

# Archetypal life themes, career orientations, and employability satisfaction of higher education students: A postmodern career counselling perspective

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## **Abstract**

The objective of the study was to explore the constructs archetypal life themes (