events (Yin, 2003, p. 5). "The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated" (Yin, 2003, p. 7).

I shall now proceed to illustrate (in italics) the practical application of Yin's (2003, p. 13) definition of a case study as it pertains to this case study research:

"A case study is an empirical inquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real- life context, especially since

Both FLOW and retirement are fairly contemporary phenomena as described in Chapter 1 and interviews with participants were conducted in their own homes, except for three, to find out how retirement is experienced. Two participants were interviewed at their place of (post-retirement) work and one at my (the researcher's) home.

- the boundaries of the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2003, p. 13).

The boundaries of this explorative study are not clear as the data are not quantifiable, and the context cannot be controlled as in a laboratory setting, i.e. the participants' views on

both FLOW and retirement in their real-life contexts are subjective, and therefore there is no clear outcome.

3.5.4 Characteristics of the Case Study Approach

According to Leedy, (1997), a *Case Study design* can refer to a single or multiple case research involving inter alia people, objects, programmes, or organisations, which are then studied in-depth in order to gain more understanding of the individual(s) or the phenomena, in their natural environment, using formal or informal interviews, which can be combined with quantitative information (Leedy, 1997; Yin, 2003) to form an “interpretational search for themes,” a “structural search for patterns in discourse,” and a “reflective portrayal” of participants’ perspectives (Leedy, 1997, p. 166). The case study can be used to describe, explain or evaluate the data gathered or the experiences of the participants, usually through doing fieldwork and interacting with the participants (Leedy, 1997; Yin, 2003). Reporting on the research can be done by using a descriptive, reflective or a more objective narrative, depending on the focus: the former two styles to recreate “the participants’ reality,” and the latter style when “structural” or “interpretational” analyses are used. This could include the use of tables and figures where appropriate (Leedy, 1997, p. 158).

Yin’s (2003) definition and other technical characteristics, which include data collection and data analysis will now be described together with my technical application pertaining to this research study.

"The case study inquiry

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables than data points, and as one result
- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result

- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (Yin, 2003, p. 14).

In the case of my research study, many variables are not measurable, because they are subjective, e.g. "successful aging." An effort was made to capture a range of behaviour through the interviews and various questionnaires, such as a biographical questionnaire, a FLOW questionnaire and quantitative questionnaires, such as the Meaning in Life Questionnaire, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the Personal Growth Initiative Scale, and the Subjective Happiness Scale. In addition, multiple sources of evidence, such as interviews, comments, and quantitative questionnaires were used. In an explorative case study, however, the development of theoretical propositions may not always be feasible, as by its nature, the outcome is unclear (Yin, 2003). Nevertheless, building blocks for successful aging were selected to guide this exploration, with the premise that FLOW could form an integral part thereof. In this way boundaries were set, which is a necessary prerequisite for this type of research, according to Yin (2003).

The explorative case study approach consists of an in-depth exploration of specific phenomena (Leedy, 1997; Yin, 2003) such as *FLOW*, retirement and successful aging, by interviewing participants. Interviews can be regarded as "guided conversations rather than structured queries" to research facts and opinions in an open-ended, but in this research study, also a focused way, without asking "leading questions" (Yin, 2003, p. 89). A focused interview, according to Yin (2003, p. 90), is likely to follow "a certain set of questions derived from the research protocol", which in this study narrowed the topics that were discussed, to a focus on *FLOW*, *SUCCESSFUL* retirement, *TRANSCENDING THE SELF* and the meaning and possible applications thereof. (The Appendices can be consulted for an overview of the questionnaires).

Quantitative data is generated by some researchers in a case study approach (Leedy, 1997; Yin, 2003), and indeed were generated in this research, by means of four questionnaires, which enhanced the information from the

interview, the biographical questionnaire (BQ) and the *FLOW* questionnaire (FQ). The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) were thus administered in conjunction with the other two questionnaires (BQ, FQ) in order to enhance the triangulation of the qualitative data, with the aim of improving reliability and validity.

A “sampling logic” was not followed, since Yin (2003, p. 51) advocates that the “selection of the number of replications depends on the certainty you want to have about your multi-case results...[and]... the greater certainty lies with the larger number of cases [and]...when the external conditions are not thought to produce much variation in the phenomenon being studied, a smaller number of theoretical replications is needed.” Theoretical replications are also linked to “the complexity of the realm of external validity” and “literal replications” are linked to replication of 2 or more cases “with exemplary outcomes in relation to some evaluation theory” (Yin, 2003, pp. 51- 52). According to Yin (2003), this calls for a prior understanding of a possible outcome so that the “why” and “how” of the outcome can be replicated under similar conditions.

3.5.5 Generalisability

Case studies are often criticised in terms of having limited scientific generalisability, but according to Yin (2003, p. 10), case studies can be generalised to “theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.” The goal therefore is to “expand and generalise theories” (Yin, 2003, p. 10), and in this sense the goal is then an “analytic generalisation” where a “previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study” (Yin, 2003, pp. 10 & 33), which is the case in this research study in terms of using the Building Blocks for Successful Aging as criteria for comparing the participants’ responses. Where two or more cases confirm a theory, this is then considered to be a replication (Yin, 2003).

Yin (2003) makes a distinction between the use of a single case study or multiple case designs, both with advantages and disadvantages. One advantage of a multiple case design is that it has more face-validity. Nevertheless “[t]he unusual or rare case, the critical case, and the revelatory case are all likely to involve only single cases, by definition” (Yin, 2003, p. 47). In this study, however, multiple case studies were chosen as a research strategy in order to “make comparisons, build theory, and propose generalisations” (Leedy, 1997, p. 157).

3.5.6 Embedded Design

An embedded case study is one in which the design requires multiple units of analysis which will be described next. According to Yin (2003, p. 53), a multiple case study approach could include multiple, embedded cases (Yin, 2003), which is the case in this research. The analysis and the study of each separate case contributes to the final conclusions (Yin, 2003). He further explains that a holistic design focuses on the “global nature” of a design, such as where logic dictates that subdivision of units is not the best approach (Yin, 2003, p. 43), which is not the case in this study. This study is therefore an example of an embedded case study design.

3.5.7 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis addresses “what object, phenomenon, entity, process, or event” is being studied (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 84), and the selection thereof is reliant upon the type of research questions posed (Yin, 2003). In this research nine individual retirees were interviewed to find out more about their *FLOW* experiences, and therefore primary data were collected through interviews and questionnaires. Interviewing is of an empirical nature as it uses case studies as the preferred method of collecting data and can be viewed as a tool for collecting primary empirical data. The unit of analysis can be groups, organisations, cultural objects, or social actions (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). A

case study approach is also appropriate because of the explorative nature of the research questions, as data were gathered directly from in-depth interviews with the individual participants in their real-life environment (Leedy, 1997). The purpose of gathering such data is learning more about *FLOW* as well as about successful retirement from the participants' perspective, by exploring these concepts. The *FLOW* phenomenon and meaningful experiences are discussed by being personally involved with the participants, in the form of doing interactive fieldwork, as suggested by Leedy (1997). Interactive fieldwork means that the researcher becomes personally drawn into the lives of the people or the phenomena that are being researched (Leedy, 1997), which is the case in this research study.

3.6 Case Study Praxis

3.6.1 Introduction

In this section, collecting and analysing the data, reliability, validity and triangulation will first be discussed in general. This general discussion of the case study approach is then followed by a specific discussion of these concepts as they pertain to this research study.

3.6.2 Collecting and Analysing Data

According to Yin (2003), the case study interview is one of the most important sources of information about subject matter or the facts of a matter, and opinions about the latter. Yin (2003, p. 83) refers to data as "evidence" that can predominantly be obtained from six locations, namely "documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts". Data analysis is done through "examining, categorising, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence" by means of "relying on theoretical propositions, setting up a framework based on rival explanations, and developing case descriptions" (Yin, 2003, p. 109).

These strategies are built up of five analytical techniques, namely “pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis” (Yin, 2003, p. 109).

Yin (2003) cites Miles and Huberman (1994) who added the following techniques for analysing the data: (i) categorising the data into matrixes, (ii) tabulating the frequencies of phenomena by calculating their means and variances, and (iii) making use of a time frame to report the data. According to Babbie and Mouton (2006), analysing the data involves organising the findings in terms of context and patterns, considering generalisability by linking the data to similar cases in previous research and theory, and also developing a theory by taking previous research into consideration, and discussing the theoretical importance of the findings (Babbie & Mouton, 2006).

Categorising, tabulating and combining both quantitative and qualitative data, and calculating means and frequencies will be used as a means of analysing the data. In this research study, three categories were established during the analysis of the data, which corresponded to the categories that were established during the literature search on *FLOW* in Chapter 1: (i) people experiencing *FLOW*, (ii) those experiencing micro-*FLOW*, and (iii) those not experiencing *FLOW* at all. A multiple case design therefore made it feasible to “categorise” or assign participants to one of these three categories by using the above sub-divisions of *FLOW*. Making a few replications of each category, helped to determine the number of participants that were chosen to take part in this research study. In addition, it made cross-case comparisons feasible, as suggested by Yin (2003).

3.6.3 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are important constructs in research methodology because they have a direct impact on the overall integrity of the research, according to Leedy (1997). In quantitative studies, measurement quality is

established through reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the “predictability” of getting the same results from a measuring instrument if a study is replicated; it also refers to the “accuracy” with which an instrument measures, and lastly it refers to the least possible presence of measurement error (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 405). In quantitative studies, validity usually refers to how accurately the measuring instrument measures the construct which it purports to measure (Kerlinger, 1986).

Some of these concepts will be discussed more fully in the following paragraphs as they specifically pertain to the case study approach, but first I shall return to a brief discussion on validity.

3.6.3.1 Validity

There are six general types of validity, namely face validity, criterion validity, content validity, construct validity, internal validity and external validity (Leedy, 1997). These will now be briefly discussed, as outlined by Leedy (1997) and in more detail in the next section as they pertain particularly to the case study method.

- Face validity relies on the subjective evaluation of the researcher in terms of whether the instrument is measuring what it purports to measure, and whether the sample used is representative in terms of what is being measured.
- Criterion validity is attained when it is possible to relate “performance” on one unit of measurement such as a test, to a “performance on another measure, called a criterion” (Leedy, 1997, p. 33).
- Content validity refers to the accuracy of a measuring instrument in terms of measuring the content under investigation.
- Construct validity refers to the accuracy of the measurement of any concept or construct, such as *FLOW*.
- Internal validity refers to the absence of bias when coming to a conclusion, based on the data; changes in the dependent variable

should be because of the independent variable, and not due to negligence in the research praxis.

- External validity refers to the generalisability of the results to other cases.

In qualitative studies, according to Leedy (1997), not all the abovementioned forms of validity are necessarily useful as findings are usually tentative and researchers differ in terms of the suggestions offered to assure validity. Furthermore, there is generally not a hypothesis that can be confirmed or disconfirmed, as would be the case in quantitative studies.

In qualitative research there is no generally accepted way to ensure reliability and validity (Leedy, 1997). Some measures that are used to ensure validity, according to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) and cited in Leedy (1997), consist of triangulation (using multi methods), member checking (participants reviewing research), a chain of evidence (establishing a link between research questions, methodology, raw data and findings), outlier analysis (extreme cases), pattern matching (studying the result of an intervention), and representativeness (when a finding is authentic, and not due to the participants' or the researcher's influence). Triangulation, or a multi-method approach to collect data, is then used to enhance the credibility of findings in qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Leedy, 1997), which includes enhancing both reliability and validity (Babbie & Mouton, 2006).

3.6.3.2 Triangulation

Triangulation is the process of using more than one method of data collection to enhance the validity of the findings (Babbie & Mouton, 2006; Leedy, 1997). In this explorative study, nine interviews and six questionnaires were included because a combined approach is "one in which the researcher uses multiple methods of data collection and analysis" to foster triangulation (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2005, p. 357), which was deemed appropriate to

achieve the aims of this study. In this research study data triangulation will be done through combining interviews, observations, and quantitative questionnaires in accordance with Yin's (2003) suggestion that the findings should reflect a union of information from several sources, and not only from either a quantitative or a qualitative perspective. Yin (2003) considers the use of many different sources of information or evidence in the case study approach as an important strength, which allows such diverse matters as historical, attitudinal and behavioural issues to be fully taken into account.

Triangulation in this case study research makes use of qualitative data that was gained from the nine interviews, which includes the biographical and *FLOW* questionnaires. The quantitative measures that were used include four questionnaires, namely the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS).

According to Eisenhardt (1989, cited in Kohlbacher, 2006), a combination of the theory based analysis of the data, such as the use of the building blocks for successful aging from Chapter 2, with other emergent themes extracted from the interviews in addition to the quantitative information, greatly enhances the internal validity, generalisability and theory building in the case study approach. Due to the abovementioned strengths, I decided to make use of the case study approach.

Validity as it specifically pertains to the case study approach will be discussed next.

3.6.3.3 Validity in the Case Study Approach

Yin (2003, p. 34) refers to validity in a case study approach as "case study tactics". He maintains that multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence, and having "key informants" reviewing a "draft case study report,"

construe construct validity. In this particular study, the data that was collected from the participants was compared to the literature by using the criteria for *FLOW* and successful aging as described in Chapters 1 and 2. Establishing links between the questions that were asked, the data that were collected and the conclusions that were drawn will add to establishing a “chain of evidence”, according to Yin (2003, p. 105). In addition, participants were asked to review their own interviews and to give feedback, which according to Yin (2003), contribute to the accuracy of the data collection method, thereby enhancing the construct validity.

External validity in qualitative research refers to the generalisability of the results to other cases. In the case study approach, and in multiple-case studies *per se*, as is the case in this research study, external validity is addressed by using “replication logic” (Yin, 2003, pp. 34 & 47). This means that cases are selected not by using “sampling logic”, in which experiments are duplicated to enhance validity, but in such a way that the cases that are chosen will yield similar results (“literal replication”) or contrasting results (“theoretical replication”), where the phenomenon studied is absent (Yin, 2003, p. 47). In the same vein Leedy (1997, p.169) refers to “*outlier analysis*” which consists of examining extreme cases that differ out-rightly from the majority of cases examined to ascertain “what is present or absent in them as compared with the more common examples”. In this research study, there is no extreme example, as participants are categorised consistent with Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) research findings that divide *FLOW* into three categories, namely those experiencing *FLOW*, *those* not experiencing *FLOW*, and those participants experiencing micro-*FLOW*. Two to three cases are considered to be adequate to corroborate findings in a literal replication (Yin, 2003); depending on the levels of certainty needed for results. This is analogous to establishing levels of significance in statistical studies. The reasoning behind this replication strategy is also to enhance a “rich theoretical framework” (Yin, 2003, p. 47). In a theoretical replication at least two cases per subgroup are needed, as theoretical replication becomes the “vehicle for generalizing to new cases”

(Yin, 2003, p. 48). According to Babbie and Mouton (2006), a replication of cases constitutes confidence in the findings, which can be said about this research study, on the grounds of having two or more cases per subgroup.

3.6.3.4 Reliability in a Case Study Approach

Reliability can be described as the repeatability of results and findings given that the same procedures and methods are followed, and also repeating the *same* case studies, and not using other participants (Yin, 2003). This can be done by documenting the precise procedures followed. Reliability is thus gained by using a study protocol and by developing a case study database (Yin, 2003, p. 67). These concepts will be discussed next.

3.6.3.4.1 The Case Study Protocol

A case study protocol has to do with the way in which data is collected. In this study the six questionnaires that were selected for the quantitative part of this study are the following: a biographical questionnaire, a *FLOW* questionnaire, the Meaning in Life Questionnaire, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the Personal Growth Initiative Scale, and the Subjective Happiness Scale, which are included in the Appendices.

In addition, one semi-structured interview per participant that made replication possible was conducted. The sequential study protocol adopted for this research follows below:

- Introduction: beginning with a research question, and choosing a qualitative approach.
- Conducting the literature research in order to gain an overview of the phenomena to be studied, as well as collecting possible questions to be used during the semi-structured interviews.
- Deciding on the choice of an appropriate research design for exploring *FLOW* in retirement.

- Collecting the data by means of multiple case studies:
 - Select and contact participants to set the time, date and length of the interviews (2 hours) at a rate of not more than two per week, at a location chosen by the interviewee.
 - At the beginning of the interview, thank the participant for his or her time and willingness to take part in the study. Explain the confidentiality of the research to the participant and who will have access to the original data.
 - Have the consent form signed.
 - Establish rapport by explaining the purpose and background of the study, as well as of the interviews.
 - Explain in detail what *FLOW* entails.
 - Conduct a semi-structured interview, asking open and not leading questions and take down the qualitative and quantitative questionnaires making cryptic notes rather than using a tape recorder to enhance rapport and openness to share.
- Translating the interviews as all participants were Afrikaans speaking.
- Rewriting the interviews within one day of the interview to remain clear on details and impressions.
- Including the interviews in the data base.
- Analysing the data in terms of recurring themes or patterns, and relating the findings to the literature.

3.6.3.4.2 The Case Study Database

A case study database is a way of “organising and documenting the data collected for case studies” (Yin, 2003, p. 101) to enhance reliability. In this study the raw data that were obtained from the interviews were translated into English, and the data presented in the form of a case study report. These case studies were used in Chapter 4 to analyse the data and identify patterns and themes. Yin (2003) recommends that the raw data must be preserved in such a way that it can be scrutinised directly by other researchers, and this

recommendation was adhered to. In this research study, a chain of evidence was maintained, which according to Yin (2003), also enhances the **reliability** of a study. This chain of evidence allows any one and not only the researcher to follow the case study from its origin (research questions) to the final conclusions via all the data collected and presented as stipulated in the case study protocol. There should be a clear link between the protocol and the research questions within the scope of the methodology selected, and with the final results (Yin, 2003).

3.7 Selection Procedure

3.7.1 Choosing Participants “on purpose”

A case study approach can involve one or several participants (Yin, 2003). Nine non-random participants were interviewed in this research study: four males and five females. *Exploring FLOW in Retirement* was researched with participants who all have a tertiary university background or post matric training. The focus was on *FLOW* as well as exploring what successful or unsuccessful aging or adaptation to retirement and transcending the self would constitute. As a case study approach supports in-depth interviews, it was important that these participants be chosen “purposefully” (Leedy, 1997, p.162) and not randomly as would have been the case in quantitative research. Therefore, participants for this research were chosen because of their knowledge of, or interest in the research topic (Leedy, 1997), and because of having a tertiary background or post matric training. Participants were selected from a network of retirees built up through my Creative Retirement Workshops, or from referrals made by other participants or people familiar with this research.

3.7.2 “Academic” Retirement

One of the factors I wanted to explore was what “academics” or retirees with a tertiary level qualification did to benefit self (and society if applicable) with their accumulated knowledge or expertise, as those who “score high in mental and physical function.....[are] more than twice as likely to be working as volunteers” (Rowe & Kahn, 1999, p. 173). I was also curious if *FLOW* could play a role in motivating participants with a tertiary or post-matric educational background or training as “[e]ducation was the strongest predictor of sustained mental function”, and may promote a life-long “pattern of intellectual activities” and higher productivity in older age (Rowe & Kahn, 1999, p. 133). Higher productivity for those with more education may be due to the possible correlation between higher levels of education and skills that generate a higher income, or provide access to higher paid occupations. Higher socio-economic status may in turn result in better health and more knowledge about volunteer opportunities; or higher education may result in a willingness to be productive in one’s later years (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). Productivity was defined by the MacArthur study as: “any activity, paid or unpaid, that generates goods or services of economic value” (Rowe & Kahn, 1999, p.169). This definition therefore includes such activities as volunteer work, or unpaid help. Higher levels of education in older people show a positive relationship with higher levels of “self-direction, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and personal growth” according to Caprara, et al. (2007, p. 120).

The following table provides information about the post-matric education or training qualifications for the nine participants in this research study:

TABLE 3-1: ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

Degree:	Doctorate	Masters	Honours	B-degree	Other: non-degree specific training
Dominee			✓		
Doctor (Medical)	✓				
Artist					✓ *
Chemist		✓			
Entrepreneur			✓ *		
Teacher				✓	
Psychologist (Research)	✓				
Nurse	✓	✓ *			
Linguist		✓			

This table shows the highest academic qualifications of the participants. *Nurse has a doctorate in Nursing, as well as a Masters degree in Practical Theology. Artist does not have an academic tertiary qualification, but she has received ongoing training in Art for 15 years, and she has partaken in various exhibitions overseas. The Entrepreneur has two honours degrees.

3.7.3 Chronological Age

The cut-off point in terms of chronological years for retirees participating in this research was guided by the literature research in Chapter 2. As stated in Chapter 2, Hill (2008), concludes that some 70-year olds can be either like 50-year olds or like 90-year olds. The reason for that is that according to Schaie (1990), age-related decline happens in a more individualised rather than a uniform way, which Paúl (2007, p. 138) refers to as “differential aging”. Where disease is present, functional loss may be sudden and less gradual than in normal aging, but where it is not present, age related deterioration varies considerably (Hill, 2008). According to Macnab (1994), those 60 years and older can be grouped into the young elderly, i.e. the group usually adjusting to retirement (61-65); the middle elderly (66-75), i.e. the group characterised by many life transitions such as change from previous routines, financial

structures, and loss of social contacts; the elderly (76-85), i.e. the group that may need more daily assistance due to ill health and also experience more death-related losses in terms of friends and family; the old elderly (86-95), i.e. the group confronted with lower physical mobility and more illness, and sometimes also more isolation; and the elite elderly (96-105), i.e. the group usually needing nursing or home care. Few very old people, aged 85 years and older, age successfully, according to Sadler and Biggs (2006). In the light of the aforementioned research, and for the purposes of this study, the focus was on the young to middle elderly (i.e. 60-75 years) as they could be expected to be the healthiest and most productive in retirement. This age group was therefore selected to find answers to the research questions.

The chronological ages, gender and the previous occupations of the participants as well as their years in retirement at the time of the interview (2010), are provided in Table 3-2.

TABLE 3-2: GENDER, OCCUPATION, CHRONOLOGICAL AGE AND YEARS IN RETIREMENT

Male Participants	Chronological age	Years in retirement	Female Participants	Chronological age	Years in retirement
Chemist	72	7	Artist **	76	N/A
Psychologist	65	5	Nurse	75	12
Doctor	63	2	Entrepreneur	66	8
Dominee	62	3	Linguist *	65	N/A
			Teacher	62	2

* The Linguist has worked free-lance intermittently for most of her life, mostly from home and she was still busy doing this at the time of the interview.

** The Artist has been a homemaker for most of her life, and therefore the term “retirement” in the traditional sense of the word, may not be applicable. **Despite setting the chronological cut-off date at 75 years, the Artist was included because she has just turned 76 at the time of the interview.

In the next section, I shall progress from the selection of the participants to the data collection process.

3.8 Data Collection

3.8.1 Introduction

A case study approach usually relies on unstructured interviews (Leedy, 1997), or on semi-structured or structured interviews, or even entirely on quantitative data (Yin, 2003). Yin's (2003) suggestions were followed for the data collection process: open questions, which have no right or wrong answers, and which include preferences, opinions and beliefs, as well as questionnaires were utilised to explore experiences and meaning (if applicable) of *FLOW* in retirement. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) proposes two ways of gauging whether someone is experiencing *FLOW*: firstly through questionnaires or structured interviews, and secondly through the Experience Sampling Method, by wearing an electronic pager activated by random signals and then rating one's ratio of skills to challenges on a ten point scale at that very moment. For this research study, however, my focus was on the practical application of *FLOW* in retirement and not on measuring *FLOW per se*.

In this research two semi-structured interviews were combined with four qualitative questionnaires to establish if participants answered to Csikszentmihalyi's (2002, pp. 203-204) criteria for *FLOW*. The Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS), for example, was included because it could provide an indication of the first criterion of *FLOW* as it gives an indication of locus-of-control. People with an internal locus of control believe that their destiny is in their own hands, while people with an external locus-of-control believe that external factors beyond their control influence their lives (Moody, 2006).

The questionnaires that were used do not include questionnaires for measuring depression or dysfunction. Although there is a link between life satisfaction and happiness or life satisfaction and depression, life satisfaction or happiness can not be reduced to the absence or presence of depression, according to Lewinsohn, Redner and Seeley (1991). The selection of the different questionnaires for this research study will be explained next.

3.8.2 The Biographical Questionnaire

The semi-structured interview consist of open questions with the aim of obtaining biographical information as background data to understand the participant in his or her context. The biographical questionnaire was simplified and adapted from Gray (1977, pp. 171-173) to get a broader understanding of the participant's life circumstances, to better understand the participant's answers, opinions and preferences.

3.8.3 The Interview

The aim of the interview was to obtain information on how retirement is experienced and how each participant views successful aging. The interview was also conducted in a semi-structured fashion, and focused on **certain topics** (Yin, 2003) to obtain a broader understanding of successful aging in a retirement context. The aim was therefore not to get a detailed life story.

The following questions for example aim to detect a willingness to get involved in social entrepreneurship projects.

- **Are you already involved in any community projects?*
- **Is it important for you to be involved in such projects and what meaning does it hold (if any) for you?*
- **Under which circumstances will you consider using your FLOW interests to benefit others?*
- **How will you consider using your FLOW interests to benefit others?*

This question, for example, is aimed at involving participants to think about aging well.

- *What is your definition of successful aging? What suggestions do you have to age “successfully?”*

Sadler and Biggs (2006) mentioned that very little research has been done on what older people see as definitions of successful aging. They found that previous studies, in which open-ended questions and self-report instruments were applied, uncovered a variety of themes as measures of successful aging, such as health, physical activity, good social relations, positive attitudes, personal growth, self-understanding, purpose in life, good adjustment skills, and accepting some form of physical decline (Sadler & Biggs, 2006).

3.8.4 The FLOW Questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire was to obtain information pertaining to *FLOW*, in order to understand what role *FLOW* plays in retirement.

- *Describe the experience of personal FLOW with regard to your most preferred activity, if applicable.*

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1993, p. 197), experiencing *FLOW* infrequently leads to a dependence on different forms of entertainment for amusement, especially passive entertainment or activities that are “wasteful or destructive” as a substitute for leading a fulfilling life.

- *What meaning does this FLOW experience have for you, if applicable?*

Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 244) defines meaning in the following way: “An experience is *meaningful* when it is related positively to a person’s goals. Life has meaning when we have a purpose that justifies our strivings, and when experience is ordered”.

- *What is the result of the FLOW experience or lack thereof?*

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1993), *FLOW* improves subjective well-being, and the results or consequences of the *FLOW* experience include the following:

- Enhanced creativity and creative thinking.
- Increased performance and productivity due to higher levels of motivation generated by experiencing *FLOW*.
- Talent development due to the enjoyment associated with working in one's talent area.
- Enhanced self-esteem due to feelings of being more successful.
- Stress reduction and fewer health problems due to a perception of matching challenges and skills.

The original *FLOW* questionnaire was amended by Gray (1977) and then again by the current researcher, in order to investigate if any of the participants' retirement activities resulted in *FLOW*. This questionnaire was adapted by Gray (1977) from the Csikszentmihalyi (1974) original. The adapted questionnaire used in this study is thus from Gray's (1977) unpublished doctoral thesis. In turn, this researcher simplified and adapted the questionnaire to include some, but not all of Gray's questions. The focus is on the *meaning FLOW* has for the participant, and not on *measuring FLOW*. The concept of *FLOW* was discussed, and the participant was encouraged to think about this in relation to his or her own life-experiences and activities. *FLOW*, according to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 4), is "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it." Csikszentmihalyi (1993, pp. 178 & 184) lists the following "dimensions of experience" for *FLOW* to occur:

- Clear goals.
- Skills and challenges are matched, avoiding boredom (activity too easy) or stress (activity too challenging).
- Intense concentration and focus resulting in a loss of self-consciousness.

- A feeling of being in control when skills and challenges are matched.
- An altered sense of time such as a perception of time passing too quickly or slowly.
- Wanting to repeat an activity because of the enjoyment it brings, also referred to as an *autotelic* experience.

The following four quantitative questionnaires were used to gain more information on how the participants experienced and made meaning of retirement and in the service of triangulation.

3.8.5 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) was retrieved April 20, 2010, from www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/ppquestionnaires.htm to gain an understanding of the subjective meaningfulness that a participant ascribes to the retirement phase of his or her life. Lyubomirsky (2001) states that almost universally included in the concept of happiness are aspects such as joy, contentment, well-being, and *meaning*. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire consists of two 5-item subscales on a 7-point scale (1=absolutely untrue to 7=absolutely true) and was developed by Steger, et al. (2006). It measures the presence of as well as the search for meaning in an individual's life: "the sense made of, and significance felt regarding the nature of one's being and existence" (Steger, et al., 2006, p. 81). The Presence of Meaning subscale measures the subjectively experienced meaning in one's life, while the Search for Meaning subscale measures the desire to find meaning in one's life. However, some individuals, such as the Mahatma Gandhi, demonstrated both a continual search for deeper meaning while already living a very purpose driven and meaningful life (Steger, et al., 2006). Total scores can range between 7 and 35, for each subscale, with higher scores indicating a higher experience of meaning in life. The mean scores for both subtests are 23,5 rounded off to 24 (Steger, et al., 2006) or 29,2 for Presence and 18,4 for Search if only the nine participants are taken into consideration.

Steger (personal communication, January 25, 2010) states that the MLQ does not have cut scores, nevertheless, based on a number of studies, he uses a total score of 24 as cut-off point to decide whether Meaning or Searching is prevalent. He suggests four broad categories for the interpretation of the scores, namely:

- Scores above 24/35 for both the Presence and the Search scales indicate that the individual experiences life as meaningful, yet he or she is still actively exploring meaning and purpose. Such an individual may tend to be optimistic, religious or spiritual, and easy-going.
- Scores below 24/35 for both the Presence and the Search scales indicate that the individual does not experience life as meaningful, and he or she is not actively seeking meaning or purpose. Such an individual may experience feelings of sadness, depression or anxiousness and is usually not very socially active.
- Scores above 24/35 for the Presence scale and below 24/35 for the Search scale indicate that the individual experiences life as very meaningful and thus does not actively search for new meaning or purpose in life. Such an individual is usually optimistic, joyful, religious or spiritual, socially outgoing and he or she holds traditional values.
- Scores below 24/35 for the Presence scale and above 24/35 for the Search scale indicate that the individual does not feel that his or her life has a valued meaning and purpose. He or she may feel distressed, lost, dissatisfied, depressed, anxious or sad. He or she may question the role of religion in life and may also tend to shy away from social activities.

Meaning in life is unique to each individual and there is no “one size fits all” meaning (or universal meaning), as the MLQ seeks to allow the participant to use his or her own criteria for meaning. It therefore deals with perceived meaning in life as an important aspect of an individual’s well-being (Steger, et al., 2006). According to these authors, different aspects of meaning are important to different people such as setting goals, finding purpose, or transcending the self. Some benefits of having meaning in life, as summarised

by Steger, et al. (2006) are less distress, less need for therapy, more happiness and more life satisfaction, whereas a lack of meaning may contribute to depression, anxiety, suicide, and substance abuse. The MLQ shows good psychometric properties, such as convergent and discriminant validity across time and informants and good reliability (Steger, et al., 2006).

3.8.6 Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)

The Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS) is the brainchild of Christine Robitschek (1998). The PGIS was retrieved April 20, 2010, from www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/ppquestionnaires. The Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) is a “metacognitive construct, an awareness and control of intentional engagement in growth-enhancing cognitions and behaviours in all areas of life” (Robitschek, 1998, p. 184). According to Robitschek (1998), the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS) incorporates *cognitive aspects* of personal growth such as self-efficacy, beliefs, attitudes and values that encourage personal growth. It also incorporates *behavioural aspects*, which means that the cognitive components are actively implemented for sustained growth. The PGI incorporates a positive *attitude* or readiness for change and for personal growth. Lastly, the PGI includes *motivation*. The PGI thus focuses on intentional and active (versus unintentional) and continued personal growth throughout the life cycle (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). Intentional growth means that the person is “actively and willingly involved in the process” of growth (Robitschek, 1998, p.183), as is consistent with Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) concept of *FLOW*. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), a person’s purpose should unite his or her goals and intrinsically motivate and spur him or her on to action, resulting in a “unified flow experience”, which brings “harmony... to consciousness”. Inner harmony means that one’s feelings thoughts and actions are compatible (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, pp. 216-217). The PGIS is positively correlated to an internal locus of control, to assertiveness, and to a problem-focused coping style (Robitschek, 1999). An internal locus of control refers to the fact that change is possible through one’s own actions, rather than

chance or fate bringing about a specific outcome. The concept of locus of control was made popular by Rotter in 1966 who found that some people believe events to be under their own control, while others ascribed events to external forces such as chance or fate (Argyle, 2001). According to Argyle (2001), many studies have found a correlation between an internal locus of control and feelings of well-being, and an internal locus of control as being an indicator of positive affect or happiness. Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) concept of *FLOW* thus incorporates the PGIS's focus on purpose and intrinsic motivation or an internal locus of control, which results in action being taken.

According to Robitschek (1998), personal growth and change can be taught to clients as it is an intentional process, and according to Schlossberg (1984), cited in Robitschek (1998), it can aid with adaption to new challenges and life transitions. The PGIS may be a valuable tool "as a measure of whether individuals have learned a growth oriented way approaching new tasks and challenges in their lives" (Robitschek, 1998, p. 196). The PGIS may also be a valuable tool in therapy building or enhancing strengths already present in the client (Robitschek, 1998).

Robitschek's (1999) research participants ranged in age from 17-66, mostly from the Anglo-American culture. The original PGIS uses nine questions on a 6-point Likert scale, where 1=definitely disagree and 6= definitely agree. This scale was also used for this research study. Scores are calculated by summing the scores. Scores indicating the level of PGI range between 0-45 and should be seen on a continuum, with higher scores indicating higher levels of intentionally seeking out opportunities for growth (Robitschek, 1999). Higher scores thus indicate higher levels of PGI and higher levels of psychological well-being (Robitschek, 1999). The PGIS focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsic, active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). The mean of 25 (rounded off from 24,8) is taken from research by Robitschek (1998), from a study with 246 highly educated, high income Anglo-

American participants, ranging in age from 21 to 66 years. No gender differences for the mean were found.

The test shows good psychometric properties, such as convergent and discriminant validity, internal consistency and temporal stability, but reliability is limited by the self-report nature of the questionnaire (Robitschek, 1998).

3.8.7 The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Diener, Emmons, Larson and Griffin (1985), assesses people's overall satisfaction with life, and not only specific life areas or domains, such as health. The SWLS was retrieved April 20, 2010, from www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/ppquestionnaires.htm. The SWLS was included as a measure of overall satisfaction with life because research focuses more and more on subjective evaluations of well-being as opposed to more objective measures such as income, health, and housing (Diener, et al., 1985). This scale is suitable for use with all age groups. Life satisfaction "refers to a cognitive, judgemental process" that a person uses to subjectively compare him or herself with "a standard that each individual sets for him or herself; it is not externally imposed" (Diener, et al., 1985, p. 71). According to Caprara, et al. (2007, p. 112), the affective or emotional component of happiness has more satisfying than negative life experiences, while the cognitive component comprises of a subjective assessment of "life satisfaction". Rudinger and Thomae (1990) regard the subjective cognitive evaluation of a situation for life satisfaction as being more important than more objective criteria such as health as assessed by a doctor, income or educational level, while Argyle (2001) focuses on both the subjective and objective components of happiness, such as income and health.

The SWLS has proven to be a reliable and valid measure of the Satisfaction with Life-component of Subjective Well-being (Pavot & Diener, 2008). This questionnaire only measures the satisfaction with life aspects of subjective

well-being, i.e. the cognitive component (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; Diener, et al., 1985). The other two parts of subjective well-being are positive and negative affect (Diener, 1984). According to Lewinsohn, et al. (1991), their own as well as other reviewed research, confirmed the relationship between current depression and life satisfaction, but both are subject to fluctuating influences. However, even when controlling for depression, Lewinsohn, et al. (1991, p. 163) found that there was “significant variance in life satisfaction,” due to such factors as self-esteem, thinking style, social support and health. Although there is a link between life satisfaction and depression, life satisfaction can not be reduced to the absence or presence of depression according to Lewinsohn, et al. (1991). Yet, according to Lyubomirsky (2010) and Schwarz and Strack (1991), participants responses on well-being or happiness may be influenced by a number of fluctuating influences, such as mood at the time of response to the questionnaire, or the manner of thinking about the event. Scores on the SWLS correlate with measures of mental health and low scores may be predictive of future suicide attempts, according to Pavot and Diener (2008). They also state that satisfaction with life is correlated with temperament or personality traits such as extraversion or neuroticism. Current mood has a slight impact on the evaluation of life satisfaction. Stressful events or situational factors, such as unemployment, widow-hood or disability, have a negative impact on the subjective evaluation of life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 2008). The questionnaire can be used with all age groups (Diener, et al., 1985).

The SWLS has only 5 items, on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and has good psychometric properties (Pavot & Diener, 2008), such as high internal consistency and high temporal reliability (Diener, et al., 1985). Scores range from 5 (low satisfaction) to 35 (high satisfaction). A score of 20 is a neutral point on the scale (equally satisfied or dissatisfied) and scores between 5 and 9 indicate that one is very dissatisfied with life, while a score of 26 to 30 demonstrates satisfaction with life, and a score of 31 to 35 shows that one is very satisfied with life. Scores of 21 to 25

indicate slight satisfaction, and scores between 15 and 19 indicate that one is slightly dissatisfied with life (Pavot & Diener, 2008, 1993). The “test” was developed for a variety of age groups, including those in midlife to more senior citizens (Pavot & Diener, 2008).

3.8.8 Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) was developed by Sonja Lyubomirsky in 1997. It was retrieved on April 20, 2010 from www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/ppquestionnaires.htm to examine how happy the retirees are in their current phases of life. The scale measures overall subjective well-being or happiness, i.e. happiness in a broad context (Lyubomirsky, 2001; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) and from the participant’s own perspective (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

The Subjective Happiness Scale was included in this study in order to measure current happiness, as happiness is one of the results of the *FLOW* experience, according to Csikszentmihalyi (e.g. 2002). Argyle (2001, p. 162) reports a strong relationship between happiness and “internal control, self-esteem, optimism, and purpose in life.” Happiness “includes the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile,” Lyubomirsky (2001, p. 239). Experiencing meaning in life is thus a good predictor of successful aging (Reker, Peacock & Wong, 1987). According to Lyubomirsky and Tucker (1998), happy people tend to interpret and think about life circumstances more positively than unhappy people, which in turn foster or diminish positive affect. Thus, unhappy people tend to dwell on negative aspects concerning their lives, although there are no differences in the types of events both groups experience.

There has been a proliferation of research on happiness with the dawn of positive psychology, and according to Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999), it has come to the fore that happiness is surprisingly subjective, therefore people can

be happy despite personal problems, tragedy or poverty while others can be unhappy amidst great wealth or advantages (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). A noted concern in terms of subjectivity is that: "All studies that involve subjective ratings face concerns about the interpretations made by the respondents", e.g. how participants come to the conclusions they do with regard to happiness such as whether happiness is seen as an "enduring condition" or a "fleeting mood" (Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006, p. 219). Finding happiness therefore could be a matter of finding a suitable happiness strategy (Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Happy and unhappy individuals seem to differ in their reactions to life's difficulties. The interpretation of an event is therefore more important than the event itself, as happy or less happy people think differently about the same life events (Lyubomirsky & Tucker, 1998). Happy people would therefore interpret life events (cognitive process) more favourably than unhappy individuals, and this in turn could influence mood or affect. Unhappy individuals tended to dwell on the negative factors, even in positive events (Lyubomirsky & Tucker, 1998). According to Lyubomirsky and Lepper's (1999) findings regarding the SHS, testees who thought of themselves as happy tended to evaluate themselves positively, were optimistic about the future, experienced more positive emotions and were more extraverted.

There is a very small correlation between happiness and wealth, and even health, according to Lyubomirsky (2001). Happy and unhappy individuals have different "cognitive, judgemental, and motivational strategies," operating more or less automatically, and therefore "appear to experience – indeed, to reside in – different subjective worlds," according to Lyubomirsky (2001, pp. 242 & 244). Personal choices such as goals, emotional reactions, and events people choose to focus on, are equally important for happiness, and seem to be well within most peoples' control (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007). According to Diener and Seligman (2002), on the other hand, good social relationships, extraversion, low neuroticism, and low levels of psychopathology, although important, could not guarantee high happiness. "Thus, there appears to be no single key to high happiness that automatically produces this state" (Diener &

Seligman, 2002, p. 83). The same conclusion was reached by Diener, et al. (1999). Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006) found in their happiness research that personality traits predict the use of certain happiness enhancing strategies, and that a combination of personality traits and happiness strategies predicted happiness levels.

According to Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006), the Subjective Happiness Scale measures chronic happiness on a 7-point Likert scale and includes four items. The first item measures the extent to which participants view themselves as being happy; the second item measures happiness compared to peers; the third item measures happiness compared to a description of a chronically happy person; and the last question measures comparison to a chronically unhappy person. The last item is reverse coded. Answers on the 4-item scale were summated in terms of the 7-point Likert scale. Testees ranged from students to older adults, including retirees. The SHS is thus suitable for different age groups as well as from different occupational and cultural backgrounds (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Those scoring above the median or mean, tend to be happy individuals, and those scoring below the median or mean tend to be unhappy individuals according to Lyubomirsky (2001). The mean used for this research study was calculated from the scores of a group of adult participants (N=198) who ranged in age from 20 to 94 years (Lyubomirsky & Leper, 1999). The same mean was used for retirees by Lyubomirsky (2010).

In this research study individual scores are also compared to the mean score for the nine participants. According to Lyubomirsky (2010), the scores on the SHS can fluctuate due to a recent event, stress levels or other circumstances. Nevertheless, the SHS has excellent psychometric properties, such as high internal consistency, and good construct and discriminant validity (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

3.8.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis was done by looking for repeated themes and patterns in people's descriptions of their *FLOW*, and other retirement experiences (Leedy, 1997; Yin, 2003). These themes were also compared to the building blocks described in Chapter 2. The thirteen building blocks for successful aging, namely creativity, goal-setting, health, life-long learning, meaning, personality, resilience, social relations, strengths, spirituality and religion, subjective well-being and happiness, transcending the self, and wisdom were reduced by excluding resilience, wisdom and personality.

The reason for not including resilience and wisdom as factors playing a role in successful aging, concern the multiple variables making up these concepts, as described in Chapter 2. It was difficult to isolate one criterion for comparison purposes. Research on resilience in older age focuses on multiple facets of well-being, such as a good self-image, good social relationships, a purposeful and meaningful life, life-long learning and managing the external environment (Ryff & Singer, 2007). However, three factors will be extracted from resilience, namely good social relations, meaning, and life-long learning, as these concepts received extensive attention as contributing factors to successful aging, by researchers such as Friedrich (2001), Hill (2005, 2008), Moody (2006) and Rowe and Kahn (1999).

The following aspects of wisdom (or perspective) were listed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as important: wisdom although distinct from intelligence, includes a high level of knowledge, good judgement, and the ability to give good advice. It also includes the competence to tackle difficult questions about the meaning of life, and is used to benefit one's own well-being and that of others. As can be seen from this list, these, and the other wisdom-related constructs discussed in Chapter 2, are extremely difficult to operationalise, and will therefore be omitted in this research study as a building block.

Personality will also be omitted, as a standardised psychometric personality questionnaire was not used. Another important aspect in the decision to omit personality was that Diener and Seligman (2002) found that extraversion, low neuroticism, and low levels of psychopathology, although important, could not guarantee high levels of happiness. In addition, Diener, et al. (1999) suggest that although personality is one of the strongest predictors of subjective well-being, the complex interaction with culture, cognitions, goals, resources, and environmental factors should also be taken into account as causes for experiencing happiness. These authors come to the conclusion that “the happy person is blessed with a positive temperament, tends to look on the bright side of things, and does not ruminate excessively about bad events, and is living in an economically developed society, has social confidants, and possesses adequate resources for making progress toward valued goals” (Diener, et al., 1999, p. 295). They acknowledge that this description will soon be dated due to the expansive nature of research on the nature of happiness.

The following ten building blocks will thus be used as criteria in trying to understand why some of the participants adapt successfully to retirement, and others struggle to adapt to retirement. These are creativity, goal-setting, health, life-long learning, meaning, social relations, spirituality/ religion, strengths, subjective well-being (including happiness), and transcending the self (including volunteering or social entrepreneurship).

To simplify the presentation of the findings, frequency tables and categories were used to summarise the data as Yin (2003) suggests. A multiple case study approach makes provision for the fact that each individual case is a mini representative of the whole, and in this way a merging or coming together of the evidence is brought about (convergent evidence). Each case’s conclusions can then be replicated by the other cases in the study to foster confidence in the findings (Yin, 2003). Each individual case’s results, as well as the combined results, need to be addressed in the conclusions, in order to enhance external validity by using “replication logic” (Yin, 2003, p. 50).

The data obtained from the Meaning in Life Questionnaire, the Subjective Happiness Scale, the Personal Growth Initiative Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale will be analysed and integrated with the themes from the interview, the biographical questionnaire and the *FLOW* questionnaire for each participant. This will be followed by an integration of the all the findings by comparing the results of the nine participants with one another, and by using the arithmetic mean as comparison base.

3.8.10 Communicating the Findings

The findings are presented in the format of a multiple-case study report. At first the findings are reported for each case alone, and then together with the other case analysis findings in a comparative way, as Yin (2003) suggests.

The findings are reported by means of describing themes or patterns in an analytical narrative style, which is a more objective writing style (Leedy, 1997) than the way the subjective experiences are described. Yin (2003) refers to this writing style as linear-analytic, i.e. starting with a research question, linking it to the literature research, progressing to analysing the findings from the collected data, and concluding with suggestions for further research. Categorising and tabulating the findings, as well as calculating the means for the quantitative questionnaires, are done in accordance with Yin's (2003) recommendations for the case study format. The means serve the purpose of examining the "complexity of such tabulations and their relationships" (Yin, 2003, p. 111).

3.9 Ethics

Leedy (1997, p. 116) suggests researchers should honour "fairness, honesty, openness of intent, disclosure of methods, the ends for which the research is executed, a respect for the integrity of the individual, the obligation of the researcher to guarantee unequivocally individual privacy, and an informed

willingness on the part of the subject to participate voluntarily in the research activity". Therefore, a participant consent form was drafted with the aim of obtaining written consent for participating in this research study, and to assure participants of confidentiality.

3.10 Limitations

The following limitations apply to this study:

- Due to using a small, non-random sample in this research study, the findings cannot be generalised to the population, and generalisation is not the aim of a qualitative study. However, the findings can be used to expand and generalise theories, since the goal is an analytic generalisation. External validity in qualitative research refers to the generalisability of the results to other cases. In the case study approach and in multiple-case studies per se, as is the case in this research study, external validity is addressed by using "replication logic" (Yin, 2003, pp. 34 & 47) in which two or more cases confirm a theory, and this is then considered to be a replication (Yin, 2003).
- The findings may possibly be generalised to the same kind of situation (Leedy, 1997), or cases (Yin, 2003). According to Yin (2003, p. 10), case studies can be generalised to "theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes". The goal therefore is to "expand and generalise theories" (p. 10) and in this sense the goal is then an "analytic generalisation" where a "previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study" (Yin, 2003, pp. 32-33).
- The participants come from a relatively homogeneous background, as all are Afrikaans speaking and come from Pretoria, which make generalising to other cultural groups risky, if not impossible, albeit only to "expand and generalise theories" (Yin, 2003, p. 10).
- No observer ratings were used, only the subjective evaluations or ratings by the respondents themselves.

- Due to the exploratory nature of this research, no pilot case study was done, but questions were derived from the literature research.

3.11 Conclusion

As Leedy (1997) suggests, the type of data for this research study dictated the research approach that I selected. The process of triangulation enhanced the validity and reliability of the results. The interpretation of the results is thus possible without much distortion, despite the limitation of the subjectivity of the responses, that in this research does not play such a crucial role, due to my aim of an analytic generalisation, which expands and generalises Csikszentmihalyi's theory of *FLOW*.

In the next nine chapters, I shall present the findings for my investigation of *FLOW* in retirement for the nine participants. The results of the biographical data, the interview, the *FLOW* questionnaire, the Meaning in Life Questionnaire, the Personal Growth Initiative Scale, the Subjective Happiness Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale, will be presented. The original interviews were all conducted in Afrikaans, but the English translations will be used for this presentation.

Discussions will be presented individually and in chronological order. A typical semi-structured interview consisted of open-ended questions and questionnaires as presented in the Appendices. The data analysis was done by looking for themes and patterns in the three semi-structured questionnaire and interview formats as well as taking the reflective descriptions of the participants' *FLOW* and retirement experiences into consideration. Thus, each interview was initially reviewed separately to *discover* themes and patterns, and then jointly with the other interviews to *compare* the patterns and themes in a cross-case comparison, as Leedy (1997) suggests. The findings of the qualitative interviews for the nine participants were also compared to the building blocks for successful aging as delineated in Chapter 2, namely

creativity, goal-setting, health, life-long learning, meaning, social relations, spirituality or religion, strengths, subjective well-being and transcending the self through volunteering or social entrepreneurship type activities. To simplify the presentation of my findings, I decided to use frequency tables and categories to summarise the data, as Leedy (1997) and Yin (2003) suggest.

In the interest of anonymity and as there is a focus on “academic” retirement or post-matric education and training, the participants will only be identified according to their previous occupations.

4 FINDINGS FOR THE DOMINEE

4.1 Introduction

My lasting impression of the reverend, minister, pastor, or *Dominee* as I prefer to call him, is that he is very passionate about his faith, and the new work he has “discovered” for himself through financial need, which now results in *FLOW*. He has not only found *FLOW*, but he experiences his retirement as tremendously meaningful as well. The Dominee’s interest in reading and research is evident from the shelves of books lining his walls. Writing is also a passion and he generously shared some of his recent religious articles with me. The interview was held in the Dominee’s Wendy house behind his home that he uses as an office, in an unpretentious suburb of Pretoria. There were no interruptions and we established good rapport.

4.2 The Biographical Questionnaire

The Dominee is a 62 year old (born in 1948) Afrikaans-speaking retired male cleric who attained his theology degree 39 years ago from UNISA, in 1971. He completed his practical year at the University of Pretoria in 1972. He began his work as a minister in the following year and married his wife in 1976. Three years ago, when they decided to retire, they moved from a rural mining community to Pretoria. They have two children, an independent son who is 32 years old, and a 29 year old, unmarried, financially dependent daughter who still lives with them.

The Dominee has serious concerns about the adequacy of his church pension and he supplements his pension by conducting weddings and funerals, usually for people who are not regular churchgoers, for those who do not attend worship at a specific congregation, or for those who have long since left the established church. There are many reasons why people look for an

independent pastor or minister, such as people who are too embarrassed to ask a familiar cleric to conduct a wedding ceremony because they already have children out of wedlock. They also know about the church's strict rules about pre-marital sex or living with a partner before marriage. The Dominee works as far afield as Klerksdorp in the North-West province to supplement his pension. He enjoys this work as it gives him time to continue his ministry in a different field, not in a specific congregation, but among people who do not and would not normally attend church services. His wife works at a nearby nursery school as a life coach to supplement their income, although she holds a social work degree. She nevertheless enjoys this very much. The Dominee does not follow a strict daily schedule, but his planning is dictated by the activities he needs to attend to, such as a wedding or a funeral. He advertises his ministerial services (conducting weddings or funerals) in newspapers and at funeral parlours. Reading and doing Sudoku count among his favourite activities. His absolute favourite activity though, is doing research and writing religious articles for a newspaper in the former mining town where he ministered. Writing a book is a goal that he would like to realise, but due to the cost involved in such a venture and the fact that publishing houses tend to favour established authors, he finds this an intimidating project. Nevertheless, it remains a goal to see his book in print one day.

He feels ambivalent about retirement and whether it is still a relevant concept, since he believes that older people should make way for younger people in the job market. On the other hand, retirement also brings financial hardship, hence his ambivalence. His retirement should have commenced at age 65, but he retired early due to personal reasons, inter alia his daughter's health problems, and the fact that he wanted to buy a house in Pretoria. He was afraid that with the rising house prices at the time, he would not be able to afford his own home if he waited any longer. Until then he and his family lived in a parsonage.

He sees himself as more of an introvert, although the rest of his family thinks that he is between an introvert and an extrovert. He and his wife have a robust social life, and they usually socialize more with friends than family.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Biographical Questionnaire: themes and patterns

Key themes: financial need, supplements pension, creative problem solving, life-long learning, cognitive stimulation, ambivalent view of retirement, writing, socially active

4.3 The Interview

The Dominee enjoys retirement and the activities that he is currently involved in, but not having adequate funds is a problem. He and his wife have not been on holiday for the past 12 years, because he saved to buy a house in Pretoria. He does not experience himself as a retiree, as he is still actively working, albeit in another context. However, he misses his rural congregation where he served for 34 years, as they were sincere people, although semi-skilled miners. He has never had any hobbies, but thoroughly enjoys reading theological books and periodicals. Reading and writing theology or religious articles (every two weeks) are extremely meaningful to him and he wants to keep on doing this. He has already written 300 articles that were published. As part of his community service he visits the sick in hospitals or leads prayer meetings, and also enjoys working with older people. He also finds these activities very meaningful as the Lord expects one to put loving others into practice. Having meaning in one's life is very important. Successful aging means to be personally involved in meaningful activities. One should also live in peace with others and self, forgive, and accept one's circumstances. Many elderly feel worthless and rejected. But having said this, he has not accomplished all he set out to do in life, yet being meaningfully involved now in

his new work means much to him. He also wants to work more with the elderly in the future, they are very appreciative, and he has helped some elderly in the past with their financial management. He feels it is important to lead an active life. This is also a Christian way of living that the Lord expects, and he is willing to serve others. People feel that he understands them, and he often ministers in a casual setting, such as a barbeque. He finds that his faith in God actually grew in retirement, and as he now works for himself he has come to depend on the Lord much more. His legacy is that he works for the Lord.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Interview themes:

Key themes: life-long learning, self-transcending activities, social entrepreneurship, goal-setting, view of retirement: not a retiree, hobbies: reading, research and writing, community service, meaningful activities, Christian values, legacy

4.4 The FLOW Questionnaire

The Dominee's most important and personally meaningful activities are reaching out to estranged ex-churchgoers and those who do not attend any church, by means of the weddings and funerals he conducts. As previously stated his absolute preferred activity is doing research (he still reads his Hebrew and Greek versions of the Bible) and writing innovative religious articles. He gets no financial remuneration for this but he never wants to stop doing this. Time passes very swiftly when he is engaged in research or writing or preparing for a funeral or wedding. He finds it stimulating to bring a new and innovative message each time. He is also in demand as a relief preacher or minister and therefore he estimates that he experiences *FLOW* at least twice per week. As he has more time in retirement and less pressure, he finds that the joy he finds in writing actually increases with time and that he grows as a

person because he is fully immersed in his subject matter. He usually writes about the things that puzzle him, which requires him to research his topics thoroughly. He has a vast personal library of books and periodicals which may include some five hundred items, some also in German and Dutch which he is also able to read and understand. He does not belong to any clubs and he does not participate in any sport. He is fairly healthy and has no specific health complaints. He sometimes works in the garden, but is not involved in any fitness program.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview that contribute to understanding the impact and application of *FLOW in retirement* are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

FLOW Questionnaire: impact and application

Key themes: FLOW, creativity, meaningful activities, cognitive stimulation, reading, researching, healthy

4.5 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The MLQ is divided into two subscales, namely Presence of Meaning and Searching for Meaning. The MLQ scores range between 5 and 35 for each subscale. “The Presence of Meaning subscale measures the subjective sense that one’s life is meaningful, whereas the Search for Meaning subscale measures the drive and orientation toward finding meaning in one’s life” (Steger, et al., 2006, p. 85). Steger (2010) states that the MLQ does not have cut scores, nevertheless, based on a number of studies, he uses a score of 24 as a cut-off point to decide whether Presence of Meaning or Searching for Meaning is more prevalent.

The Dominee: Presence of Meaning: 34 in the range of 5-35	The Dominee: Searching for Meaning: 6 in the range of 5-35
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RANGE	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35				
Low	Cut-off point																				24	High													
PoM*																																		34	
SfM*	6																																		

*PoM means Presence of Meaning and SfM means Searching for Meaning

According to the MLQ, the Dominee’s high score of 34/35 for the subscale Presence of Meaning and the much lower score of 6/35 for the subscale Searching for Meaning, suggests that he has found and experiences meaning in his life and that he is not actively seeking meaning. Steger (2010) suggests that someone with these scores is a traditional individual with strong religious beliefs.

4.6 Personal Growth Initiative Scale

The PGI focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsically motivated, active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). The PGIS is positively correlated to an internal locus of control, to assertiveness, and to a problem-focused coping style (Robitschek, 1999). An internal locus of control refers to the fact that change is possible through one’s own actions, rather than chance or fate bringing about a specific outcome (Argyle, 2001). Scores range between 0 and 45 and should be seen on a continuum, with higher scores indicating higher levels of intentionally seeking out opportunities for growth (Robitschek, 1999). Higher scores thus indicate higher levels of PGI and higher levels of psychological well-being (Robitschek, 1999). The *mean of 25 (rounded off from 24,8) is taken from research by Robitschek, 1998, from a study with 246 highly educated, high income Anglo-American participants, ranging in age from 21 to 66 years. No gender differences for the mean were found. Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) concept of *FLOW* incorporates the PGIS’s focus on purpose and intrinsic motivation or an internal locus of control, which result in action being taken.

Dominee Score 35/45	*Mean for the PGIS: 25 Range 0-45	Dominee scored above the mean of 25, suggesting an above average search for purpose
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Range	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	45
Dominee	35																							
Mean	25																							

The Dominee’s score of 35/45 on the PGIS suggests that he is probably intrinsically motivated or has an internal locus of control and that he is intentionally seeking out new opportunities for growth, which include religious activities, research and writing articles.

his income through conducting services for non-churchgoers at marriages and funerals. This has led to the continuation of his work as a minister. He unexpectedly found *FLOW* by continuing his previous line of work in a different context. By taking the qualitative as well as the quantitative findings into consideration, it is clear that the Dominee experiences above average meaning in life due to being engaged in work that he enjoys and that, according to him, supplements his income (MLQ). However, financial worries may also contribute to his subjective happiness scores being below the SHS mean. The Dominee's experience of *FLOW* is not influenced by finances, as ascertained by the *FLOW* questionnaire, however, he expressed ambivalence about retirement during the interview due to his financial concerns, and this may explain his low score on the SHS and the higher scores for the MLQ and the SWLS. This also explains his desire to keep on working in retirement. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 3), the best time in a person's life is "when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. *Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen*". This constitutes being intrinsically motivated or having an internal locus of control as seen in the Dominee's high PGIS scores. The Dominee is actively aging, as can be seen in the purpose driven goals he pursues (as illustrated by the PGIS) and the way his day is structured around his work. The Dominee is thus a good example of a person who ages actively. According to Friedrich (2001), the more active aging comes into play, on a physical, psychological, and a social level, the more successful one is at aging.

Creativity was found to be one of the building blocks for successful aging, and creativity is seen as a "way of looking at the world to see possibilities for making something new" according to Mannheimer (2006). Lubart and Guignard (2004, p. 44) see creative work as encompassing "all types of ideas and productions" and also being "novel," meaning that something is new and has not existed before. It also includes the idea of reinventing or reinterpreting something previously known, which the Dominee did by reinterpreting and

expanding his previous work as minister to those who do not necessarily attend church, focusing on weddings and funerals. According to Gray (1977), middle-aged and older adults found creative-type activities very fulfilling. Writing religious articles for a newspaper can also be seen as a creative outlet, which keeps the Dominee cognitively or mentally sharp. Reading in foreign languages such as Dutch, German, Hebrew and Greek serves the same purpose. According to Doidge (2007, pp. 47 & 60), "brain resources are allocated according to the principle of use it or lose it", and Doidge's (2007) also found in his research that using a foreign language adds to cognitive stimulation. The Dominee does not belong to any clubs. This is consistent with what Gray (1977, p. 126) found in his study, namely that the age-group 65 and older does not really partake in clubbing as a preferred activity. The Dominee subjectively rates his health as very good, with no specific health complaints. He is not actively involved in any sport. This is consistent with Gray (1977, p. 125) who found that as one ages, less physical activities such as tennis or golf, were chosen. Reading (including research) and writing are some of the Dominee's favourite pastimes. Gray (1977) found that reading was the most favourite activity of the age-group 40-50, and the second favourite activity of the age-group 65 and older. Writing and researching theological articles or sermons for weddings and funerals result in *FLOW* for the Dominee. He never wants to stop doing this and he has a sense of total involvement and happiness. The experience is so enjoyable it becomes autotelic, or self-perpetuating, which is consistent with Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) research. The Dominee has no other hobbies apart from reading and writing.

The Dominee believes in transcending the self in the form of community service, such as visiting the sick in hospitals or working with the elderly and his legacy, according to him, is that he works for the Lord. He is thus engaged in self-transcending and meaningful work as could also be seen in his high scores for the MLQ. Goal-setting is important to him, e.g. continuing to write his religious articles, working with the elderly, and in future he still wants to write a book. This constitutes active and purpose-driven aging (PGIS).

According to Emmons (2006), the goals and priorities people have determine their overall quality of life and moving towards meaningful life goals is vital for continued emotional and physical well-being, as is evident from the Dominee's life. Argyle (2001) also states that just having long-term goals already adds meaning to life.

The Dominee is involved in a sustainable social entrepreneurial project by delivering services at funerals and weddings and spreading the gospel at the same time, which both add to the Dominee's experience of meaning in life (MLQ) and satisfaction with life (SWLS). According to Dees (2009) and Yunus (2006), social enterprise business models run along a continuum from being totally philanthropic to being fully commercial. In the Dominee's case, financial concerns forced him to become a social entrepreneur. Creative thinking is important, as social innovation often springs from "combining existing elements in new ways" (Young, 2006, p. 69), as the Dominee did. In accordance with the findings of Grenier (2006) and Nicholls and Cho (2006), it can be said that the Dominee had a kind of perseverance in the face of obstacles and financial hardship and that he implemented his vision for a better society, creating "new institutions and practices" on a local level as well as augmenting his own income. Social entrepreneurs define success in two ways, as profit and as improving people's lives (Skoll, 2006). The Dominee is a living testimony to this. He has a tremendous sense that what he is doing has meaning, for him and for others (self-transcendence). He shared many of his writings with me, the researcher, which further underscores the meaning that he attaches to sharing the gospel with others. This is consistent with his high scores on the MLQ and SWLS.

The higher score for the subscale Presence of Meaning indicates that the Dominee is experiencing retirement and the work he is currently doing as highly meaningful. His life is purpose driven (PGIS) by his faith and his goals of spreading the gospel in a new environment, and thus there is not much reason from his perspective to still be searching for meaning (MLQ). He is interested

in intentionally seeking out new opportunities for personal growth, such as doing research and writing articles, which may culminate in a book, and which result in experiencing *FLOW*.

The Dominee structures his day by setting work-related goals, using his strengths (including his religious beliefs) and creative problem solving skills in ministering, social entrepreneurial projects, life-long learning (research, writing, reading foreign languages) and active social relations with friends and family.

4.10 Conclusion

The three research questions with regard to the findings for the Dominee's life, can now be answered as follows:

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?

Yes, it seems that finding *FLOW* is aiding the Dominee in successfully adapting to retirement.

- Can knowing one's *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society's needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

Yes, the Dominee is involved in a self-sustaining social entrepreneurial project and *FLOW* seems to play a self-sustaining role.

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-matric training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

Yes, the Dominee is using his previous training and skills in another context and *FLOW* seems to play a significant role in motivating him to continue his community involvement.

The Dominee is a living example of Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) suggestion to make an optimal experience happen by using one's strengths and former skills and training creatively. He not only found a creative solution to a difficult financial situation, but he also found *FLOW*.

5 FINDINGS FOR THE DOCTOR

5.1 Introduction

The Doctor comes across as very reserved, and he also seemed to be a little despondent when we met at his home in a well-to-do suburb in Pretoria-East. His communication style is exact and to the point, as could be expected from an introvert and someone who has had such a hectic pre-retirement lifestyle and little time to waste. He was a gracious and extremely well mannered host.

5.2 Biographical Questionnaire

The Doctor is a 66-year old (born in 1944) retired male medical specialist. He is married and has three adult children in their thirties who are financially self-sufficient, and one grandchild. He has a good relationship with them. He retired three years ago at the age of 63, because he felt burnt out due to the dual responsibilities of being a professor at the local university as well as being the head of a specialist division at a local hospital. He was the youngest professor in his peer group in his field of specialisation. He was president of his specialist field's society for ten years. During that time he was also involved in private practice. His work life was characterised by a very hectic daily schedule, at times managing up to a hundred employees and therefore he never had time to cultivate outside interests or hobbies. Currently he feels very frustrated, demoralised and bored because he would like to work in his field of expertise, but due to the fast changing technological environment of his previous field of medical specialisation, retirees are not considered for posts. Another problem is the expensive equipment needed for his field of medical specialisation, which makes it impractical to start a small practice. Therefore, the field does not lend itself to entrepreneurial projects. He misses the companionship as well as the technical side of his previous work, which he always thoroughly enjoyed. He sees retirement as the worst possible thing that could have

happened to him, and that people should not retire. He now realises the importance of work, and therefore retirement is not a viable option to him. Although he has a wide field of interest, he mostly reads novels or watches television (e.g. National Geographic), and therefore he does not structure his day. The goals he sets are short-term, like going on outings to a shopping mall, or travelling, such as to Warmbaths (Bela Bela). Besides that, he currently does not have many other goals, except maybe attending courses in psychology in the future. He lives comfortably in his retirement as he has no debt, and he made more than adequate provision in terms of his pension. From time to time he suffers from flare-ups of rumathoid arthritis, which makes him house bound. This also means that he is cautious in working in a hospital environment due to an immune deficiency which makes him susceptible to infections. He likes walking as a form of exercise. He quantifies his health on a ten-point scale as between 5 and 8 out of ten.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Biographical Questionnaire: themes and patterns

Key themes: extremely successful former career, difficulty in adapting to retirement, financially secure, very little cognitive stimulation, negative view of retirement, no hobbies

5.3 Interview

The Doctor describes his retirement so far as follows: "Retirement hit me hard. It feels as if someone has pulled out the rug from under my feet". He experiences his retirement as a sense of tremendous loss, a loss of structure, meaning and purpose. He once held various important positions in his field of specialisation, but now he feels as if his star has burnt out. He does not structure his day at all. He usually reads fiction or enjoys watching documentary television programmes such as National Geographic. He has a

keen interest in nature, especially astronomy. He plans to buy a telescope to further this interest, but has not done so yet. However, reading is his current favourite pastime as he feels it keeps him mentally alert. He does not take part in any creative activities. He has started collecting cacti on a small scale as a hobby, but due to limited space at the townhouse where he lives, he does not regard this as a long-term interest. As previously stated, he never had the time to cultivate a hobby as he was overseas twenty two times for his work, apart from having a hectic daily schedule.

He is not involved in any community projects, but would consider such projects, especially if it could benefit older people using his medical expertise. He is willing to work without any remuneration. The Doctor's definition of successful aging is to retire with purpose and meaning, preferably in his field of interest, such as to continue working in his field of medical specialisation or in the medical field in general. He is however not interested in starting his own general practitioner's practice, because he has been in his field of expertise field for too long. He is thinking about studying psychology in the future, but has so far not done anything about it. Successful aging to him means that one has a continuation of a previous interest that can be meaningfully engaged in during the retirement years. He has not found any truly meaningful activities to pursue in retirement. His legacy is that he is a fair, well-balanced person.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Interview: themes and patterns

Key themes: no meaningful goals, despondent, not using qualifications or skills, no community projects, successful aging is to continue working, legacy

5.4 FLOW Questionnaire

The Doctor is primarily engaged in reading (fiction, astronomy) and watching nature programmes on television. He finds these activities stimulating, but does not feel that any of these activities provide *FLOW*, since they are second best to what he would like to do, i.e. to be engaged in a technical medical field using his accumulated expertise. He is not a member of any club.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview that contribute to understanding the impact and application of *FLOW in retirement* are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

FLOW Questionnaire: Impact and application

<i>Key themes: no FLOW</i>

5.5 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The MLQ is divided into two subscales, namely Presence of Meaning and Searching for Meaning. The MLQ scores range between 5 and 35 for each subscale. “The Presence of Meaning subscale measures the subjective sense that one’s life is meaningful, whereas Search for Meaning measures the drive and orientation toward finding meaning in one’s life” (Steger, et al., 2006, p. 85). Steger (2010) states that the MLQ does not have cut scores, nevertheless, based on a number of studies, he uses a score of 24 as a cut-off point to decide whether Presence of Meaning or Searching for Meaning is more prevalent.

The Doctor: Presence of Meaning: 20 in the range of 5-35	The Doctor: Searching for Meaning: 30 in the range of 5-35
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RANGE	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
	Low																Cut-off point		24	High											
PoM*																	20														
SfM*																											30				

*PoM means Presence of Meaning and SfM means Searching for Meaning

The Doctor’s Presence of Meaning score is 20/35, which is lower than the cut-off point of 24/35. His score for the subscale Searching for Meaning is 30/35 and much higher than the cut-point of 24/35. His scores thus indicate that he is

searching for meaning in his life, while he does not experience meaning in his present circumstances. According to Steger’s generic interpretation of the scores (2010), this probably indicates that the Doctor does not feel his life has a valued meaning and purpose, and that he is actively searching for purpose, and experiencing a sense of loss, which causes distress. This could be accompanied by feelings of anxiousness, sadness, depression, searching for the meaning of spiritual or religious experiences and not being socially active. While no depression or anxiety scale was used, the Doctor did come across as despondent during the interview. He also did not seem to be socially very active, as gained from information during the interview. He experiences his retirement as a loss of his former important work role.

5.6 Personal Growth Initiative Scale

The PGI focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsically motivated, active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). The PGIS is positively correlated to an internal locus of control, to assertiveness, and to a problem-focused coping style (Robitschek, 1999). An internal locus of control refers to the fact that change is possible through one’s own actions, rather than chance or fate bringing about a specific outcome (Argyle, 2001). Scores range between 0 and 45 and should be seen on a continuum, with higher scores indicating higher levels to which participants intentionally seek out opportunities for growth (Robitschek, 1999). Higher scores thus indicate higher levels of PGI and higher levels of psychological well-being (Robitschek, 1999).The *mean of 25 (rounded off from 24,8) is taken from research by Robitschek, 1998, from a study with 246 highly educated, high income Anglo-American participants, ranging in age from 21 to 66 years. No gender differences for the mean were found. Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) concept of *FLOW* incorporates the PGIS’s focus on purpose and intrinsic motivation or an internal locus of control, which result in action.

The Doctor Score 31/45	Mean for the PGIS: 25 Range 0-45	The Doctor scored above the mean of 25 for the PGIS, indicating an above average search for purpose
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Range	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	45	
Doctor														31											
Mean														25											

(2010) study, the Doctor seems to be unhappy in his current life situation as a retiree.

5.9 The Results of the Findings for the Doctor

The Doctor is searching for meaning in his retirement life (MLQ) to replace previously meaningful work goals. This is consistent with the qualitative results which indicate that the Doctor has not yet successfully adapted to retirement and may be grappling with finding or “making” new meaning in his “roleless role” where little is expected from the older person (Rowe & Kahn, 1999, pp. 51-52). When he worked, he experienced *FLOW* during work and optimised his potential in the process. This is consistent with Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) findings that active social relationships improve one’s quality of life and that work has set goals, feedback, structure, and challenges which provide an opportunity to get fully absorbed in the task at hand. People who are often in *FLOW* at work feel “strong,” “active,” “creative,” “concentrated,” and “motivated” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 158) while the Doctor experiences a great loss in the absence of these stimulating aspects of his previous work environment. He is not engaged in any stimulating cognitive activities, except reading. He is only slightly satisfied with his current life phase (SWLS) and is generally not very happy (SHS). “An experience is meaningful when it is related positively to a person’s goals. Life has meaning when we have a purpose that justifies our strivings, and when experience is ordered” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 244). According to the Doctor, his life consists of an unstructured purposelessness. He was so involved in his professional career, that he never had the time to engage in any hobbies, and there was little time for leisure. Since he views successful aging as the continuation of previous skills and interests, he is disillusioned with retirement due to a loss of meaning, no structure, no status, no network of colleagues and no continuation of his previous skills and interests. In the Doctor’s words he now feels like a “has-been”. This is consistent with Muller and Stevens’s (2001) and Macnab’s (1994) research findings that people find not only significance and self-worth

from their work role, but also derive meaning from it. Once this role is no longer relevant, such as when one retires, the remaining void may result either in a search for new meaning, or depression, or other negative results. It may also be difficult to distance oneself from previous ambitions and work related goals, especially those that were entangled with one's identity and thus difficult to replace (Brandstädter, 2006). However, this is not consistent with Argyle (2001) who states that retirees tend to be happier than those who work, especially retirees who had boring or too challenging jobs, the latter being the case with the Doctor.

Health problems may compound a negative perception of retirement, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 36), as is the case with the Doctor, which impacts negatively on the quality of his life (Paúl, 2007). Although the Doctor is financially secure, his health problems contribute to being "unhappily retired." According to Paúl (2007), those retirees who have many health problems are more likely to be depressed, but no depression scale was used to ascertain if this is indeed the case.

From the MLQ it is clear that the Doctor is searching for meaning in his life. In this vein Macnab (1994, pp. 2-3) comments on the waste of skills, experience and resources when individuals retire, as retirees may become people at risk for feeling "useless and bored, of having a limited sense of power and identity in their restricted lifestyle." The Doctor is negative about retirement, frustrated, demoralised and bored. According to Macnab (1994, pp. 2-3), many people may experience retirement as a loss of status, networks and identity as the "very word 'retirement' suggests in-activity, withdrawal, passivity – a time of doing nothing and being free". This is certainly true of the Doctor as well, as he is not meaningfully involved in any other activities, he has not yet found purpose or goals that intrinsically motivate him and he watches a lot of television. This is consistent with the PGIS results, indicating only a slightly above average motivation for purpose-driven activities. As the Doctor does not have any meaningful goals currently, according to Csikszentmihalyi's (2002, p.

36) *FLOW* theory, “psychic entropy” will be the result. “Psychic entropy” can be experienced as “fear, boredom, apathy, anxiety, confusion, jealousy, and a hundred other nuances,” depending on the nature of the goals that were thwarted (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988b, p. 22). *FLOW* as an optimal experience is the opposite of “psychic entropy” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 39). According to the *FLOW* Questionnaire, the Doctor is not engaged in any activities that can be described as bringing about *FLOW*.

According to the Doctor’s story, he seems to have no reason to structure his days and he tends to be involved in passive activities. Diener (1984) reports that a good education does not promise more subjective well-being. This is certainly true if the good education is not used in a meaningful way. The Doctor would like to use his knowledge in a meaningful way and keep on working in retirement, but he has not yet found a way to redeploy his accumulated skills and knowledge. However, his search for purpose in retirement to replace the important previous work-role is of a mild to moderate nature (PGIS). Nevertheless, according to Robitschek (1998), personal growth and change can be taught to clients.

It was difficult to “measure” religious activity as the Doctor did not volunteer any information on this subject. Moody (2002) paints a complicated picture pertaining to religion. The older some people get, the more they withdraw from religious activities such as active church attendance, and the more the shift moves to personal religious practices such as bible study, personal prayer time, or listening to religious programmes on the radio or television. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) is of the opinion that to overcome the challenges of one’s everyday life, a person must learn to become independent of the perceived rewards and punishments of society, and rather reward oneself with personally chosen and intrinsically motivating goals in order to experience *FLOW* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). However, the Doctor has not yet succeeded therein. His legacy is that he is a well-balanced and fair person, thus focused on the self versus being other-centred.

5.10 Conclusion

Taking the research questions into consideration, I can tentatively conclude the following about the Doctor:

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?

Yes, it seems that not experiencing *FLOW* may be detrimental to successfully adapting to retirement.

- Can knowing one's *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society's needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

The results are inconclusive as the Doctor does not experience *FLOW* and this may be one reason for not redeploying his skills in a self-sustaining social entrepreneurial way or in other social projects.

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-matric training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

The results are inconclusive, as the Doctor has not experienced *FLOW* yet.

6 FINDINGS FOR THE ARTIST

6.1 Introduction

The Artist is a bubbly and extraverted housewife and artist. She is a busy, productive and active woman with a full life. She comes across as very people oriented, sincere, alert and interested in many things, and very young at heart. In fact, it is difficult to see her as 76! The Artist has a minimal level of formal post-matric training, but she has attended art classes and held exhibitions here and abroad for numerous years.

6.2 Biographical Questionnaire

The Artist was born in 1934. She worked as a window dresser for 3-4 years before getting married, but now she says she should have studied social work. She has been married for 55 years and has four children, nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren with whom she has close ties. She and her husband are able to live comfortably on a golf estate. He is currently 81 years of age and has a doctorate in business economics. He runs his own business, and he is still actively working as business consultant here and abroad. He travels overseas several times a year. Therefore, there is no “retirement” in this household as the Artist is actively involved in arts and crafts projects such as painting, lithography, and sewing, for herself and for an upliftment project in Danville. She has been an active member of this program for 15 years, teaching the less fortunate to sew, and making items such as handbags, doggy clothing and similar items, which she sells in order to buy groceries for the poor. She is very intent on spreading the gospel and she is very concerned with the problems of the needy who are involved in the project. As a child, she wanted to study fashion design after finishing her matric, but due to personal circumstances, she could not do so. She has been involved in creative projects since childhood. She has been attending art classes for the past 15 years once

or twice per week until recently. Nowadays she only attends the art classes occasionally to further develop her creative skills. She has minor health problems, which do not really interfere with her day-to-day functioning, and she rates her health as eight out of ten.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Biographical Questionnaire: themes and patterns

Key themes: financially secure, healthy, transcending the self (involved in community project and volunteering), life-long learning, no retirement, active aging, very religious, creative

6.3 Interview

The Artist learnt compassion for those less fortunate than herself from an early age from her mother and grandmother. She grew up on a wine farm in the Boland and her mother was especially compassionate towards the farm workers and very engaged in their day-to-day problems on a practical level. Her grandmother's faith still inspires the Artist to this day. Her grandmother, Ouma Kitty, was a very encouraging and supportive kind of person with a great sense of humour. She was also very religious, and she spontaneously prayed and sung praises to the Lord. The Artist still follows the example of her mother and grandmother in mentoring and helping the people in Danville. Working with the latter and being engaged in creative projects make her so happy that time flies when she is busy with it. She is also involved with helping some less fortunate elderly, albeit on a smaller scale than her involvement with the Danville project, like socialising, and taking them on small outings, such as for lunch or tea to get them out of their confined surroundings. The Artist sets goals according to the requirements of her projects (e.g. Danville and creative projects). The goals are usually of a practical nature for her creative or social projects, such as sewing, drawing, painting or etching. These activities fill her

days with meaning and purpose. She feels “awake” when she is busy with her projects or when she is helping people. She goes to Danville once or twice per week, but she also spends up to six hours per week involved in completing creative projects, especially sewing articles to be sold to buy essential goods, such as school shoes or paying school fees for the needy. The Artist feels because of her hectic schedule, she sometimes needs personal space and she can therefore actually enjoy the times her husband needs to be away from home. Her day is structured by her activities, her personal time with God which starts at 6:00 (usually watching a religious program on TV, praying and reading the Bible), and also getting some exercise by brisk walking on the golf-course where she lives, or going to the gym. The Artist has constant communication with God throughout the day, attends church services regularly and finds great meaning in her relationship with God. She believes God guides her and her prayer life is extremely important to her. Jesus is a constant companion. She believes that one should practically demonstrate what one believes in. Thus, religion needs to be lived rather than preached. One’s life should be a “thank you” in response to God’s goodness.

Weekends are often taken up by her activities, but she always makes time for her children, grandchildren, and visiting friends. She tries to rest a bit in the afternoons. Retirement is a relevant concept to her, depending on what a person makes of his or her retirement life. Retirement, to her, is a time to be actively involved in the community or in meaningful endeavours. Successful aging to her means that one fulfils one’s purpose in being sensitive to others’ needs, and helping them on a practical level. To age successfully one needs to find one’s strengths, something that one enjoys and practices. The Artist’s legacy is to lead a thankful life, be sincere, and help others. Her children and grandchildren have also started reaching out to others, due to her example, just as she followed her mother and grandmother’s example.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview that contribute to understanding the impact and application of *FLOW in retirement* are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Interview: themes and patterns

Key themes: creative work, transcending the self, social entrepreneurship, strengths, religion, gratitude, meaningful social ties, goal-setting, meaning, active aging, view of successful aging

6.4 FLOW Questionnaire

The Artist's top three personally meaningful activities are helping people in need, teaching others to do creative work to better their circumstances, and lastly doing creative work herself. Her art group yearly travels to France, Spain or Italy to paint, learn and hold exhibitions. She loves to paint, sew and do lithography, but her favourite activity is to help others and to experience how she makes a difference. This energises her, makes her feel alive inside, and keeps her involved in others' needs. Time tends to fly when she is involved in these projects. As previously stated she has been involved in an upliftment project in Danville for 15 years. It bothers her that Christians are so seldom involved in the plight of the poor. She finds *FLOW* in being involved with others' problems, in 'giving' and in creative pursuits. Therefore, *FLOW* is difficult to quantify, for example occurring once a week, or once a month. Her work is also her passion. She does not belong to any clubs, but she reads magazines to get ideas for sewing projects. Many ideas also come to her spontaneously. She experiences more joy as time passes and is usually very tired at the end of each day. She feels energized by being involved in the activities mentioned and also experiences a keen feeling of purpose and being "alive." Giving back to the community is also a highly spiritual experience of thanksgiving for all the wonderful blessings she receives daily.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview that contribute to understanding the impact and application of *FLOW in retirement* are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

FLOW: impact, meaning and application

Key themes: experiences FLOW, creative and self-transcending work

6.5 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The MLQ is divided into two subscales, namely Presence of Meaning and Searching for Meaning. The MLQ scores range between 5 and 35 for each subscale. “The Presence of Meaning subscale measures the subjective sense that one’s life is meaningful, whereas Search for Meaning measures the drive and orientation toward finding meaning in one’s life” (Steger, et al., 2006, p. 85). Steger (2010) states that the MLQ does not have cut scores, nevertheless, based on a number of studies, he uses a score of 24 as a cut-off point to decide whether Presence of Meaning or Searching for Meaning is more prevalent.

The Artist: Presence of Meaning: 34 in the range of 5-35	The Artist: Searching for Meaning: 5 in the range of 5-35
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RANGE	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35			
	Low															Cut-off point 24		High																
PoM*																																		34
SfM*	5																																	

*PoM means Presence of Meaning and SfM means Searching for Meaning

The Artist scored high above Steger’s (2010) set point of 24. Her extremely high score on the Presence of Meaning scale indicates that she is experiencing her life as very meaningful. Steger (2010) sees someone with these scores as holding traditional values, with strong religious beliefs and understanding what makes her life meaningful.

6.6 Personal Growth Initiative Scale

The PGIS focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsically motivated, active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). The PGIS is positively correlated to an internal locus of control, to assertiveness, and to a problem-focused coping style (Robitschek,

1999). An internal locus of control refers to the fact that change is possible through one's own actions, rather than chance or fate bringing about a specific outcome (Argyle, 2001). Scores range between 0 and 45 and should be seen on a continuum, with higher scores indicating higher levels to which participants intentionally seek out opportunities for growth (Robitschek, 1999). Higher scores thus indicate higher levels of PGI and higher levels of psychological well-being (Robitschek, 1999). The *mean of 25 (rounded off from 24,8) is taken from research by Robitschek, 1998, from a study with 246 highly educated, high income Anglo-American participants, ranging in age from 21 to 66 years. No gender differences for the mean were found. Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) concept of *FLOW* incorporates the PGIS's focus on purpose and intrinsic motivation or an internal locus of control, which result in action.

The Artist Score 42/45	Mean for the PGIS: 25	Artist scored high above the mean of the PGIS, and close to the end of the range.
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Range	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	45
Artist																							42	
Mean													25											

The Artist's high score of 42/45 indicates that she has a high intrinsic motivation or locus of control and thus she purposefully seeks out personally meaningful opportunities for growth.

6.7 Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

This questionnaire, developed by Diener, et al. (1985), assesses people's overall satisfaction with life, and not only specific life areas or domains. Scores range from 5 (low satisfaction) to 35 (high satisfaction). The categories for the SWLS were suggested by Pavot and Diener (2008,1993).

Category	Scores 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied					Scores 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied					20 *	Scores 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied					Scores 26 - 30 Satisfied					Scores 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied											
Range	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35		
Score																																	33

*A score of 20 is indicated as a neutral score by Pavot and Diener (2008, 1993)

The Artist's score of 33/35 indicates that she is extremely satisfied with her present life.

The Artist has a very youthful spirit and a people loving nature, and she is a living reminder that these attributes as well as good physical and mental health diminish or soften the decline related to aging. The aforementioned apparently also widens the gap between actual chronological age and subjective age, i.e. how young one feels (Daatland, 2007). According to Hill (2008), some 70-year olds can be either like 50-year olds or like 90-year olds, which in the Artist's case is confirmed by a very youthful spirit in her 76-year-old body! According to Schaie (1990), age-related decline happens in a more individualised than a uniform way, while Paúl (2007, p. 138) refers to "differential aging". The Artist's bubbly personality and active lifestyle bear witness to the concept of differential aging.

The Artist is fairly healthy, and she gets regular exercise. This is in line with the advice of Baltes and Baltes (1990) that postponing the onset of chronic illness is much less expensive, and thus the focus should be on preventive care. The Artist and her husband are financially secure, and this gives her the opportunity to attend to the plight of the needy.

The Artist has strong and meaningful social ties with friends and family: Rowe and Kahn (1999) report that successful agers in the MacArthur Study have meaningful, caring and rewarding social ties with family and friends, and were more active, felt emotionally safer, and tended to be healthier and also live longer than lonely elders. The value of mentorship as suggested by Freedman (1999) can clearly be seen in the Artist's life, as she followed in the footsteps of her mother and grandmother in terms of self-transcendence.

She is involved in ongoing development of her own potential through continuing with her art classes and holding regular exhibitions overseas, which is a form of life-long learning. According to Hill (2008), a positive ager makes a lifestyle choice to foster psychological well-being, such as personal growth, life-long learning, and relationships; and physical well-being, such as actively seeking ways to preserve or improve health. The Artist is a good example of

Hill's understanding of positive aging. According to Runco (2004), many individuals never fulfil their potential because they have not found an appropriate domain in which to express themselves. It is evident that the Artist has found her calling, as she is combining art with upliftment projects and working in a team (social aspect) for the betterment of society. Being productive and active are important to her. Productive involvement in retirement focuses on hours of productive work, compensated or uncompensated, and helping others (Rowe & Kahn, 1999). The Artist is engaged in social-entrepreneurship, and social entrepreneurs, according to Dees (2009, p. 12) can be seen as special kinds of leaders who "develop and test innovative solutions to social problems" to determine what is "viable, cost-effective, and scalable". Drayton emphasises the innovative and visionary aspect of entrepreneurship, i.e. creative solutions to society's problems that bring about social change (Drayton, 2000). The Artist has proven over a 15-year period that she is committed to changing lives for the better (self-transcendence), not only as social entrepreneur, but also as volunteer. This brings about a sense of fulfilment, rejuvenation, idealism and a sense of new possibilities and meaningful accomplishments as is consistent with Freedman's (1999) findings. Thus, successful aging to the Artist is to fulfil her creative potential and augment this with meaningful social upliftment projects. Her legacy is to model gratitude and helping behaviour, which displays an other-centred perspective.

Runco (2004) sees creativity as a form of self-expression and problem solving, while Young (2006) emphasises the innovative aspect. The latter is often meant in the sense of inventing a solution to an everyday problem or frustration in the market place (Henderson, 2004), as the Artist demonstrates by selling crafts for funds to buy necessities for the needy.

The Artist finds comfort, inspiration, meaning and purpose in a personal relationship with Jesus, such as through prayer, scripture reading, doing good to others, and living gratefully. This is consistent with Emmons' (2006, p.69)

research that found that spiritual and religious goals focus on purpose, meaningfulness and to “maintain a relationship to the sacred”. According to Emmons (2006), spiritual goals lead to greater satisfaction than more material and self-focused goals would. The Artist is working in her strengths, which is consistent with Winseman, et al. (2004) and Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007) who advocate a focus on strengths rather than developing lesser areas lacking in natural ability.

For the Artist, *FLOW* has to do with helping others in a self-transcending manner, as discussed previously. Her creative work, religion and meaningful social ties add to *FLOW* and well-being. As delineated in Chapter 1, the whole concept of *FLOW* originated when Csikszentmihalyi (1975), as part of his doctoral research, observed male artists working, sculpting and painting. These artists were absorbed in their activities, and intrinsically motivated, as none expected their paintings to make them rich or famous. In the same vein the Artist uses her creative talent to enrich her own and others’ lives in a meaningful way. *FLOW* by its very nature is innovative and leads to growth of the self and thus *FLOW* activities are experienced as meaningful because they are freely chosen (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Other consequences of *FLOW*, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1993), are enhanced creativity and self-esteem, peak performances, talent development, increased productivity and motivation, all of which the Artist bears testimony to.

6.10 Conclusion

The Artist is a good example of living with purpose or “making” meaning, as Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 3) so aptly put it, “optimal experience is thus something that we *make* happen”. Taking the research questions into consideration, I can tentatively conclude the following for the Artist:

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?

Yes, it seems that experiencing *FLOW* is definitely promoting successful aging in the Artist's life.

- Can knowing one's *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society's needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

Yes, the Artist is involved in self-sustaining social entrepreneurial projects and *FLOW* seems to play a significant role.

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-matric training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

Yes, the Artist is using her post-matric training and skills in social entrepreneurial projects and *FLOW* seems to play a significant role.

7 FINDINGS FOR THE CHEMIST

7.1 Introduction

My first and lasting impression of the Chemist is that he is driven by his belief in God, like Nehemia who is his role model, to see his social entrepreneurial vision put into action. He is passionate about social entrepreneurial activities for upliftment purposes. The Chemist is an open and approachable type of person and a very good conversationalist, despite seeing himself as between an introvert and extravert. He comes across as quite extraverted. I interviewed the Chemist at his small factory in an industrial area of Pretoria.

7.2 Biographical Questionnaire

The Chemist was born in 1938, and he is currently an energetic 72 years old. He has been married for 42 years and has four grown children, three sons and a daughter. His wife is a homemaker. He does not see himself as “retired” and he still works in his own factory, making all kinds of herbs and spices, golden syrup, and developing other food entities, such as instant food. He grew up in a very poor family after the depression of 1933 and had to leave school in standard 8 to work in the post office. He realised however that low academic qualifications would get him nowhere and a few years later he returned to school, caught up accounting from standard 6, matriculated, and went on to finish a masters degree in Chemistry at the now University of the North West. This was in part also due to a motivating Life Coach, and a book he read called “Die Atoom” (The Atom) which kindled an interest in science. Einstein was also a great inspiration. Since then he has seen science as a detective would, almost like Sherlock Holmes, uncovering new scientific knowledge. At that time he was not very entrepreneurial. He worked as a water pollution expert (as chemist and hydrologist), but it was only when he was employed by the then Oilseed Board that his entrepreneurial skills came to the fore. He had to find

application and processing possibilities for various kinds of seeds, e.g. sunflower seed, groundnuts, and soya beans, and he also went on various overseas tours to do his research. When the Oilseed Board shut its doors in 1995, he “retired” at the age of 57 years. He tried his hand as entrepreneur at various small business ventures, but he really started to succeed in 2001 when he bought a small herbs and spices factory. Until recently, (he sold this section of his business a few months ago) he produced 3 tons of golden syrup per day! He is fairly healthy and rates his health as 8 out of 10, although he is diabetic and suffers from high blood pressure. He and his wife are able to live financially comfortably in their own home.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed in the results section of this chapter.

Biographical Questionnaire: themes and patterns

Key themes: Lives financially comfortably, does not believe in the concept of retirement, social entrepreneur, lifelong learning, good social relations, healthy despite diabetes

7.3 Interview

The Chemist does not think of himself as a retiree as he works a full day from 8:00 till 16:00 every weekday. He definitely has no plans to “retire” in the traditional sense of the word as long as he is healthy, and he sees retirement almost as a health risk! He believes one should never ever retire, but keep contributing to society until one can no longer do this or until the day one dies. A Christian may never ever retire in his view. Being involved in volunteering or other community based projects (according to him through job creation) is the essence of what it means to be a Christian. Retiring means one loses one’s passion and vision. Apart from this, working with the day to day problems of his small business necessitates that one solves problems, plans and remains active, thereby keeping mentally alert as well. It is also necessary to remain a

life long learner. His idea of the term successful aging means to model one's passion and religious faith and to make a difference. To let one's light shine.

His preferred activities are to develop innovative and new products for his two-partner business. He sees his hobby as his work and vice versa. He absolutely loves what he does and sees product development from a scientific point of view as a kind of scientific detective work, putting everything together, such as the ingredients to make syrup, cookie pre-mixes and the like. He loses track of time when he is busy doing this as this energizes him very much.

He structures each day in order to run his business and works a full day as previously stated. At night he attends to email and the administration associated with his work. He regularly sets goals for himself in terms of his job, but the most essential goal is that of furthering the gospel and the message of Jesus Christ. Just like the prophet Nehemia, he wants to work with the Bible in his one hand and a trowel in the other, meaning he wants to spread the gospel by creating jobs. Unemployment is a huge problem in this country. This is the most important thing in his life. One way of achieving this is by creating new job opportunities through developing new products. This he considers being his strength. This definitely puts him in *FLOW*! He wants and needs to give back to society because he is so blessed: with his family, health, knowledge, opportunities, and his work. Strong social ties are also important, with his family, friends, church community, and even his neighbours. He sees it as part of thanking the Lord, and it is important to him to be like a diamond or a light on a stand that reflects the light of his religion, that is due to his gratitude for all his blessings. He believes in the concept of ubuntu, i.e. fostering the well-being of the group by God's grace. Therefore he experiences his "retirement" years as meaningful.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview that contribute to understanding the impact and application of *FLOW in retirement* are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Interview: themes and patterns

Key themes: Social entrepreneurship, self-transcendence, not a retiree, active aging, work as hobby, cognitive stimulation, structures day, religious, strengths, mentally alert, life-long learner, goal-setting, strengths, gratitude, no clubs, successful aging

7.4 FLOW Questionnaire

The Chemist's top three meaningful goals are to contribute to the development of society, to contribute to the transference of knowledge and skills to benefit others and to help others via entrepreneurial projects to lead a better life and earn some money, through job creation. He definitely does not want to go to his grave with all his accumulated knowledge. He wants to contribute to society via product development, creative thinking and encouraging entrepreneurial projects. This puts him in *FLOW* and he feels like a Columbus that explores and finds new territory. He also feels like a dog that chases a hare, excited, energised and stimulated when he does this. Time just flies! He experiences *FLOW* at least once a day. He is not an active member of any club. He reads a lot in his field of interest as he is knowledge driven as a scientist. He sees himself as an idea generator. *FLOW* brings health, brain stimulation, and energy into his life.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire that contribute to understanding the impact and application of *FLOW* in retirement are highlighted in the box on the next page and will be discussed in the results section of this chapter.

FLOW: impact and application

Key themes: Creativity, idea generator, social entrepreneurship, transcending the self

7.5 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The MLQ is divided into two subscales, namely Presence of Meaning and Searching for Meaning. The MLQ scores range between 5 and 35 for each subscale. “The Presence of Meaning subscale measures the subjective sense that one’s life is meaningful, whereas Search for Meaning measures the drive and orientation toward finding meaning in one’s life” (Steger, et al., 2006, p. 85). Steger (2010) states that the MLQ does not have cut scores, nevertheless, based on a number of studies, he uses a score of 24 as a cut-off point to decide whether Presence of Meaning or Searching for Meaning is more prevalent.

The Chemist: Presence of Meaning: 35 in the range of 5-35	The Chemist: Searching for Meaning: 7 in the range of 5-35
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RANGE	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35				
	Low																			Cut-off point		24	High												
PoM*																																			35
SfM*				7																															

*PoM means Presence of Meaning and SfM means Searching for Meaning

The Chemist’s extremely high score of 35/35 on the Presence of Meaning scale is above the cut-off score of 24 suggested by Steger (2010). The Chemist is thus experiencing his life as very meaningful. The low score for the subscale Searching for Meaning indicates that the Chemist is not actively seeking for meaning in his life. This probably indicates that he is experiencing retirement and the work he is currently doing as highly meaningful. He experiences his life to be purpose driven by his faith, and thus there is not much reason from his perspective to still be searching for meaning. Steger (2010) also sees someone with these scores as holding traditional values, with strong religious beliefs, understanding what makes his life meaningful, as is the case with the Chemist.

7.6 Personal Growth Initiative Scale

The PGIS focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsically motivated, active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). The PGIS is positively correlated to an internal locus of control, to assertiveness, and to a problem-focused coping style (Robitschek, 1999). An internal locus of control refers to the fact that change is possible through one's own actions, rather than chance or fate bringing about a specific outcome (Argyle, 2001). Scores range between 0 and 45 and should be seen on a continuum, with higher scores indicating higher levels of intentionally seeking out opportunities for growth (Robitschek, 1999). Higher scores thus indicate higher levels of PGI and higher levels of psychological well-being (Robitschek, 1999). The *mean of 25 (rounded off from 24,8) is taken from research by Robitschek, 1998, from a study with 246 highly educated, high income Anglo-American participants, ranging in age from 21 to 66 years. No gender differences for the mean were found. Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) concept of *FLOW* incorporates the PGIS's focus on purpose and intrinsic motivation or an internal locus of control, which result in action being taken.

The Chemist Score 43/45	Mean for the PGIS: 25	Result: The Chemist scored close to the endpoint of the range and high above the mean.
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Range	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	45
Chemist																								43
Mean													25											

The Chemist's high score of 43/45 indicates a high incentive or intrinsic motivation for personal growth.

7.7 Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

This questionnaire, developed by Diener, et al. (1985), assesses people's overall satisfaction with life, and not only specific life areas or domains. Scores range from 5 (low satisfaction) to 35 (high satisfaction). The categories for the SWLS were suggested by Pavot and Diener (2008, 1993).

Category	Scores 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied					Scores 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied					20 *	Scores 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied					Scores 26 - 30 Satisfied					Scores 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied												
Range	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35			
Score																																		33

*A score of 20 is indicated as a neutral score by Pavot and Diener (2008, 1993)

strengthen relationships, give to and receive from others, and practice gratitude. He sees himself as healthy, despite suffering from diabetes. This is consistent with research that confirms that subjectively evaluated health has a greater impact on quality of life than objectively rated health, such as by a medical doctor (Paúl, 2007).

Creative thinking is therefore important, as social innovation often springs from “combining existing elements in new ways” (Young, 2006, p. 69) In the Chemist’s case, he intertwines themes of combining religion or spirituality with creativity and job creation for the greater good. The Chemist sees himself as an idea generator. The theme of social entrepreneurship runs through all three sections of his interview, like a golden thread. This life theme also displays some of his strengths. The Chemist can be seen as a pattern-change social entrepreneur with his vision of creating jobs through entrepreneurship. “The job of the pattern-change social entrepreneur is to recognize whenever a part of society is stuck in an inefficient or harmful pattern, to conceive a better and safe alternative, to make that vision realistic and then a refined reality, and then to persuade his or her entire society to make the leap to this new way. Spotting and solving these problems require the entrepreneur because only he is married to a vision and cannot rest until it has transformed all of society” (Drayton, 2000, p. 2). According to Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007), strengths can be divided into two categories, intrapersonal (hidden personal resources such as creativity, intelligence, curiosity and resilience) and interpersonal (having effective social relationships), of which the Chemist shows both kinds of strengths in his day to day life and social entrepreneurial projects. Featherman, et al. (1990, p. 52) concluded that “[t]he elderly may be needed to make society function, in an everyday sense, and not in just some abstract or intellectualized way,” and the Chemist seems to be a good example of combining the practical with the creative in making a change by developing new products. A strong positive relationship between intrinsic religion (not using religion as a way to benefit self, such as to get social support) and spirituality and meaning was found by Steger, et al. (2006). The Chemist is a

good example of being intrinsically motivated by his religious beliefs to benefit the greater good.

The Chemist repeatedly stated his gratitude for his blessings, as consistent with Emmons (2006) who states that religious and spiritual people tend to feel more gratitude, awe, reverence, wonder and forgiveness than non-religious or non-spiritual people. The Chemist is focused on a purpose-driven life, i.e. upliftment via entrepreneurship by his religious goals, and according to Emmons (2006, p. 69) spiritual and religious goals focus on purpose, meaningfulness and to “maintain a relationship to the sacred,” e.g. finding and following God’s will for one’s life. The Chemist views his social entrepreneurial projects as doing God’s will. This leads to greater satisfaction than more material and self-focused goals, according to Emmons (2006), and the results on the SWLS, indicate that the Chemist is extremely satisfied with his life. According to Argyle (2001, p. 162), a strong relationship between happiness and “internal control, self-esteem, optimism, and purpose in life” exist. Purpose in life depends on goal commitment, and realistic and attainable goals, and the Chemist seems to set intrinsically motivated goals and follow through with attaining these goals. This is consistent with his high score on the PGIS. He is intrinsically motivated by his faith to make a difference in society.

The Chemist finds *FLOW* in his day to day existence as his work is his hobby, and vice versa. According to McGregor and Little (1998, pp. 494 & 505), there is a relationship between “doing well” and happiness as well as between “being yourself” or “project integrity” and meaning. In their research they found that project efficacy, i.e. the likelihood of success of a project, is associated with raised levels of happiness. Project integrity, i.e. congruence between projects and “core aspects of the self,” (McGregor & Little, 1998, pp. 495 & 504) resulted in higher levels of experienced meaning. These findings are evident on the Chemist’s high scores on the MLQ and SWLS. Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 244) defines meaning in the following way: “An experience is *meaningful* when it is related positively to a person’s goals. Life has meaning when we

have a purpose that justifies our strivings, and when experience is ordered.” Csikszentmihalyi (2002, pp. 214-215) contends that achieving a challenging goal and putting in the effort to get the necessary skills to achieve it, results in a “unified flow experience” therefore “actions and feelings will be in harmony...and each activity will ‘make sense’ in the present, as well as in view of the past and the future. In such a way, it is possible to give meaning to one’s entire life,” and find purpose...as the Chemist demonstrates. His legacy is other-centred, namely upliftment through job creation. Thus to him, successful aging means to let one’s “light shine” and live one’s passion – and to never ever retire!

7.10 Conclusion

The Chemist is a living example of Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) suggestion that an optimal experience happens through using one’s strengths, former skills and training creatively. He is a social entrepreneur *par excellence* through his vision of creating work, by creatively using his former skills and strengths as a chemist.

Taking the research questions into consideration, I can tentatively conclude the following for the Chemist:

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?

Yes, it seems that finding *FLOW* is providing the Chemist with the impetus to carry on with his work and is congruent with his belief of never retiring. The Chemist does not believe in the concept of retirement.

- Can knowing one’s *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society’s needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

Yes, the Chemist is involved in a self-sustaining social entrepreneurial project, which satisfies some of society's needs.

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-matric training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

Yes, the Chemist experiences *FLOW* by using his previous training, skills and education for the greater good in his retirement years. Experiencing *FLOW* perpetuates his motivation to continue being involved in his community's problems and needs.

8 FINDINGS FOR THE ENTREPRENEUR

8.1 Introduction

The Entrepreneur is a warm and friendly person, juggling ten balls at once, or so it seems! She juggled this interview with other business appointments and was in a bit of a hurry. She nevertheless gave her full cooperation. She has trouble with her leg at the moment due to arthritis, and she struggles to walk with ease. The interview was held at my (the researcher's) home for more privacy as the Entrepreneur is presently sharing a rented apartment with a (female) friend in order to cut costs. The Entrepreneur is a good example of a person who currently experiences grave financial problems, and who despite this still experiences *FLOW*.

8.2 Biographical Questionnaire

The Entrepreneur was born in 1943. She is currently a 66 year old entrepreneur, life coach and ex-teacher, who has through preference and through financial circumstances never considered retirement as an option. She is divorced from her husband, a former lecturer, who left her 5 years ago for one of his students. She was also involved in a few derailed business ventures. She experiences herself as someone in her thirties and definitely not as a retiree. She has three adult children, a daughter and two sons, all in their thirties, all with whom she has good relations.

She is currently struggling to get a permanent or relief teaching position to sponsor her main interest, coaching and people development, for businesses. The aim is to develop employees' strengths and creative thinking skills, within a company structure, and at the same time to achieve a return on investment for the company. In this way she is able to build a data base reflecting the companies' strengths. This also fosters intrinsic motivation in employees. She

likes to do coaching within a Christian context. This is her passion and she would like to pursue this until the day she dies, however, she also needs the stability of a secure income.

She currently has grave concerns about her financial situation, due to a few derailed entrepreneurial projects. She is, however, trying several ways of remedying the situation by selling short term insurance, and she is looking for a teaching post as previously mentioned (although she dislikes teaching due to the repetition and routine work of a school post). She also develops curricula for businesses, in business management. She would prefer to coach people full-time, and sees herself as a fully-fledged entrepreneur.

She structures each day and starts to work in her home office at 8:00 and she works until the afternoon, in between making appointments and networking. Every night before she goes to bed, she makes a to-do list for the next day. She then prioritizes the list. Therefore, she sets goals for herself which are regularly updated and flexible. Helping people to be all they can be, financial independence and helping her own children (financially and emotionally) are her top three goals.

She holds two honours degrees, one in History and one in Political Science, as well as a post graduate diploma in Life Coaching. She does not think retirement is a relevant concept since she believes that it leads to the isolation and stagnation of active people. From her perspective, to age successfully means that one should remain active and one should be involved in living one's passion as well as contributing to society.

Her health is fairly good; she rates it as seven out of ten as she suffers from severe arthritis that makes walking difficult and she also had a hip replacement. She has been in a wheelchair previously due to severe backache before the hip replacement that led to the operation. She believes one should

remain positive despite setbacks and look after one's health as this is a Christian value.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Biographical Questionnaire: themes and patterns

<i>Key themes: financial hardship, social entrepreneurship, social relations, goals, health problems, religion, transcending the self</i>

8.3 Interview

The last time the Entrepreneur held a full time teaching post was about eight years ago. Since that time she has been involved in entrepreneurial projects and business ventures, some with more success than others. Therefore it is not possible for her to describe "retirement." It is not a relevant concept for her. She never wants to "retire" in the conventional sense of the word. She feels 30 years old despite the fact that she is already 66. Her preferred activities are to read about and develop people in terms of promoting meaningful living and wealth creation, and including such concepts as health and strengths. When she is busy with this, time flies, and she "forgets" to eat or sleep. She sees herself as a skills development facilitator, and she also experiences this as a calling. She furthermore sees people development as a creative thought process, which also has to do with EQ (emotional intelligence) and being able to communicate clearly.

The Entrepreneur's definition of successful aging is to have a hobby or favoured meaningful activity, to be active and to make a difference in the community. Having a relationship with Christ and religion are very precious for her and she is in constant communication with the Lord in prayer. When she was young she wanted to become a minister, but ended up as a life coach and entrepreneur. She came to realise that one can also serve the Lord and have a

positive impact on others without necessarily having to be a minister. She has previously done upliftment work in various rural communities such as Kwazulu-Natal, but she is currently not actively involved in such work.

She belongs to a more charismatic church but she is not involved in any church activities since she sees her mission in life as developing people's creativity in the broadest possible sense. This means to help them be all they can be in their work environment and in a Christian context. Her legacy is demonstrating her faith and beliefs by the way she lives.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Interview: themes and patterns

<i>Key themes: transcending the self, religion, creativity, strengths</i>

8.4 FLOW Questionnaire

The Entrepreneur's top three meaningful activities, as discussed during the interview are reading about and actually being involved in people's development, and adding value and meaning to people's lives. She sums this up as "loving and serving". Gardening is a hobby, despite the limitations of arthritis.

She experiences *FLOW* when she is coaching people or developing a set of courses, and because she is so immersed in these activities, time passes almost unnoticed. It is difficult to pinpoint how many times per day she experiences *FLOW*, as it is rather determined by the task or activity she is currently involved in. This happens more or less once a week. Unfortunately it is not always possible to work in her *FLOW* area, and she gets impatient when she has to do other work that is not her passion. For her the benefit of working in her *FLOW* area is that it brings her to live her dream, her life's purpose. She

below the cut-off point of 24, which indicates that the Entrepreneur is not *actively* searching for more meaning in her life. Steger (2010) sees someone with these type of scores as holding traditional values, with strong religious beliefs and understanding what makes her life meaningful.

8.6 Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)

The PGIS focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsically motivated, active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). The PGIS is positively correlated to an internal locus of control, to assertiveness, and to a problem-focused coping style (Robitschek, 1999). An internal locus of control refers to the fact that change is possible through one’s own actions, rather than chance or fate bringing about a specific outcome (Argyle, 2001). Scores range between 0 and 45 and should be seen on a continuum, with higher scores indicating higher levels on which participants intentionally seek out opportunities for growth (Robitschek, 1999). Higher scores thus indicate higher levels of PGI and higher levels of psychological well-being (Robitschek, 1999).The *mean of 25 (rounded off from 24,8) is taken from research by Robitschek, 1998, from a study with 246 highly educated, high income Anglo-American participants, ranging in age from 21 to 66 years. No gender differences for the mean were found. Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) concept of *FLOW* incorporates the PGIS’s focus on purpose and intrinsic motivation or an internal locus of control, which result in action.

The Entrepreneur Score 39/45	Mean for the PGIS: 25	The Entrepreneur scored high above the mean score for the PGIS and closer to the end of the range.
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Range	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	45
Entrepreneur	39																							
Mean	25																							

The Entrepreneur’s score of 39/45 indicates high intrinsic motivation for seeking out opportunities for personal growth.

8.7 Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

This questionnaire, developed by Diener, et al. (1985), assesses people’s overall satisfaction with life, and not only specific life areas or domains. Scores range from 5 (low satisfaction) to 35 (high satisfaction). The categories for the SWLS were suggested by Pavot and Diener (2008,1993).

has good social relations, solves day to day problems and thus keeps mentally fit, despite having some debilitating health problems. Transcending the self is experienced in active religious activities, and social entrepreneurship.

Argyle (2001) observes that purpose in life strongly correlates with happiness, and religion. However, religion is only one source of purpose. Other sources of purpose are working or having a career, voluntary work, family obligations, and having long-term goals. This has many beneficial consequences for subjective well-being, although there is only a modest positive effect between religion and happiness (Argyle, 2001). The Entrepreneur has successfully combined the aspects of religion, purpose, passion, creativity and strengths into her daily work-life.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), experiencing *FLOW* during work, optimising one's potential in the process, as well as fostering positive social relationships improves one's quality of life, because work has set goals, feedback, structure, and challenges which provide opportunities to get fully absorbed in the task at hand. The Entrepreneur seems to experience such quality of life by leading a purpose driven life, which entails following intrinsically motivated and self-transcending goals on a daily basis, as Csikszentmihalyi suggests. Argyle (2001) found that measures of purpose in life correlate strongly with happiness, and it is clear from the high scores on the MLQ and the SHS that the Entrepreneur experiences her life as meaningful and that she is a very happy person. People who are often in *FLOW* at work feel "strong," "active," "creative," "concentrated," and "motivated" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 158). This is consistent with the Entrepreneur's experience of *FLOW* during work. Despite finding herself in dire financial straits at the moment, her happiness is more affected by her children and their well-being than money. Despite the setbacks, she is still able to experience *FLOW*. Since her legacy is other-centred, namely living her faith to benefit and build up others, she experiences meaning in life (MLQ), she is intrinsically motivated and purpose-driven (PGIS), satisfied with her life (SWLS) and happy (SHS).

8.10 Conclusion

The Entrepreneur is an example of Csikszentmihalyi (2002) suggestion that an optimal experience happens through using one's strengths, former skills and training creatively despite financial hardship.

Taking the research questions into consideration, I can tentatively conclude the following for the Entrepreneur:

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?

Yes, it seems that experiencing *FLOW* is providing the impetus to carry on with her work and age successfully, while experiencing positive affect, such as meaning, satisfaction and happiness (MLQ, SWLS, SHS) and not depression, as she is forced to continue working due to financial worries. According to the Entrepreneur, she does not acknowledge the concept of retirement, thus it is not possible to answer the question about successful adaptation to retirement as she is still working. She is pro-active and intrinsically motivated (PGIS), rather than reactive, to prevent poverty in old age.

- Can knowing one's *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society's needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

Yes, the Entrepreneur is involved in a self-sustaining social entrepreneurial project, which also provides an income. No, she is not involved in volunteering projects.

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-matric training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

Yes, the Entrepreneur is using her previous training, skills and education for the greater good as well as a source of income for herself.

9 FINDINGS FOR THE TEACHER

9.1 Introduction

The Teacher is an upbeat, people loving, practical and activity oriented lady, who does not like to be idle for too long. She sees herself as a “do-er.” The interview was held at her home, over several cups of tea. Later she showed me, the researcher, a garden path she built herself, using paving blocks and cement. She has never attempted anything like this before, and it came out beautifully constructed without the use of a water level! She was a music teacher for several years, but these days she prefers to listen to, rather than make, music.

9.2 Biographical Questionnaire

The Teacher was born in 1949. She is currently 61 years old and she retired in 2009. The company she worked for went bankrupt and she decided it was a good time to retire as well. The Teacher is married but estranged from her husband. She lives alone in Pretoria while her husband lives in another province as per mutual consent. His health is deteriorating and becoming a concern, and at this stage she travels to and fro between their two homes on a regular basis to help him. She divorced her husband a few years ago, but remarried him two years ago for financial security, by mutual agreement. She is able to meet her needs on her husband’s pension (a retired banking economist) but she cannot afford to live extravagantly. She also has a few annuities and investments to fall back on. She is not currently involved in any work for financial gain as it is not necessary. Her previous work was quite demanding, keeping her occupied from 6 o’ clock in the morning until 6 o’ clock at night when her workday ended and therefore she wants to enjoy life more now that she is retired. She enjoys not having such a busy schedule any more and thus she does not structure her day too much other than making time for physical exercise (walking with a neighbour) and doing house chores. Doing

house chores has never bothered her and she feels she is quite content with life. She does not have specific goals other than wanting to travel and going on vacation. She also plans on keeping herself busy with knitting, possibly as a community project, and doing some renovations around the home.

The Teacher attained a BMus degree at a university when she was 20 years old and made a living by giving piano lessons at a private school for 12 years. She and her husband adopted two children as babies, and when they were little she gave private piano lessons from home, but this was never very lucrative, although she enjoyed it. When the children left school she started doing administrative work in the morning. She continued with this until she retired. According to the Teacher, retirement is still a relevant concept since it allows her to do things she enjoys, like knitting and gardening or playing the piano and having less stress, the latter being inevitable when one works. To her, successful aging means that one is content with who you are and what you have, not necessarily ecstatically happy, but happy with where you are in life. It also means to live a thankful life and have a positive attitude despite adversity. The Teacher's adopted son (19 years old) died in an accident 6 years ago and her loss was very hard to overcome, but the Teacher's friends and her relationship with God helped her to pull through. She has a good relationship with her adopted divorced adult daughter, 31 years old now, who is financially independent and lives in another city. There are no grandchildren yet. The Teacher is very healthy and takes no medication. She rates her health as ten out of ten.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire are highlighted in the box on the next page and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Biographical Questionnaire: themes and patterns

Key themes: short term goals, gratitude, healthy, do-er (activity oriented), social ties, functional creativity, financial security, positive view of retirement, active aging, no structure, successful aging, gratitude, religious

9.3 Interview

The Teacher finds her retirement peaceful and it gives her an opportunity to do what she likes, such as socialising with friends and family, and being there for them when they need her. She feels that she needs others to flourish since it makes her happy to socialise. She does not want to give music lessons or work outside the home any more, as this would restrict her freedom. Currently she is not involved in any community projects, but she has begun chaperoning an elderly lady to her Bible study classes once a week, when she is in Pretoria. Once she commits to something, she feels she needs to be trustworthy. She is willing to take part in volunteer activities that do not require ongoing commitment. Generally speaking, she prefers to be asked for help instead of volunteering her services. She has tried to become involved in some church projects, but this was not very fulfilling. She actually experienced it as limiting and she believes that one should “be or live” church, rather than just attend church. Her definition of successful aging is to have a positive influence on others, to be mindful and concerned about others, and to focus on relationships. The most important thing is being available when friends and family need her. Having a relationship with God is extremely important to her, and this has helped her to accept her son’s death and her divorce. She feels that God is blessing her much and she feels grateful.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview are highlighted in the box on the next page and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Interview: themes and patterns

Key themes: active social relations, people oriented, creativity (functional), transcending the self: beginning to volunteer, positive view of retirement, religious, hobbies, no clubs,

9.4 FLOW Questionnaire

The Teacher does not partake in any activities that result in *FLOW*, but she finds peace, contentment and joy in doing everyday things, such as cleaning her house. She sees herself as a doer, and therefore does not really enjoy reading very much. She enjoys listening to music more than making music these days, as well as knitting and gardening, but she does not experience *FLOW* when she is busy doing these activities. What she does experience, however, is a feeling of peace and contentment. She does not belong to a club, but thoroughly enjoys socialising with others. She wants to get more involved in helping others. She sees herself as a people's person, although she also needs space to recharge her batteries at times.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire that contribute to understanding the impact and application of *FLOW in retirement* are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

***FLOW*: impact and application**

Key themes: micro-flow in everyday activities

9.5 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The MLQ is divided into two subscales, namely Presence of Meaning and Searching for Meaning. The MLQ scores range between 5 and 35 for each subscale. "The Presence of Meaning subscale measures the subjective sense that one's life is meaningful, whereas Search for Meaning measures the drive and orientation toward finding meaning in one's life" (Steger, et al., 2006, p. 85). Steger (2010) states that the MLQ does not have cut scores,

nevertheless, based on a number of studies, he uses a score of 24 as a cut-off point to decide whether Presence of Meaning or Searching for Meaning is more prevalent.

The Teacher: Presence of Meaning: 30 in the range of 5-35	The Teacher: Searching for Meaning: 24 in the range of 5-35
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RANGE	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
	Low																			Cut-off point		24	High								
PoM*	30																														
SfM*																				24											

*PoM means Presence of Meaning and SfM means Searching for Meaning

The Teacher's score of 30/35 for the subscale Presence of Meaning is much higher than the cut-off point of 24/35, but equal to the score of the cut-off point for the subscale Searching for Meaning, which suggest that she is not actively searching for meaning, since she already experiences her life as meaningful. Steger (2010) does not have an explicit explanation for someone with this type of score.

9.6 Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)

The PGIS focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsically motivated, active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). The PGIS is positively correlated to an internal locus of control, to assertiveness, and to a problem-focused coping style (Robitschek, 1999). An internal locus of control refers to the fact that change is possible through one's own actions, rather than chance or fate bringing about a specific outcome (Argyle, 2001). Scores range between 0 and 45 and should be seen on a continuum, with higher scores indicating higher levels of intentionally seeking out opportunities for growth (Robitschek, 1999). Higher scores thus indicate higher levels of PGI and higher levels of psychological well-being (Robitschek, 1999).The *mean of 25 (rounded off from 24,8) is taken from research by Robitschek, 1998, from a study with 246 highly educated, high income Anglo-American participants, ranging in age from 21 to 66 years. No gender differences for the mean were found. Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) concept of *FLOW* incorporates the PGIS's focus on purpose and intrinsic motivation or an internal locus of control, which result in action.

The Teacher's score of 24/28 on the SHS, which is 2 points higher than the mean score of 22/28, indicates that she is fairly happy with her life.

9.9 The Results of the Findings for the Teacher

The Teacher experiences her life as meaningful (MLQ), she is happy (SHS) and satisfied with her life as a retiree (SWLS). This is consistent with Argyle (2001) who states that retirees tend to be happier than those who work, especially retirees who had boring or too challenging jobs, the latter being the case with the Teacher. She is not intentionally and actively seeking out new growth opportunities for this phase of her life, such as volunteering (PGIS). However, from the interview it is clear that she prefers to be asked for assistance rather than to volunteer.

The Teacher is activity oriented, with a host of day to day short-term goals which structures her day. The Teacher describes herself as not ecstatically happy, but content and Lyubomirsky (2001) states that almost universally included in the concept of happiness are aspects such as joy, contentment, well-being, and meaning. This is consistent with the Teacher's positive experience of retirement. Successful aging to her is doing things one enjoys as is reflected by the score on the SHS. She also enjoys not working and she does not need to supplement her income. Adding to her well-being (SWLS) is good health.

Her creativity and activity levels are apparent in the functional things she does to beautify her surroundings, such as building a garden path or working in her garden. This is consistent with Cohen's (2000, p. 101) research that suggests that creativity can be public or private: "public creativity" involves "creative acts that are recognized and celebrated as such by your own community, culture or beyond." On the other hand, "personal creativity" involves "something new, perhaps a product or idea, or simply a fresh perspective; something that you have brought into being that has enhanced your life and given you

satisfaction,” something that is only intended to be important to yourself or your immediate circle of family or friends (Cohen, 2000, p. 101).

She is a very practical person, and therefore she does not particularly like reading, or “life-long learning” of a more theoretical nature. This is consistent with activity theory which focuses on remaining active and pursuing social relationships for as long as possible (Duay & Bryan, 2006). The more active aging comes into play, i.e. on a physical, psychological, and a social level, the more successful one is at aging according to Friedrich (2001). She is a people’s person, and invests in building and retaining relationships where possible. Supportive social relationships act as a buffer against stress, or depression and in the process promote healthy life choices, from avoiding too much alcohol consumption to sticking to sound medical advice (Rowe & Kahn, 1999), and these relationships helped her to cope with her initial divorce and the death of her son. Diener (1984) reports mixed results in terms of the importance of religion in subjective well-being, however, social relations are good indicators of subjective well-being, according to him.

Transcending the self is seen in Teacher taking the first steps in terms of volunteering, and the comfort she derives from her strong religious faith. Steger, et al. (2006) report that religion increases feelings of leading a meaningful (consistent with the Teacher’s score on the MLQ) and purposeful life (consistent with the Teacher’s score on the PGIS). Taking part in religious activities fosters well-being (Steger, et al., 2006) as is evident from the interview and the Teacher’s score on the SWLS which indicate that she is satisfied with her life.

The Teacher does not report any activities that put her in *FLOW*, but she nevertheless finds contentment and joy in her day-to-day activities, such as housework or listening to music. This is consistent with the concept of micro-*FLOW*, which consists of the daily, almost routine common experiences or patterns of behaviour that create structure and meaning in one’s life

(Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Additionally, these experiences can be with or without a specific purpose, such as listening to music. Csikszentmihalyi and Graef (1975) advise that enjoyable trivial activities, at a “lower level of complexity” and therefore requiring less skill, can produce “micro flow” throughout one’s day. *FLOW* exists on a continuum and varies from extremely low to extremely high complexity (Csikszentmihalyi & Graef, 1975). They also found that people show unique personal preferences for micro-*FLOW* activities, thus experiencing and describing the intensity of micro-*FLOW* experiences seems to be a subjective process.

9.10 Conclusion

There were some mixed results for the Teacher, however, I can tentatively draw the following conclusions in terms of the research questions:

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?

The Teacher reports experiencing micro-*FLOW*, nevertheless, she feels happy and content in retirement as is evident from the qualitative (biographical and *FLOW* questionnaires and the interview and the quantitative data (MLQ, PGIS, SWLS, SHS). Micro-*FLOW* thus seems to be one aspect of successful aging and adaptation to retirement.

- Can knowing one’s *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society’s needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

The Teacher does not use her micro-*FLOW* interests or her previous qualifications in retirement. She has taken the first steps in terms of volunteering, but she is not actively involved in society’s challenges and needs yet.

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-school training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

No, the Teacher is not using her previous qualifications in retirement. She is not experiencing *FLOW*, only micro-*FLOW* and this does not seem to promote involvement in society's needs and problems in the retirement years.

10 FINDINGS FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

10.1 Introduction

My interview with the Psychologist (a retired research psychologist) was conducted at his home on a Saturday afternoon. He is currently working on a temporary contract basis, and understandably, could not “take off” two hours during office hours for this interview. He is a friendly yet reserved introvert, a true scientist, and his conversation tended to be precise and to the point. Nevertheless, his complete honesty in terms of his disillusionment with retirement was noticed and highly appreciated by me, the researcher. His wife was a wonderful hostess, providing juice and cookies, but tactfully leaving the lounge to allow privacy of conversation.

10.2 Biographical Questionnaire

The Psychologist is currently 65 years old. He was born in 1945. He received his doctorate in Research Psychology in 1989. He retired 5 years ago from a semi-government post where he was involved in research, such as standardising psychometric tests. He has since done sporadic work in this field for a few private clients and therefore sees himself as having retired in increments. He did not want to retire, but was “forced” to do so due to affirmative action. The longest he has been “fully retired” so far was six months, and this was not a happy experience as he missed the structure and purpose of his work-life. During those six months of his retirement he pottered around the house and did some renovations. He is happiest when he can work in his field of research psychology. He has grave concerns about whether his pension money will be adequate now that he has encountered some health problems, and he is only covered by a hospital medical aid plan (as opposed to a full medical aid plan). He suffers from arthritis, his hearing is diminishing and he also has back problems. He has three adult children who are all still

studying at university and staying in university hostels. As he comes from a poor background, it is important to him to give his children a head start in life by paying their fees, which are quite substantial. To add to his concern his pension fund at Old Mutual only yielded a 2% interest this year (2010), but his wife works as a free-lance editor and this supplements their income. He is currently working on a contract basis for the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), and he thoroughly enjoys the project. Previous occupations include teaching and lecturing at the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA).

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Biographical Questionnaire: themes and patterns

<i>Key themes: Grave financial concerns, family-oriented, minimal socialising, churchgoer, negative view of retirement, wants to work, health concerns</i>
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10.3 Interview

Retirement has not been very meaningful so far. As explained above, there are no activities or hobbies in the Psychologist's life that he experiences as *FLOW*. He has inherited a small farm near Oudshoorn, but the upkeep is hard work and does not produce *FLOW* either. The closest he comes to experiencing *FLOW* is when he is juggling data for a research project. His strengths lie in being dependable and hard working. Because of his poor background he has always worked hard and found security in his work and his academic achievements. He does not structure his day, and he does not set goals for himself. Retirement is in the light of the above a negative concept to him. He socializes minimally with friends and leaves that to his wife, who is involved in many social activities outside the home and at their church. He will currently only get involved in community projects as a last resort, but previously he

worked as a police reservist and when he was much younger, he also coached mini-cricket.

Successful aging is a contradiction-in-terms, as he experiences that older people lose their power and also decline physically and mentally. He does not have any suggestions to age successfully. His legacy is that he gave his children a stable home environment and a head start in life. He attends church services regularly, but he does not partake in any church activities such as Bible study, apart from regular church attendance. He did not elaborate on his religious beliefs or the possible meaning he derived from this.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Interview: themes and patterns

Key themes: No self-transcending activities currently, no purpose outside work, no goals, no structure, negative concept of successful aging, strengths, meaning, legacy, no hobbies other than reading

10.4 FLOW Questionnaire

The Psychologist does not partake in any activities that would fit the description of *FLOW*. He thoroughly enjoys doing research, but would not describe doing research as a *FLOW* experience. He does not have any hobbies.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire that contribute to understanding the impact and application of *FLOW in retirement* are highlighted in the box on the next page and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

FLOW: impact and application

Key themes: no FLOW

10.5 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The MLQ is divided into two subscales, namely Presence of Meaning and Searching for Meaning. The MLQ scores range between 5 and 35 for each subscale. “The Presence of Meaning subscale measures the subjective sense that one’s life is meaningful, whereas Search for Meaning measures the drive and orientation toward finding meaning in one’s life” (Steger, et al., 2006, p. 85). Steger (2010) states that the MLQ does not have cut scores, nevertheless, based on a number of studies, he uses a score of 24 as a cut-off point to decide whether Presence of Meaning or Searching for Meaning is more prevalent.

The Psychologist: Presence of Meaning: 17 in the range of 5-35	The Psychologist: Searching for Meaning: 27 in the range of 5-35
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RANGE	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
	Low													Cut-off point 24										High							
PoM*														17																	
SfM*																								27							

*PoM means Presence of Meaning and SfM means Searching for Meaning

The Psychologist’s low score of 17/35 for the Presence of Meaning scale indicates a lower presence of meaning, since his score is 8 points below the cut-off point. The higher score of 27/35 for the Searching for Meaning scale indicates that he has so far invested more mental energy in searching for meaning, which is in line with the fact that he does not experience any *FLOW*. Without *FLOW* it is difficult to experience meaning in life, according to Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002). According to Steger’s (2010) interpretation of such scores, this probably indicates that the Psychologist does not feel his life has a valued meaning and purpose, and he is experiencing a sense of loss, which causes distress. Usually such a person is not socially active, which is the case with the Psychologist. He experiences his retirement as a loss of his former important work role.

10.6 Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)

The PGIS focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsically motivated, active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). The PGIS is positively correlated to an internal locus of control, to assertiveness, and to a problem-focused coping style (Robitschek, 1999). An internal locus of control refers to the fact that change is possible through one's own actions, rather than chance or fate bringing about a specific outcome (Argyle, 2001). Scores range between 0 and 45 and should be seen on a continuum, with higher scores indicating higher levels of intentionally seeking out opportunities for growth (Robitschek, 1999). Higher scores thus indicate higher levels of PGI and higher levels of psychological well-being (Robitschek, 1999). The *mean of 25 (rounded off from 24,8) is taken from research by Robitschek, 1998, from a study with 246 highly educated, high income Anglo-American participants, ranging in age from 21 to 66 years. No gender differences for the mean were found. Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) concept of *FLOW* incorporates the PGIS's focus on purpose and intrinsic motivation or an internal locus of control, which result in action being taken.

The Psychologist Score 13/45	Mean for the PGIS: 25	The Psychologist scored significantly below the mean score for the PGIS.
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Range	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	45
Psychologist	13																							
Mean	25																							

The Psychologist's low score of 13/45, which is nearly 50% below the mean, indicates that he is not intentionally and actively seeking out opportunities for involvement in intrinsically motivated activities. He experiences himself as a dependable, hardworking provider for his children and he has not developed any hobbies, which suggests that all his psychic energy has been channelled into this task.

10.7 Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

This questionnaire, developed by Diener, et al. (1985), assesses people's overall satisfaction with life, and not only specific life areas or domains. Scores range from 5 (low satisfaction) to 35 (high satisfaction). The categories for the SWLS were suggested by Pavot and Diener (2008,1993).

(MLQ), but he is not intentionally seeking out opportunities for personal growth at present (PGIS). This is consistent with the qualitative findings, namely the biographical and *FLOW* questionnaires and the interview. According to Robitschek (1998), however, personal growth and change can be taught to clients.

The Psychologist has grave financial concerns about whether his pension will last long enough in retirement, as consistent with the literature research that advocates more careful financial planning since many elderly people have a fear of longevity, not knowing whether a longer life would be affordable (Macnab, 1994; Muller & Stevens, 2001). This concern is especially relevant in view of the Psychologist's diminishing health. A decline in income results in an increased cut in expenditure for goods and services, and less money to spend (e.g. on leisure activities) the longer retirees spend time in retirement (Abrams, 1995; Biggs, 1993; Muller & Stevens, 2001).

The Psychologist tremendously enjoyed the research work he did during his working life and it became part of his identity. Being involved with research was also very stimulating. Presently his days are only structured when working on a contract. His strengths, according to him, lie in being a dependable worker. Therefore, the Psychologist does not see retirement as being a meaningful life phase (MLQ) and he has a negative view of retirement. His financial worries, which include having to pay for his children's education, worsen his adaptation to retirement. The Psychologist would prefer to keep on working in retirement due to interest and due to financial concerns, which is consistent with Friedrich's (2001) and Smith and Clurman's (2007) research that 80% of those in the USA who have pension benefits, want to work part-time during retirement, of which only 35% want to work part-time because of interest and enjoyment.

The result of retirement, according to Macnab (1994, pp. 2-3), could be that retirees may experience feeling "useless and bored, of having a limited sense

of power and identity in their restricted lifestyle". This may certainly be true of the Psychologist as his passivity extends to not socialising much, minimally outside the family context and he may thus be at risk for isolation in a "restricted lifestyle" retirement (Macnab, 1994).

The Psychologist did not spontaneously discuss the matter of religion. Moody (2002, p. 394) distinguishes "formal religious behaviour," such as attending a church service, from an "inner attitude of spirituality" and it seems that, according to Moody (2002), those elders with higher involvement in religious activities reported more satisfaction with life. According to the Psychologist, he is dedicated to church attendance, which is consistent with Moody (2002) who found that church attendance and life-long religious involvement is a strong indicator of high religious practices in older age. However, it is unclear how much meaning these religious practices hold for the Psychologist.

He does not have any hobbies other than reading and he is not keen to get involved in community projects. Only work goals structure the day and provide meaning. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), Emmons (2006) and Sheldon (2006) the goals and priorities people have, determine their overall quality of life and moving towards meaningful life goals is vital for continued emotional and physical well-being. The Psychologist does not see successful aging as being a realistic concept, as aging is a time of gradual general decline. Although this is true as discussed in Chapter 2, very few people follow a predictable path in terms of age-related decline (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Friedrich, 2001; Rowe & Kahn, 1999; Schaie, 2006, 1990), also referred to as "differential aging" by Paúl (2007, p. 138). The Psychologist's legacy is being a good father and provider for his family, which may explain why he is not interested in developing other areas of growth (PGIS).

The Psychologist is not involved in any activities that he would describe as resulting in *FLOW*.

10.10 Conclusion

The Psychologist is struggling to adapt to the void left by his previous career and he is not experiencing any *FLOW*.

Taking the research questions into consideration, I can tentatively conclude the following for the Psychologist:

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?

The Psychologist is not experiencing any *FLOW*. He has not adapted successfully to the retirement phase of his life.

- Can knowing one's *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society's needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

The Psychologist is not experiencing any *FLOW*. He is not involved in any self-transcending activities in the retirement phase of his life.

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-matric training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

The Psychologist is not experiencing any *FLOW*. He is not using his training and skills in any social entrepreneurial projects.

11 FINDINGS FOR THE NURSE

11.1 Introduction

The Nurse is an extraordinary person, an outlier in statistical terms, gifted, an energetic driver, and above all, a people's person. I was amazed at the whirlwind of activity that seems to characterise her days, as she is a known mover and shaker in the retirement who's-who world. She is an inspiration and role model for a purpose-driven life, relentlessly focused on improving the plight of the sick and frail elderly through informing and mobilising others to this end.

11.2 Biographical Questionnaire

The Nurse was born in 1934, and is currently 76 years old (2010). She holds a doctorate in Nursing which she attained at the age of 57 as well as a masters degree in Practical Theology, which she attained in 2008 at the age of 74. Some of her strengths are that she is inquisitive and loves to learn. Knowledge gives her confidence to face the challenges she has to face. She regularly takes a leadership role wherever a need arises.

She has been married for 54 years and she has been living with her husband, a retired general in the South African Police Service (SAPS), in an upmarket retirement village for the past three years. She has three adult children with whom she has good relationships, but she does not see them often as two children are living abroad and one in Stellenbosch. They are able to live comfortably (but not extravagantly) due to their double pension. She held a top government post in health services at one stage. They also have an additional (passive) income from a guesthouse in the Cape, which is managed by their one daughter. She therefore does not need to work to supplement their combined income. The Nurse also held the position of principal at a nursing college and was a matron at three hospitals. She rates her health as seven out of ten, due to two hip replacements and hypertension. Despite this, she leads a

very active life and she has hardly slowed down since her “forced” retirement due to affirmative action.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Biographical Questionnaire: themes and patterns

<i>Key themes: Financially secure, life-long learning, leadership, healthy</i>
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11.3 Interview

The Nurse was forced to retire in 1996, when she was 62 years old. At the time she held a very senior government position in the health service sector. Her preferred activities since then have been to further the cause of the aged, especially the sick or frail older person. To this end she has organised three congresses between 2007 and 2010. She has also organised numerous workshops to educate and mobilise the relevant role players, and to promote the engagement of a multi-disciplinary team for the care of frail elderly people. She is also actively busy advocating and trying to implement a system at churches to assist their elderly in practical ways. To further this aim, she enrolled for a master’s degree in Practical Theology. The development of curricula for student clergy to educate them for their work with the elderly in a congregation gives her great pleasure, time flies when she pours herself wholeheartedly into this work. She assumed a leadership role compiling an advanced short course with the aim of empowering student ministers with the knowledge and skills to understand the needs of the elderly. Her aim is to bring together church leaders, family members, volunteers and professionals to aid the frail elderly. She feels strongly about the responsibility that children have toward their ailing or aging parents. Adult children who emigrate and leave their elderly parents in South Africa, add to the problem of caring for some of the white elderly.

She is also actively involved in the improvement of frail care, especially in terms of quality control, in her own retirement village. She promotes campaigns to advance knowledge about the plight and the needs of the frail elderly, especially in retirement homes and villages, and in home based care. She has put together informative programmes about Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and the occurrence of falling in the elderly, palliative care, home-based care and care of the dying.

She structures her day and has a set routine which she plans on a weekly basis; getting up at 6.30 am and working on her schedule of planned activities until 10.30 at night. She regularly sets goals for herself. Important goals are to set up service centres at churches for frail elderly and to educate the ministers about the needs of the elderly and the use of volunteers, as mentioned previously. She is currently busy researching the responsibility of religious institutions towards their aging members and the role of spirituality and religion in their lives. Another very important goal, in which she is actively involved, is to get a course on gerontology reinstated as part of the nursing curriculum. She is busy with discussions on this topic with other leaders in the nursing field and has been asked to compile a curriculum for teaching gerontology. In 2009 she was asked to act as a consultant at a private hospital in Pretoria to provide guidelines in nursing and caring for elderly patients. She is also involved in the decentralisation of the gerontological society by starting a branch in Pretoria to mobilise and inform others in terms of the needs of the elderly.

On a more personal note she is planning to become computer literate. As is evident, community projects are very important to her. Successful aging from her perspective means to actively help the elderly and identify their needs, as well as pursuing lifelong learning and being able to listen to others' stories. Educating and informing others in terms of planning for retirement, other than financially, but also socially, are important, as older people easily get isolated and lonely, especially in retirement homes.

Retirement is still a relevant concept to her but it is dependent on a person's health. People also differ in what they want for later life. Some only want to lessen their workload, without retiring, which is what she wants as well. The Nurse finds great meaning and fulfilment in pursuing her goals to benefit the frail elderly and fight ageism at the same time, by educating others. Socialising with others is a top priority for her. She invites people over for soup and bread on a regular basis, as people can get very isolated in a retirement village. She socialises more with friends than family as her children are in the Cape and overseas. Her legacy would be that she was always there for others who needed her help. Religion, and being involved in church activities and bible study, is extremely important to her. Her religious beliefs motivate her to become involved in the plight of others. The Lord provides the strength and help that she needs to fulfil her task and she is grateful for this as well as being in a position to help others.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Interview: themes and patterns

Key themes: Self-transcending activities, uses academic qualifications for self-transcending purposes, life-long learning, cognitive stimulation, passionate and driven, goal-setting, fairly healthy, motivated by religious beliefs, socializes, a people's-person, active aging, positive view of retirement, structure, legacy, successful aging, gratitude, no clubs

11.4 FLOW Questionnaire

The Nurse is actively involved in various projects in aid of the elderly as mentioned previously. Educating and informing others are dear to her. In her retirement village, she is busy with bereavement counselling, and care of the dying. This involves her mind, her body and "soul" (religious beliefs) and emotions, the totality of who she is. Time flies when she is busy with this and it

is a very meaningful pursuit. In turn it also helps her with self-development and causes her to experience *FLOW* at least once a day. It gives her tremendous joy to make a difference in others' lives. She feels driven to "live church". She is knowledge-driven, and sees herself as innovative in the role of caring, teaching, and fighting for the dignity and rights of the elderly.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire that contribute to understanding the impact and application of *FLOW in retirement* are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

FLOW: impact and application

Key themes: FLOW through developing courses, self-transcendence, mentoring

11.5 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The MLQ is divided into two subscales, namely Presence of Meaning and Searching for Meaning. The MLQ scores range between 5 and 35 for each subscale. "The Presence of Meaning subscale measures the subjective sense that one's life is meaningful, whereas Search for Meaning measures the drive and orientation toward finding meaning in one's life" (Steger, et al., 2006, p. 85). Steger (2010) states that the MLQ does not have cut scores, nevertheless, based on a number of studies, he uses a score of 24 as a cut-off point to decide whether Presence of Meaning or Searching for Meaning is more prevalent.

The Nurse: Presence of Meaning: 33 in the range of 5-35	The Nurse: Searching for Meaning: 26 in the range of 5-35
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RANGE	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	
	Low																			Cut-off point 24		High										
PoM*	33																															
SfM*	26																															

*PoM means Presence of Meaning and SfM means Searching for Meaning

The Nurse's very high score of 33/35 as compared to the cut-off point of 24 for the Presence of Meaning scale, suggests that she experiences her life as very meaningful. Her score of 26/35, which is just above the cut-off point of 24/35 for the Searching for Meaning scale of the MLQ, indicates that she is searching

for meaning in this retirement phase of her life, although she experiences her retirement as meaningful. According to Steger (2010), someone with this type of score usually holds strong religious beliefs and acts upon those beliefs. He also considers such a person to be very conscientious as well as being able to understand what makes her life meaningful.

11.6 Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)

The PGIS focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsically motivated, active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). The PGIS is positively correlated to an internal locus of control, to assertiveness, and to a problem-focused coping style (Robitschek, 1999). An internal locus of control refers to the fact that change is possible through one's own actions, rather than chance or fate bringing about a specific outcome (Argyle, 2001). Scores range between 0 and 45 and should be seen on a continuum, with higher scores indicating higher levels of intentionally seeking out opportunities for growth (Robitschek, 1999). Higher scores thus indicate higher levels of PGI and higher levels of psychological well-being (Robitschek, 1999). The *mean of 25 (rounded off from 24,8) is taken from research by Robitschek (1998) from a study with 246 highly educated, high income Anglo-American participants, ranging in age from 21 to 66 years. No gender differences for the mean were found. Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) concept of *FLOW* incorporates the PGIS's focus on purpose and intrinsic motivation or an internal locus of control, which result in action.

The Nurse Score 39/45	Mean for the PGIS: 25	The Nurse scored high above the mean score for the PGIS and closer to the end of the range.
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Range	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	45
Nurse	39																							
Mean	25																							

The Nurse's high score of 39/45, which is far above the mean of 25/35, indicates a high intrinsic motivation to continually search out growth opportunities in her life.

fact that the Nurse was under a lot of pressure for a seminar she had to organise in the time she answered the MLQ. According to Lyubomirsky (2010), the scores on the SHS can fluctuate due to a recent event, stress levels or other circumstances. The SWLS, however, assesses people's overall satisfaction with life, and not only specific life areas or domains and was found to be consistent with the MLQ, the interview and the *FLOW* questionnaire. She experiences both a presence of meaning in her life, while simultaneously searching for ways in which to enrich other's lives even more in a goal-directed and purpose driven way (PGIS). Some individuals, such as the Mahatma Gandhi, and evidently the Nurse, demonstrate both a continual search for deeper meaning while already living a very purpose driven and meaningful life (Steger, et al., 2006).

The Nurse is a knowledge-driven educator by nature, and she uses her academic background to inform, teach, mentor and transcend the self, especially in aid of the frail elderly. The high score for searching for meaning can be understood in the light of her desire to continually add value to others' lives as is evident in her projects to aid the frail elderly and educate others about their plight.

Her preference for cognitive pursuits, such as developing courses, organising and developing seminars as well as intellectual achievements, are consistent with the concept of differential aging (Paúl, 2007) and life-long learning (Doidge, 2007). Additionally, she is financially independent during her retirement years, which is also consistent with Schaie's (2006, p. 15) findings that successful agers are usually "genetically and socio-economically advantaged" and tend to favour cognitively stimulating pursuits. This group shows a "very modest decline on highly speeded tasks", and tend to maintain a high level of intellectual functioning until shortly before death (Schaie, 2006, p. 15). The Nurse's positive view of retirement may also be understood in the light of her financial freedom, good health, good cognitive functioning and her meaningful projects.

Volunteers who use their time, experience and involvement in projects or for people are the ones benefitting most from helping those in need. They tend to experience a sense of fulfilment, rejuvenation, a new beginning, idealism and a sense of new possibilities and meaningful accomplishments according to Freedman (1999). The Nurse's purpose-driven and meaningful (MLQ) life echoes Freedman's (1999) sentiments and culminate in an active, structured and goal-driven life (as is evident from the PGIS) to help others. The Nurse understands helping others as the essence of successful aging. Successful aging, according to Friedrich (2001), refers to aging people who lead long and productive lives as well as those who experience satisfaction and a sense of well-being deep into old age. This is evident from the Nurse's life and her responses on the SWLS. Aging successfully is evident in the Nurse's life. The Nurse can be considered an active ager, when all her projects, goals and the way she structures her day are taken into account. Her goals are motivated by her religious beliefs. According to Emmons (2006), spiritual and religious goals focus on purpose and meaningfulness and finding God's will for one's life. These goals result in greater life satisfaction (as seen on the SWLS) than a pursuit of material and self-focused goals (Emmons, 2006), and this is evident in the Nurse's life. Her legacy is other-focused, namely to help those in need. Seligman (2006, p. 234) hypothesises that an "engaged life" consists of finding key personal strengths and qualities and using these as much as possible in everyday life, which then brings about *FLOW* and which curbs the fear of personal insignificance. Using her academic qualifications and strengths and finding personal significance and *FLOW* seems to be especially true of the Nurse which spurs her on in all her goal-oriented and intrinsically motivated projects to aid the frail elderly and to educate others about their plight.

According to Rowe and Kahn (1999), successful agers report having meaningful, caring and rewarding social ties with family and friends. The importance of good social ties with significant others are well illustrated in the Nurse's life and echoed in her high score on the SWLS.

11.10 Conclusion

The Nurse is another good example of living with purpose or “making” meaning, as Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 3) so aptly put it, “optimal experience is thus something that we *make* happen”. Taking the research questions into consideration, I can tentatively conclude the following for the Nurse:

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?

Yes, it seems that experiencing *FLOW* is definitely enhancing successful aging in the Nurse’s life.

- Can knowing one’s *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society’s needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

Yes, the Nurse is involved in self-sustaining social entrepreneurial projects and *FLOW* seems to play a big role.

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-matric training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

Yes, the Nurse is using her previous education, training and skills in social entrepreneurial projects and *FLOW* seems to provide the fuel for sustaining her endeavours.

12 FINDINGS FOR THE LINGUIST

12.1 Introduction

The interview with the Linguist was held in her temporary office where she does free-lance work for an elderly upliftment organisation. She impressed me with her refreshing candour and honesty with which she answered questions about herself by demonstrating seldomly seen insight into her own strengths, weaknesses and motivations. She currently uses her administrative, writing and editing skills in aid of a senior upliftment agency as consultant.

12.2 Biographical Questionnaire

The Linguist is a 65 year old lady (born in 1945) who has been married for 44 years to a (now retired) architect. Her husband was forced to retire due to the affirmative action policy. He used to be involved in big architectural contracts, which allowed him and his wife to be financially independent. They are now able to live comfortably due to the subsequent investments he could make. He now potters around the home, while the Linguist does paid freelance editing work for a senior citizen upliftment company. She has been engaged in freelance work for most of her life, while bringing up her two children, a chartered accountant (son) and a graphic designer (daughter), 37 and 35 years old respectively, who are both unmarried. She sees her immediate family as an extension of herself, and enjoys the fact that her children are not married, because this means that she can have a closer relationship with them. She does not miss not having any grandchildren. She cared for her aged mother for three years until she passed away recently by working day and night as the only caregiver.

As a free-lancer, she wrote a homework guide and did editing work for well-known publishers in Pretoria. Additionally, she edited theses for students, mostly working from home. She also did some secretarial work for her

husband, and worked as an estate agent for a few years, until it became too dangerous. The money she earns is hers to spend as she wishes, which usually includes attending operas or lunching with a friend. Because her husband was so involved in his career, they are only now beginning to do some things together. The Linguist was an only child, and describes herself as selfish and self-indulgent because of this. She does not see herself as a people's person, and she likes to do her "own thing". She values being on her own, and she also needs "space" in her marriage to follow her own pursuits. She holds a master's degree in Afrikaans-Dutch. She estimates her health to be 11 out of ten, as she has no health problems of any kind.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Biographical Questionnaire: themes and patterns

<i>Key themes: Not a social person, privileged background, financially secure, likes to do her own thing, writing, healthy</i>
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12.3 Interview

The Linguist's experience of retirement is one of "contentment". She thoroughly enjoys being able to do her own thing, and being on her own "mission". Her preferred activities are reading, especially history, biographies, and fiction, and writing. She describes her life as "uneventful," yet she is content, albeit also lonely at times. She also enjoys editing and research, as well as her part time work at the senior citizen aid organisation, but would not describe this as bringing about *FLOW*. She enjoys working and she receives a small salary for this. Her day is structured; she gets up at 8 o' clock, and cleans the house first thing in the morning, because she cannot relax until all the housework is done. If she feels bored, she starts washing the windows or doing some other chores, as she does not employ a cleaning lady. During the afternoons she does as she pleases. She does not set particular goals for

herself, although she wants to finish the fiction book she is currently writing. But she has not set a date for herself. Writing this book also does not bring about *FLOW*, possibly micro-flow. She does not see retirement as a relevant concept any more, people should rather just work fewer days or hours per week. Retirement is a waste of skills and knowledge. She has never thought of what the term “successful aging” could mean, and has no specific suggestions for retiring successfully as people differ according to their needs and wants. She thinks it is wrong to be prescriptive. She has no interest in community work, caring for or visiting sick unknown people (outsiders) or using her skills and knowledge for the benefit of others. She prefers to engage in the editing work she is currently doing for the senior citizen group, and she sees this as an adequate contribution to society. She does not think she has a legacy, apart from her children thinking she was a good mother. She is not interested in what others’ opinion of her are in terms of a legacy.

Religion is very important to her, and she is not scared to die because of the comfort religion has brought her. She is not involved in any church activities or Bible study groups as she dislikes any group activities, and sees herself as an introvert. She has only a few close and trusted friends with whom she socialises, usually attending opera or having lunch. She recharges her batteries alone, not in the company of others. This is also treasured “thinking or contemplation time.” She prefers her children’s company above all, but as her children are overseas quite often and have demanding careers, she does not see them regularly.

The themes and patterns extracted from this interview are highlighted in the box on the next page and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Interview: themes and patterns

Key themes: Content, does own thing, reading, creative writing, cognitive stimulation, productive aging?, little goal-setting, structures her day, very healthy, using strengths, content, no self-transcending activities, religious, micro-FLOW, successful aging, legacy, no clubs, negative view of retirement

12.4 FLOW Questionnaire

The Linguist's top meaningful activity is to edit the work she is currently doing for the senior citizen's group, but she would not describe this as *FLOW*. Her life is uneventful, but she is content. She likes to read, and she likes to do research, but yet again, she would not describe this as bringing about *FLOW*, possibly as *micro-FLOW*. This also extends to visiting the opera, or going to a ballet. She therefore is unable to supply any further information on *FLOW*.

The themes and patterns extracted from this questionnaire that contribute to understanding the impact and application of *FLOW* in retirement are highlighted in the box below and will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

FLOW: impact and application

Key themes: Micro- FLOW through everyday activities

12.5 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The MLQ is divided into two subscales, namely Presence of Meaning and Searching for Meaning. The MLQ scores range between 5 and 35 for each subscale. "The Presence of Meaning subscale measures the subjective sense that one's life is meaningful, whereas Search for Meaning measures the drive and orientation toward finding meaning in one's life" (Steger, et al., 2006, p. 85). Steger (2010) states that the MLQ does not have cut scores, nevertheless, based on a number of studies, he uses a score of 24 as a cut-off point to decide whether Presence of Meaning or Searching for Meaning is more prevalent.

The Linguist: Presence of Meaning: 27 in the range of 5-35	The Linguist: Searching for Meaning: 18 in the range of 5-35
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RANGE	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
	Low																				Cut-off point				24	High					
PoM*																											27				
SfM*																		18													

*PoM means Presence of Meaning and SfM means Searching for Meaning

The Linguist's score of 27/35 for the subscale Presence of Meaning is just above the mean for this subscale. The Linguist's score of 18/35 on the subscale Searching for Meaning falls below the mean of 24. This indicates that she is experiencing her life as relatively meaningful, and thus that she is not intrinsically motivated to search for new meaningful pursuits in her life. This is in accordance with Steger's (2010) interpretation of such results.

12.6 Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)

The PGIS focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsically motivated, active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998). The PGIS is positively correlated to an internal locus of control, to assertiveness, and to a problem-focused coping style (Robitschek, 1999). An internal locus of control refers to the fact that change is possible through one's own actions, rather than chance or fate bringing about a specific outcome (Argyle, 2001). Scores range between 0 and 45 and should be seen on a continuum, with higher scores indicating higher levels of intentionally seeking out opportunities for growth (Robitschek, 1999). Higher scores thus indicate higher levels of PGI and higher levels of psychological well-being (Robitschek, 1999). The *mean of 25 (rounded off from 24,8) is taken from research by Robitschek, 1998, from a study with 246 highly educated, high income Anglo-American participants, ranging in age from 21 to 66 years. No gender differences for the mean were found. Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) concept of *FLOW* incorporates the PGIS's focus on purpose and intrinsic motivation or an internal locus of control, which result in action.

The Linguist Score 30/45	*Mean for the PGIS: 25	The Linguist scored slightly above the mean score of 25 for the PGIS.
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Range	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	45	
Linguist																	30								
Mean															25										

12.9 The Results of the Findings for the Linguist

The SWLS score is difficult to interpret as it is not consistent with the qualitative information that suggest that the Linguist is content, but not extremely satisfied or happy with her life. This is confirmed by the SHS score which marginally exceeds the mean of 22. She is open to the concept of personal growth (PGIS), but she is not actively searching for growth opportunities as she experiences her life as generally meaningful (MLQ).

The Linguist is an introvert with a small circle of friends. Consistent with introversion, the Linguist prefers a focus on reflection, thoughts and feelings, or a focus on the “inner world of ideas and experiences,” directing her “energy and attention inward” (Briggs Meyers, 1998, p. 9) and therefore she is not a member of any club. Her career as editor and writer is thus well-suited to her personality. As previously stated, the Linguist likes to do her “own thing” and she is the happiest in most solitary pursuits, focusing on her own interests, such as writing or editing. This also offers an opportunity for continued cognitive stimulation or life-long learning, as suggested by Doidge, that with the prediction of increased longevity, it is vital that the mental lifespan should equal the body’s lifespan and thus life-long learning is very important (Doidge, 2007). As the Linguist is very healthy, mental stimulation (reading, writing, research) to enhance successful aging would certainly be very prudent. In the process, her hobbies (reading, writing, research) provide opportunities to enhance her strengths.

She finds the work she does meaningful (MLQ). In accordance with Gardner’s intelligence theory (Leaf, 2005) she has an understanding of her own thoughts, intuitions, feelings and inner experiences; she understands her own psychological strengths and weaknesses well; and she works well independently and likes solitude. She is thus not interested in group activities or social entrepreneurial activities.

Throughout her life, the Linguist has mostly done free-lance work, and although she reports little goal-setting, her day is semi-structured by her interests and day-to-day chores. She prefers not to be involved in community projects, and she is content to use her administrative skills as well as her writing and editing strengths in aid of a senior citizen upliftment company. In this sense, she is continuing the use of her previous education and skills. She comes from a privileged background as an only child and she is currently in the socio-economically advantaged strata of society, and therefore in the position to do her own thing. Her immediate family is seen as an extension of herself.

The Linguist did not report any activities that resembled the description of *FLOW*. The Linguist finds contentment and joy in her day-to-day activities, such as housework, writing or editing. This is consistent with the concept of micro-flow, which consists of the daily, almost routine like, common experiences or patterns of behaviour that creates structure and meaning in one's life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Csikszentmihalyi and Graef (1975) advise that enjoyable trivial activities, requiring less skill, can produce micro-*FLOW* throughout one's day. *FLOW* exists on a continuum and varies from extremely low to extremely high complexity (Csikszentmihalyi & Graef, 1975) and the Linguist seems to be somewhere in between these two extremes. Gratitude was not a concept that spontaneously came up during our conversation.

The Linguist has a negative view of the concept of retirement and she suggests that people should rather work fewer days per week than retire. She enjoys working and receiving a small salary for her efforts. She has no suggestions in terms of enhancing successful aging. Her legacy is more self-focused than other-focused, namely being remembered as a good mother. This is consistent with the PGIS score that indicates that she is not actively seeking out new growth opportunities. She sees herself as religious, but she did not spontaneously provide more information about the personal meaning this has.

12.10 Conclusion

Although there were some mixed results for the Linguist, I can tentatively draw the following conclusions in terms of the research questions:

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?

The Linguist reports experiencing micro-*FLOW*, nevertheless, she feels happy and content in retirement as is evident from the qualitative and the quantitative data. *FLOW* thus seems to be only one aspect of successful adaptation to retirement.

- Can knowing one's *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society's needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

No, the Linguist prefers pursuits that are more self-contained although she is using her previous qualifications in retirement.

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

No, the Linguist prefers pursuits that are more self-contained although she is using her previous qualifications in retirement, which produce micro-*FLOW*.

13 INTEGRATED FINDINGS

13.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall present an overview and integration of the themes from the interviews and the six questionnaires for the nine participants, in order to find patterns and a clearer understanding of the role of *FLOW* in successful adaptation to retirement, or successful aging. Freund and Baltes' (2007) outcome based definition for successful aging is used in this research study, since it defines successful aging as a measure of attaining subjective feelings of happiness and health. Featherman, et al.'s (1990) process based definition of aging, which defines successful aging as a life-long adaptive process, was considered to be inappropriate for this non-longitudinal, retrospective study.

The nine participants' *FLOW* experiences fell into one of three groups: those who experienced feelings of being in *FLOW*, those who experienced no *FLOW*, and those who experienced *micro-FLOW*. These categories are consistent with Csikszentmihalyi's (2002, 1975) findings on *FLOW* experiences. The outcome of this research study is thus a replication of Csikszentmihalyi's (2002, 1975) *FLOW* categories, which according to Yin (2003) enhances the validity of case study research.

13.2 Replication of Cases

A replication of the nine cases in terms of the three *FLOW* categories, namely *FLOW*, non-*FLOW* and *micro-FLOW*, is presented in Table 13-1.

TABLE 13-1: REPLICATION OF CASES

	In <i>FLOW</i>	Non- <i>FLOW</i>	Micro- <i>FLOW</i>
Men	Dominee Chemist	Doctor Psychologist	None
Women	Artist Entrepreneur Nurse	None	Teacher Linguist
Total	5	2	2

In working towards a theory, and by not selecting a representative sample, the aim is to achieve external validity through a replication of the case results as suggested by Yin (2003).

A replication of *FLOW* results in each category, which means two or more participants who show similar results in a particular category, is a “theoretical replication” according to Yin (2003, p. 52). The aim of such replication is to achieve external validity. The replication of case studies per category is as follows: *FLOW* (5), non-*FLOW* (2) and micro-*FLOW* (2). Gender was also taken into account to get a more complete overview of experiences of *FLOW* in retirement.

The integrated qualitative findings of the nine participants will be presented next.

13.3 Integrated Qualitative Findings

13.3.1 The Use of the Building Blocks

By assessing the building blocks for successful aging from the literature review in Chapter 2 as some of the criteria for determining successful adaptation to retirement with regard to *FLOW*, the following integrated findings for the nine participants will now be presented in Table 13-2.

TABLE 13-2: CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL AGING

BUILDING BLOCKS USED FOR INDICATING SUCCESSFUL AGING/ADAPTATION TO RETIREMENT	DOMINEE	DOCTOR	ARTIST	CHEMIST	ENTREPRENEUR	TEACHER	PSYCHOLOGIST	NURSE	LINGUIST
1. CREATIVITY	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
2. GOAL - SETTING	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	-
3. HEALTH	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
4. LIFE-LONG LEARNING	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	-
5. MEANING	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	?
6. SOCIAL RELATIONS	+	?	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
7. SPIRITUALITY/ RELIGION	+	?	+	+	+	+	?	+	+
8. STRENGTHS	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
9. SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING:		-				+	-		+
Contentment									
Happiness	+	-	+	+	+		-	+	
10. TRANSCENDING THE SELF		-	+	-	-	?	-	+	-
Volunteering									
Social Entrepreneurship	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
TOTAL BUILDING BLOCKS PRESENT	10	0	10	10	10	7	1	10	5
*FLOW CATEGORIES	F	nF	F	F	F	mF	nF	F	mf

*F means *FLOW*, nF means non-*FLOW* and mF means micro-*FLOW*

The integrated findings in Table 13-2 suggest that the most “successful agers” or those who adapted well to retirement are the Artist, the Entrepreneur and the Nurse (female), as well as the Dominee and the Chemist (male). These five participants all employed ten out of the possible ten building blocks used to describe successful agers. The five successfully adapted retirees all reported good health and experiencing of *FLOW* in their lives, as is evident from Table 13-2. They used their strengths to volunteer or to be active in some way in building a better community. This is consistent with the literature research that thriving in the midst of decline, encompasses such moderating aspects as a deep sense of spirituality or religion, feelings of hope and optimism, personality aspects such as not having a victim-mentality, fulfilling social relationships,

being compassionate, and having meaningful goals (Friedrich, 2001; Hill, 2008; Ryff & Singer, 2007) as well as positive perceived self-efficacy (Caprara, et al., 2007; Friedrich, 2001; Minichiello & Coulson, 2005; Rowe & Kahn, 1999). The happiest participants modelled all of these aspects. The personality factors were excluded, since they were not taken into account for this research study.

The depth and meaning of religious or spiritual activities were hard to determine for some participants, such as the Doctor and the Psychologist, since they did not spontaneously volunteer information in this regard. Moody (2002, p. 394) distinguishes “formal religious behaviour”, such as attending a church service, from an “inner attitude of spirituality”. According to Moody (2002), those elderly individuals with a higher involvement in religious activities report more satisfaction with life. However, many elderly attend less formal church meetings, but there is an increase in personal religious practices such as Bible study, listening to or watching religious programmes on the radio or TV, and a stronger focus on the inner life, such as an increase in the frequency of daily prayer (Moody, 2006). Spontaneous discussion of the meaning of religious or spiritual activities were used as criteria for this research study. Spiritual and religious goals focus on purpose and meaningfulness (Emmons, 2006; Steger, et al., 2006) and foster well-being (Argyle, 2001; Steger, et al., 2006).

The Dominee, the Chemist, the Entrepreneur and the Artist were involved in social-entrepreneurial projects while the Nurse focused on anti-ageism awareness and volunteering activities to benefit the frail elderly. These participants were thus actively involved in changing society for the better, following self-transcending goals inspired by their religious beliefs, which in turn lead to experiencing more meaning and happiness in retirement. This is in line with Csikszentmihalyi's (1993, pp. 235-238) suggestion that transcending the self means “using one's unique potentials” or “creative strivings” not only for oneself, but also for the common good. By focusing on strengths, the

individual is helped to develop or maintain a more positive self-image as self-efficacy is directly related to life-satisfaction and psychological well-being (Friedrich, 2001), and this focus also boosts confidence and optimism (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007). According to Table 13-2, it is clear that all the participants in *FLOW* (and one in micro-*FLOW*) used their strengths in some way outside their previous work situation.

From the qualitative findings, which include the interview, the biographical questionnaire and the *FLOW* questionnaire, it seems that those experiencing *FLOW* indeed aged or adjusted to retirement more successfully, and generally found life meaningful. They were also happy and satisfied with their lives. Those experiencing *FLOW* used their *FLOW* interests to make a difference in society, while those without *FLOW* and those who experienced micro-*FLOW* were not yet actively involved in self-transcending (volunteer) activities.

The Doctor and the Psychologist both find it hard to adjust to the retired lifestyle and do not have meaningful goals to substitute their previous work-related goals. This is consistent with the literature review: "People will find it most difficult to disengage from ambitions and goals that are central to their identities or life plans and for which equivalent substitutes cannot easily be found" (Brandtstädter, 2006, p. 149). Meaningful and attainable goals are good predictors of life-satisfaction, but thwarted meaningful and personally important goals may lead to frustration and depression, according to Brandtstädter (2006). Accommodating, by gradually decreasing the attractiveness of previously attainable goals, acts as a defence against these losses and promotes subjective well-being, such as a sense of self-efficacy, enhanced self-esteem and perceived control. In this way, developmental adaptation is promoted by a reorganisation of goals. Therefore, well-being and self-esteem are dependent on a willingness to adjust goals to changing circumstances without feelings of regret (Brandtstädter, 2006). It seems the two men using one or no building blocks, and who reported not experiencing any *FLOW* at all,

were not able to find substitute goals. The Doctor and the Psychologist did not volunteer and were not engaged in any activities related to community building.

The two participants not experiencing *FLOW* (Doctor, Psychologist) have probably not found substitutes for their work-self, consistent with the literature research. The result of retirement, according to Macnab (1994, pp. 2-3), could be that retirees may experience feeling “useless and bored, of having a limited sense of power and identity in their restricted lifestyle”. Many may experience retirement as a loss of status, networks and identity as the “very word ‘retirement’ suggests in-activity, withdrawal, [and] passivity” (Macnab, 1994, pp. 2-3). However, Moody (2006) challenges these negative beliefs about retirement and suggests that most people look forward to the leisure and self-development opportunities retirement may hold.

Optimal experience, where personal goals are actively pursued and happiness ensues (such as Dominee, Artist, Nurse, Entrepreneur and Chemist) produces *FLOW*, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002). The more *FLOW* experiences, the better the quality of life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). *FLOW* leads to “a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality...to higher levels of performance”. In this “growth of the self lies the key to *FLOW* activities” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 74).

The Linguist’s and the Teacher’s findings present interesting results. Both of them experience occasional micro-*FLOW* (but not *FLOW*) and report to be quite content, happy and satisfied with life, and both these participants experience life as meaningful. Micro-*FLOW* experiences can diminish boredom, but because of lesser complexity cannot produce *FLOW*, i.e. skills and challenges are mismatched (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). The Teacher and the Linguist both seemed to experience micro-*FLOW* in day to day activities such as household chores, and both reported being content to happy, which is consistent with Csikszentmihalyi’s (2002) research. Both pursued more self-contained goals, did not volunteer and were not engaged in any activities

related to community building although the Teacher was beginning to do volunteer work on a small scale. The Linguist continued to use her strengths (writing and editing skills), but generally not in a self-transcending manner (she enjoys using her skills for remuneration). Csikszentmihalyi sees control over consciousness as liberating and as a determinant of the quality of life. Where too much “psychic energy” is “wrapped up in the self,” one cannot “lose oneself in an activity that offers no rewards outside the interaction itself” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 85), and this may be a reason for not being in *FLOW*. Focusing on one’s unique individuality rather than the broader community, defies a meaningful and purpose-driven life, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1993, p. 237). According Csikszentmihalyi (1993, p. 238), pride in one’s uniqueness should therefore be “balanced” with an interest and concern for the wider community.

In the next section, the additional themes from the qualitative findings are presented. These themes were derived from the biographical questionnaire, the interview with each participant and the *FLOW* questionnaire.

13.3.2 Additional Themes

The following table provides an overview of the additional themes that were found to play a role in successful aging or successful adaptation to retirement in the interviews, the biographical questionnaire and the *FLOW* questionnaire. The results for the nine participants in the 3 categories of *FLOW*, non-*FLOW* and micro-*FLOW* are summarised by frequency, and presented in Table 13-3 on the next page.

TABLE 13-3: FREQUENCIES OF ADDITIONAL THEMES

ADDITIONAL THEMES	Non- <i>FLOW</i> N=2	Micro- <i>FLOW</i> N=2	<i>FLOW</i> N=5
Active Aging	0	2	5
Clubs	0	0	0
Cognitive Stimulation	2	2	5
Finances not Sufficient	1	0	2
Supplementing Pension?	1	1	3
Would prefer to work?	2	1	4
Most preferred hobby: reading	2	1	5
Negative view of retirement *one ambivalent	2	1	2/3*
Structuring the day	0	1	5
Gratitude	0	1	4
Using education and training in retirement	0	1	5

Those participants experiencing *FLOW* (N=5) and those experiencing micro-*FLOW* (N=2) are all active in this retirement phase of their lives, while those in non-*FLOW* (N=2) are passive. As previously stated in Chapter 2, successful aging, optimal aging, positive aging, productive aging, active aging, adaptive aging, or aging well, are late 20th century ideas without universally accepted definitions (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Fernández-Ballesteros, et al., 2007a; Pederson & Harris, 1990; Rowe & Kahn, 1999; Sadler & Biggs, 2006). The criteria used for active aging was goal-setting (please refer to Building blocks and Table 13-2) and structuring the day (please refer to Table 13-2). Six participants, of whom five experienced *FLOW*, and one experienced micro-*FLOW*, structured their days, usually according to the projects at hand for the particular day.

All nine participants were engaged in some form of cognitively stimulating pursuits, with reading being the most preferred activity, although all were not engaged in lifelong learning, such as those not experiencing *FLOW* and one participant experiencing micro-*FLOW* (refer to Building Blocks and Table 13-2).

Reading was also found to be a favourite activity of those older participants in Gray's (1977) research. While only three participants reported grave financial concerns, five were actively supplementing their pension or working due to intrinsic motivation. Eight out of the nine participants are working or would prefer to be productive in retirement, even if it is not financially necessary. Only one participant did not want to work in one or other form in the retirement years. This is inconsistent with Moody's (2006) research that the majority of retirees look forward to retiring, inter alia as an opportunity for self-fulfilment. Apparently wanting to work is not only a Boomer objective, as can be seen in these research findings. Of the Boomers in the USA who have pension benefits, 80% want to work part-time during retirement, of which only 35% want to work part-time because of interest and enjoyment (Friedrich, 2001; Smith & Clurman, 2007). Five out of the nine participants reported a negative view of retirement in accordance with Macnab (1994, p. 46) who sees retirement as a "waste of human resources, skills and experience". Retirement was mostly seen as a loss of income, status and structure by those six participants who view retirement in a negative light. Stereotypes of passive idleness are inconsistent with the research findings of this study (as seen in work-related behaviour and active aging) and are consistent with the research findings of Freedman (1999), Gray (1977) and Macnab (1994) who negate these stereotypes. For those in non-*FLOW*, it seems that the real problem (as in the USA) lies with the unstructured time available: "What is problematic about retirement is not that work is always better, but that the abundance of free time...is not adequately structured for any larger social purpose or meaning" (Freedman, 1999; Moody, 2006, p. 237). A greater emphasis should thus be placed on productivity, in work and in leisure (Freedman, 1999; Moody, 2006). The five participants who experienced *FLOW* were all involved in self-transcending or social-entrepreneurial projects in one form or another, while those without *FLOW* did not generally structure their time, had no longer term goals and tended to be passive.

The five participants who reported *FLOW*, all used their education or skills in retirement. Four of the five participants who experienced *FLOW*, spontaneously reported being very grateful for their blessings. No one belonged to any clubs, which is consistent with Gray's (1977) findings that club membership is not favoured by older people as a leisure activity. The most often mentioned element of successful aging, according to the participants, was helping others, i.e. transcending the self in various ways.

The possible relationship between marital status and *FLOW* will be examined in the next section.

13.3.3 Marital Status and FLOW

In Table 13-4 the marital status of the nine participants is considered in relation to their experiences of *FLOW*.

TABLE 13-4: MARITAL STATUS AND FLOW

CATEGORY	(N=9)	<i>FLOW</i> categories
Married	4	<i>FLOW</i>
	2	<i>Non-FLOW</i>
	1	<i>Micro-FLOW</i>
Divorced	1	<i>FLOW</i>
Married, but estranged and living apart	1	<i>Micro-FLOW</i>
Widowed	0	

The results in Table 13-4 suggest that marital status does not influence experiences of *FLOW*. However, the sample is too small to draw definite conclusions.

13.3.4 FLOW Results Consistent with the Literature Review

***FLOW* was not related to the following variables:**

- *FLOW* was not related to gender.
- *FLOW* was not related to marital status.
- *FLOW* was not related to income.
- *FLOW* was not related to years in retirement.
- *FLOW* was not related to subjective health rating as only one of the nine participants viewed her health as good to excellent (i.e. as ten out of ten).

***FLOW* was related to the following variables:**

- *FLOW* was related to meaningful activities, such as volunteering.
- *FLOW* was related to active religious practices (more than just attending church).

13.3.5 Micro-FLOW Results Consistent with the Literature Review

Micro-*FLOW* is the result of enjoying daily, almost routine common experiences or patterns of behaviour that creates structure and meaning in one's life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Csikszentmihalyi and Graef (1975) advise that enjoyable trivial activities, at a "lower level of complexity" and therefore requiring less skill, can produce "micro flow" throughout one's day.

- The two female participants reported occasional micro-*FLOW* linked to mostly household tasks and described themselves as "content to happy" despite not reporting any *FLOW* experiences. Both found fulfilment in doing ordinary chores around the house, such as cleaning or even building a short footpath, which could be considered a practical creative endeavour (Teacher). The Linguist found a creative outlet in using her writing skills.

13.3.6 Non-FLOW Results Consistent with the Literature Review

“Psychic entropy” (Csikszentmihalyi, e.g. 2002) may be one of the results of not experiencing any *FLOW* in retirement. The Doctor and the Psychologist are struggling to adapt to retirement. People who found their previous work interesting, and who were happy with their salaries, are generally less happy not working any more, according to Argyle (2001), in adjusting to a “roleless role” (Rowe & Kahn, 1999, p. 51, Freedman, 1999, p. 51). This is consistent with the findings of the participants who reported experiencing no *FLOW*. Diener and Seligman (2002) found that good social relationships, extraversion, low neuroticism, and low levels of psychopathology, although important, could not guarantee high happiness. “Thus, there appears to be no single key to high happiness that automatically produces this state” (Diener & Seligman, p. 83). Although there is a link between life satisfaction or happiness and depression, life satisfaction or happiness can not be reduced to the absence or presence of depression (Lewinsohn, et al. 1991).

13.3.7 Results not Consistent with the Literature Review

In this research study, no results were found to be inconsistent with the literature review.

13.4 Integrated Quantitative Findings

13.4.1 Introduction

Four quantitative questionnaires were included for each participant to complete, with the aim of adding to the reliability of the research by means of triangulation. The four questionnaires, which all used a Likert type scale are: The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and lastly the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS). *No effort was made to include any scales or*

questionnaires measuring depression or any type of pathology as: “the avoidance of psychopathology, negative behavioural outcomes, or illness is no guarantee that one will also flourish and be well in multiple realms of life” (Ryff & Singer, 2007, p. 27). Tkach and Lyubomirsky, 2006 (p. 221) also found in their happiness research that “ [personality] traits alone do not fully account for levels of happiness”.

The premise that meaning in life adds to subjective happiness and therefore to successful aging as discussed in Chapter 2, contributed to the decision to include the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ). The Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS) was included because it provides an idea of Locus of Control, e.g. does the participant take initiative in steering life in a desired direction? Additionally, setting goals was one of the building blocks evaluated in the qualitative research. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLS) was included because it provided an indication of overall life satisfaction, and not just satisfaction with specific life domains. Lastly the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) was included because it provides an indication of overall happiness and happiness is regarded as a component of successful aging, and a result of *FLOW*.

The questionnaires are all measured on Likert Scales or a summated rating scale, measuring intensity of attitudes which are regarded as being equal in value (Kerlinger,1986). One of the disadvantages of this type of scale is that some individuals may have a preference for using a certain response style, e.g. extreme or neutral responses (Kerlinger,1986).

13.4.2 Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ)

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) measures the presence of as well as the search for meaning in an individual’s life. It also incorporates the personal significance felt in evaluating one’s life (Steger, et al., 2006). The Presence of Meaning subscale measures the subjectively experienced meaning in one’s

life, while the Search for Meaning subscale measures the desire to find meaning in one's life.

TABLE 13-5: MLQ INTEGRATED FINDINGS

DOMINEE	DOCTOR	ARTIST	CHEMIST	ENTREPRENEUR	TEACHER	PSYCHOLOGIST	NURSE	LINGUIST
P	S	P	P	P	P	S	P	P
<i>FLOW</i>	Non- <i>FLOW</i>	<i>FLOW</i>	<i>FLOW</i>	<i>FLOW</i>	Micro- <i>FLOW</i>	Non- <i>FLOW</i>	<i>FLOW</i>	Micro- <i>FLOW</i>
m	m	f	m	f	f	m	f	f

m=male and f= female

P= Presence of Meaning and S= Searching for Meaning

The results for the nine participants are given in terms of either a focus on the subscale Presence of Meaning (P) or on Searching for Meaning (S).

The MLQ provided the following results for the nine participants: as expected, those with *FLOW* experienced presence of meaning in their lives, and those without experiences of *FLOW* (Doctor and Psychologist) scored higher on the subscale Searching for Meaning than on the subscale Presence of Meaning. The participants who experienced micro-*FLOW*, however, also experienced presence of meaning in their lives. Therefore, *FLOW* does not seem to be the only predictor of experiencing meaning in life. It seems that the results for the nine participants demonstrate a range of *FLOW* on a continuum which depends on various factors such as matching skills and challenges, the ability to focus on the task at hand and feelings of being in control of the action (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi & Graef, 1975). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Graef (1975), micro-*FLOW* experiences may be as intrinsically rewarding as experiences of *FLOW*, which seem to be the case for the participants experiencing micro-*FLOW*.

13.4.3 Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS)

According to Robitschek (1998) the Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) incorporates *cognitive aspects* of personal growth such as self-efficacy, beliefs, attitudes and values that encourage personal growth. It also incorporates *behavioural aspects* that means that the cognitive components are actively implemented for sustained growth. Lastly, it incorporates a positive *attitude* or readiness for change and for personal growth. The PGI thus focuses on intentional (versus unintentional), intrinsic and active and continued personal growth (Robitschek, 1999; 1998).

A mean score of 34 for the PGIS for this research study was calculated from the scores of the nine participants and used to compare the participants in relation to *FLOW*. Their results are also compared to an American sample.

TABLE 13-6: PGIS INTEGRATED FINDINGS

Range	0	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	45	FLOW*	Gender*	
Dominee																			35							F	m
Doctor																			31							nF	m
Artist																							42			F	f
Chemist																							43			F	m
Entrepreneur																							39			F	f
Teacher																							33			mF	f
Psychologist													13												nF	m	
Nurse																							39			F	f
Linguist																							30			mF	f

*F = FLOW, nF = non-FLOW, mF = micro-FLOW, m = male and f = female

**The mean score of 34 is the average of the scores obtained by the nine participants who ranged in age from 62 to 76. Eight were highly educated and had above average to high incomes. All nine participants were Afrikaans speaking.

***The mean of 25 is from the research of Robitschek (1998) for adults ranging in age from 21 to 66 years (N=246). The participants were generally highly educated, had high incomes and were Anglo-American. The participants were all actively involved in the process of seeking out personal growth.

Those participants who experienced *FLOW*, Dominee, Chemist, Artist, Entrepreneur and Nurse, scored above the mean of 34, as could be expected. Those who scored below the mean of 34 (Doctor and Psychologist) did not experience any *FLOW*, as consistent with the interviews. Teacher and Linguist who reported micro-*FLOW* also scored below the mean. Those in *FLOW*

(Doctor, Psychologist) were extremely dissatisfied to slightly satisfied with their lives, as could be expected. However, those in micro-*FLOW* (Teacher, Linguist) were satisfied to extremely satisfied with their lives. This suggests that *FLOW* is but one element for experiencing satisfaction in retirement.

The results for the Subjective Happiness Scale for the nine participants will be presented next.

13.4.5 Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

The scale measures overall subjective well-being or happiness, i.e. happiness in a broad context and from the participant's own perspective (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). A mean of 22,48 rounded off to 22,5 for this diagram, was calculated from the scores of a US retired community sample (N=622) (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). The same mean was used for retirees by Lyubomirsky (2010). A mean of 20,4 rounded off to 20 is the mean score for the nine participants.

TABLE 13-8: SHS INTEGRATED FINDINGS

Range	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20*	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	FLOW, Micro- or Non-FLOW	m or f***																									
Dominee																17											FLOW	m																								
Doctor													13											Non-FLOW	m																											
Artist																							26																											FLOW	f	
Chemist																							26																												FLOW	m
Entrepreneur																							25																												FLOW	f
Teacher																							24																												Micro-FLOW	f
Psychologist						8																		Non-FLOW	m																											
Nurse																			22							FLOW	f																									
Linguist																							23																												Micro-FLOW	f

*The mean score for the nine participants is 20,4 rounded off to 20.

**The mean score of 22,5 is from Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999).

*** m = male or f = female

The above scores indicate that those who experience *FLOW* and micro-*FLOW* scored above the mean of 20, except the Dominee. His financial concerns or other factors may explain his unexpected low score. The fact that he also reported being ambivalent about retirement may also have played a role in his lowered feelings of happiness. However, the Teacher and the Linguist

experiencing micro-FLOW also scored above the mean. The two males, experiencing *FLOW*, the Doctor and the Psychologist, scored below the mean, as expected. Thus it seems that *FLOW* is only one aspect of being happy in the retirement years.

When comparing the results with the American sample, it is evident that those in *FLOW* scored above the mean of 22,5 except the Dominee and the Nurse, who scored below the mean. Thus, although both reported experiencing *FLOW*, *FLOW* seems to be but one aspect accounting for successful and happy adaptation to retirement when compared to retirees in the USA. Those in non-*FLOW* scored significantly below the mean as could be expected. Those participants in micro-*FLOW* scored close to the mean, which is consistent with feeling content versus experiencing high levels of happiness.

Baltes and Baltes (1990, p. 6) warn that subjective criteria for successful aging such as measures of life satisfaction, self-concept, self-esteem and personal control may be over-emphasised and even misleading, and therefore this information must not be overly interpreted, but seen in context with the qualitative data.

13.5 The Results of the Integrated Findings

The Doctor and the Psychologist who did not experience any *FLOW* as ascertained from the qualitative results, consistently scored below the means on the quantitative questionnaires as expected. The Teacher and the Linguist who reported micro-*FLOW*, demonstrate that these results cannot be used as a predictive measure in retirement.

Those who reported being in *FLOW*, experienced the most meaning in life (qualitative and quantitative results), and seem to be successfully adapted to retirement as measured by the following criteria: *active social relations, creativity, flow, goal-setting, happiness, life-long learning, spirituality/religion,*

transcending the self through volunteering or social entrepreneurship, and using strengths in retirement. Those in *FLOW* also **actively sought out** activities that added meaning to their lives and can be said to experience personal growth in aging (Personal Growth Questionnaire) as well as being satisfied with their lives (Satisfaction with Life Scale).

14 CONCLUSION

14.1 Finding FLOW

The aim of this explorative study has been to find the role of *FLOW* in successfully adjusting to retirement, fostering successful aging and being “happily retired”, as one result of *FLOW* is happiness. In addition, the role of academic qualifications and/or skills, and the role of *FLOW* to engage in self-transcending activities were taken into consideration.

From the research findings it became clear that the five participants who were in *FLOW* consistently employed all the building blocks used as criteria. These participants also used their academic qualifications and training in a self-transcending manner. They also seemed to be the happiest. In view of all the evidence these participants can be viewed as successful agers or successfully adapted to retirement.

The two males, who did not experience *FLOW*, employed the lowest number of building blocks for successful adaptation to retirement and they are still struggling to adapt to retirement. They do not seem to have any goals that can substitute their previous work-related goals. They are not involved in any self-transcending activities. They are not using their academic qualifications, except in the case of the Psychologist who is sporadically involved in his previous line of work. As is evident, a good *education* does not promise more subjective well-being, as confirmed by Diener’s (1984) and Kunzman’s (2007) research.

The two females experiencing micro-*FLOW* provided interesting results. They reported being content, happy, and experiencing life as meaningful although they did not experience *FLOW*. They are satisfied with their lives, yet they do not generally engage in any self-transcending activities, and generally do not

use their qualifications in a self-transcending manner. These findings suggest that *FLOW* may be one, yet an *important* aspect of successful aging or successful adaptation to retirement.

Before integrating the findings into a working model for successful adaptation to retirement, it is necessary to refer back to the literature search to bring together some important theoretical concepts. Logan (1988, p.172) sees *FLOW* as a coping mechanism even under adverse circumstances, such as decline and as a possible solution for successfully coping with life's challenges, as *FLOW* is "the vehicle for linking the psychology of successful coping with the psychology of enjoyment". This is important, as according to Robitschek (1998), personal growth and change can be taught to clients, as it is an intentional process. By implication, enhancing *FLOW* can therefore be "taught" to clients (people) – but how?

Robitschek's suggestion is consistent with Csikszentmihalyi's (2002, p. 3) suggestion that "optimal experience is thus something that we *make* happen". This concept of intentional activity is also echoed by Lyubomirsky (2010), who found in her research that 40% of a person's happiness is under his or her own control and could be enhanced by intentional pleasurable activities, in the process alleviating depressive symptoms and improving *productivity, creativity, purpose and meaning*. This is also important, as Csikszentmihalyi's research (e.g. 2002) confirms that happiness is the end-result of *FLOW*. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) advocates that one's whole life should be turned into a unified *FLOW* experience to derive meaning, and that setting personally meaningful goals is a pre-requisite to experience *FLOW*. Thus, intentionally seeking out *FLOW* experiences in retirement, by means of **goal-setting** seems to bring ample reward in terms of happiness, meaning and successful adaptation to retirement. This goal-setting is accomplished by cultivating one's **talents or one's natural competencies**, which will yield more successful outcomes than trying to build up weaknesses (Biswas-Diener & Dean, 2007; Winseman, et al., 2004). Thus, using the building blocks suggested may

enhance the frequency of *FLOW* experiences since Csikszentmihalyi (1993) considers talent development as dependent on the frequency of *FLOW* experiences. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002, p. 225), the discovery of a meaningful goal to invest “psychic energy” in, is accomplished through “[s]elf-knowledge – an ancient remedy so old that its value is easily forgotten...” Manheimer (2006, p. 262) echoes this sentiment when he encourages finding “new uses for our past experiences, accumulated knowledge and expertise, while taking advantage of leisure time we may not have experienced since our teens....having to rethink who we are outside the world of paid work”. Therefore, using intentional activity by setting personally meaningful goals, linking this to one’s strengths and natural abilities, and thinking creatively how to use previous skills in a self-transcending manner, are exactly what the five most “successful” agers (male and female) did.

An illustrative example of how the use of the building blocks promotes *FLOW* may be in order: When faced with the challenging problem of having to supplement his income in retirement, the Dominee used the building blocks creatively and in such a way that he discovered new meaningful goals to substitute his previous work-related goals, which resulted in *FLOW* experiences.

Thus, taking intentional practical steps to improve one’s life may increase feelings of being in control of life, and this may improve overall life satisfaction and happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Lewinsohn et al., 1991; Lyubomirsky, 2010). This, once again, is indeed what the most “successful” agers did. Therefore, it seems that linking the building blocks and the other themes with *FLOW* and entrepreneurship, could provide a tentative model for promoting successful aging or successful adaptation to retirement in line with Hill (2005) and Rowe and Kahn’s (1999) suggestions:

- “Although the concept of utilizing volunteerism as an intervention to enhance well-being has been recommended by self-help authors for decades and theological scholars for centuries, a specific counselling

strategy that engages help-giving as an intervention for promoting positive ageing of the helper has not been articulated in the treatment literature” Hill (2005, p. 169).

- According to Rowe and Kahn (1999, p. 180), research “has yet to discover how best to increase the numbers of older people who age successfully” to enhance more productive aging.

I thus propose a preliminary theoretical model for promoting successful adaptation to retirement, by linking the building blocks discussed, with *FLOW*. Encouraging retirees to explore and redeploy their interests, previous knowledge and skills (strengths) together with the additional themes, and finding *FLOW* in the process, may be a first step to living with self-discovered purpose in retirement - actively forging a new meaningful role to play in retirement, which may also benefit those in society needing help.

A visual representation of the role of *FLOW* to enhance successful retirement or successful adaptation to retirement, is provided in figure 14-1 on the next page. The figure demonstrates the interactive nature of *FLOW*, the building blocks and the additional themes to enhance successful aging and adaptation to retirement.

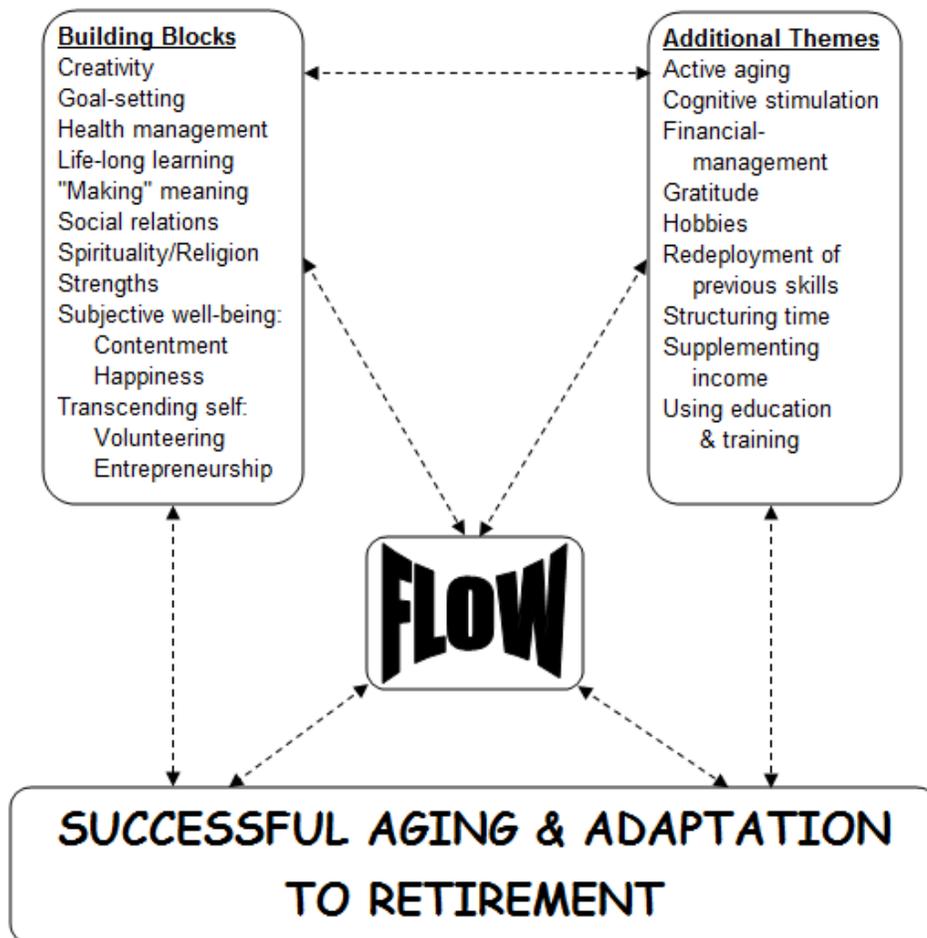


FIGURE 14-1: VISUAL PRESENTATION OF THE ROLE OF FLOW IN SUCCESSFUL RETIREMENT

Taking the qualitative and the quantitative results into consideration, the research questions can be answered next:

14.2 Answers to the Research Questions

Question 1

- Can finding *FLOW* promote successful aging? Alternatively, is experiencing *FLOW* a good indicator of successful adaptation to retirement?

The answer to this question seems to be affirmative. However, it is difficult to determine the direction of causality. Do people in *FLOW* employ more building blocks for successful aging, or do successful agers tend to be more engaged in *FLOW* activities? This is in line with LeFevre's (1988) suggestion that either the time spent in *FLOW* makes people happier, more motivated and more creative, or happier people are able to find opportunities to be in *FLOW* more often. From the quantitative results, it is evident that *FLOW* is only one, albeit an important, aspect of the process of successfully adapting to retirement. Thus, finding and enhancing *FLOW* – activities may be important for adjusting successfully to retirement.

Question 2

- Can knowing one's *FLOW* interests inspire one to become involved in some of society's needs and challenges (transcending the self) in a sustainable way, for example through social entrepreneurship or volunteering?

Yes. The participants in *FLOW* were all involved in self-transcending endeavours, and those without *FLOW* were not. Thus, knowing one's *FLOW* interests could promote motivation to engage in self-transcending activities.

Question 3

- Does a combination of *FLOW* and tertiary education or post-matric training promote involvement in community problems and needs during the retirement years?

No conclusive answer can be given to this question, based on the results of this study, mainly because of the small sample size. The answer to this question is much more complicated than simply taking a tertiary qualification into consideration. Other factors seem to play a role as well, such as successful adjustment to retirement. The Artist, the one with the lowest post-matric qualifications in this study, was also one of the most active, happy, and involved agers, impacting those in need and deriving great meaning from this. On the other hand, the Doctor and the Psychologist, with high levels of education, did not use their accumulated skills and knowledge in retirement. This is in agreement with the findings of Rudinger and Thomaes (1990) who suggest that the subjective cognitive evaluation of a situation for life satisfaction is more important than more objective criteria, such as education. As both the quantitative and qualitative results indicate a search for meaning in these two participants, it seems that they have not yet found ways of redeploying their previous skills in another context, namely retirement.

14.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Additional research on the following topics may enhance successful adaptation to retirement:

- Researching volunteering (help-giving) as a strategy to age successfully.

“Although the concept of utilizing volunteerism as an intervention to enhance well-being has been recommended by self-help authors for decades and theological scholars for centuries, a specific counselling strategy that engages help-giving as an intervention for promoting positive ageing of the helper has not been articulated in the treatment literature. The impact of altruistically motivated help-giving, as a way of developing peace of mind, can be foundational

in moving the focus of psychological resources from self-concerns to a more outward concern for the welfare of others” (Hill, 2005, p. 169).

- Researching ways to actively and practically encourage and sensitise society to the contributions elders can make.

Rowe and Kahn (1999) suggest that voluntary organisations have not yet realised the untapped potential and contributions that retirees could make, and therefore do not reach out to them.

- Researching the influence of personality in the use of the building blocks, additional themes and *FLOW*.

14.4 Reflection

Exploring *FLOW* in Retirement has been a personal and an amazing journey of growth for me, and through exploring *FLOW* I have learnt the following for my own retirement:

- The self-transcending retirees are the happiest and experience retirement as a positive life phase by setting intrinsically meaningful goals.

One of the problems identified in retirement was that life has become devoid of meaning. Setting personally meaningful goals for the retirement years may add feelings of usefulness and meaning to my later years, as consistent with Hill’s suggestion to research volunteering as a strategy to enhance successful adaptation to retirement. The findings of this research study suggest that those retirees who *actively sought out* opportunities to be engaged in meaningful activities, were also the happiest. This is in line with a sermon I heard where Dr Stephan Joubert explained the message of the Bible book Ecclesiastes. The author of Ecclesiastes searched for meaning in knowledge, academic achievements, engineering enterprises, and wealth creation, and came to the conclusion that all these endeavours were meaningless. After much contemplation the writer of Ecclesiastes found that meaning in life needs to be purposefully created, i.e. one should live “on purpose” to flourish. This is

echoed by Csikszentmihalyi's (2002, p. 3) observation that "optimal experience is thus something that we *make* happen".

- My interests, abilities, strengths, and life experiences are a strong indication of where to redeploy my accumulated skills and knowledge in volunteering or social entrepreneurial activities. Describing it in two words: FINDING *FLOW*! According to Csikszentmihalyi's (2002), the result of finding *FLOW* is happiness.
- Failure to use my strengths will result in losing them, for according to Doidge, (2007, pp. 47 & 60) "brain resources are allocated according to the principle of use it or lose it". Thus, life long learning is of paramount importance.
- Working during the retirement years seems to be increasingly important with the longevity envisaged. Social entrepreneurship may thus be a blessing to myself and benefit others in the process.
- Lastly, and very importantly, in the words of Manheimer (2006, p. 262), creative retirement entails focusing on possibilities, on a re-evaluation of my life, a re-thinking of ways to be "engaged with the world", and adding value to others' lives. Just avoiding boredom or keeping occupied without purpose, leads to a postponement of finding new meaning in retirement (Manheimer, 2006).

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16 APPENDICES

16.1 Instruments

16.1.1 The Interview

1. Please describe your experience of retirement so far
.....
.....
2. What are your preferred activities or hobbies? Why?
.....
.....
3. Are you currently engaged in any activities or hobbies that make you so happy that you loose track of time? Such as?
.....
4. And previously? Explain
.....
5. How do you spend your time every day? Any specific (and creative) activities?
.....
.....
6. How do you structure your day (if applicable)?
.....
.....
7. Do you regularly set goals for yourself?
.....
8. Name your top 3 goals (if applicable)
.....
.....
9. What is the result of these meaningful activities, or lack thereof? How does it make you feel?
.....

10. Do you experience your retirement years as meaningful? Why or why not?
-
11. When do you think people should retire?
-
12. Is retirement still a relevant concept? Why or why not?
-
13. What does the term successful aging mean to you personally?
-
14. Is it important for you to be involved in community projects or volunteering and what meaning does it hold (if any) for you?
-
15. Under which circumstances will you consider using your *FLOW* interests to benefit others?
-
-
16. How do you think you would be able to use your *FLOW* interests to benefit others (if applicable)?.....
-
17. What is your definition of successful aging?
-
18. What suggestions do you have to age “successfully?”
-
19. What would you consider to be your legacy?
-
20. What meaning (if any) does the term spirituality or religion have for you?
-

21. Do you belong to a church? Is it still relevant to belong to a church? Why or why not?

.....

.....

16.1.2 FLOW Instrument

1. Please supply detail about the top 3 personally meaningful activities in your retirement and rank these.
2. Name your absolute favourite activity. Explain why it is your favourite.
3. Describe the experience of personal *FLOW* with regard to the most preferred activity, if applicable.
4. How frequently do you experience *FLOW*?
 - Once a day
 - Once a week
 - Once a month
 - 3-4 times a year
 - Once a year
 - Less than once a year
5. How many years have you participated in this activity?
6. How many hours per week do you take part in this activity?
7. In how many clubs are you an active member?
8. Do you take part in top-level competitions?
9. How many books/ magazines or other information (e.g. internet) on your favourite activity do you own or have?
10. Do you experience more or less joy in this activity as time passes?
11. Reasons for enjoying this activity...
12. How do you feel when you are taking part in this activity?
13. Are you aware of your surroundings?
14. How do you experience the passing of time during this activity?
15. What meaning does this *FLOW* experience have for you, if applicable
16. In which situation or areas of life does this experience occur?

17. What is the result of the *FLOW* experience or lack thereof?

16.1.3 Biographical Questionnaire

Date2010

Name and Surname

1. Male/ Female
2. Date of birth
3. Age
4. Date of retirement
5. Married/ divorced/widowed/ estranged
6. Do you experience your pension as being adequate to meet your current needs? (circle the appropriate option):
 - I have some/ grave concern about my financial independence.
 - I am able to meet my needs.
 - I am able to live comfortably.
7. Why do you regard your pension/ financial situation as being adequate or inadequate to meet your current needs?
Reason:
.....
.....
.....
8. Are you currently doing any work for an extra income, e.g. part time work or being self-employed?
9. What kind of work? (If applicable)
10. Previous occupation(s)

11. Current job/ occupation

12. Education (circle the appropriate bullet)

- Less than matric (up to grade 11)
- Matric (grade 12) or equivalent
- Special training (specify)

.....

- Tertiary education (specify)

.....

16.1.4 Informed Consent Form

University of South-Africa (Unisa)

Title of master's degree study: ***EXPLORING FLOW IN RETIREMENT***

Researcher: Aletia Nortje, contact no. 084 783 1308 or 012 997 1025

Supervisor: Dr Beate von Krosigk, Unisa contact no. 012 429 8224

I, (name and surname of participant) hereby acknowledge that the above mentioned study and my participatory role has been clearly explained to me by the researcher. I understand that I am free to contact the researcher at any time should I need any more information, also regarding my participation, or should I wish to cancel my involvement in this study. I understand that participation is voluntary and can be terminated at any stage. It was explained to me that all information will be held by the investigator and not be available to any person, except the researcher's supervisor, Dr Beate von Krosigk.

The date, time and place of the interview will be chosen by me, the participant, at my convenience.

I hereby also acknowledge that any answers or the information given during the interview is voluntary and that it may be used by the researcher in her study and thesis. The information gained is confidential and will only be used for the purpose of the researcher's master's dissertation. I can remain anonymous if I so choose and I shall then only be identified by code or by a pseudonym.

I agree to complete the following 5 questionnaires and take note that it will take approximately 30-40 minutes and the interview on successful retirement approximately another 40-60 minutes.

- BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE
- FLOW QUESTIONNAIRE
- MEANING IN LIFE QUESTIONNAIRE (MLQ)
- PERSONAL GROWTH INITIATIVE SCALE
- SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS SCALE
- SATISFACTION WITH LIFE QUESTIONNAIRE

I hereby give permission for my responses during the interview to be used in the research as outlined above.

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Participant's signature

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Investigator's signature

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Date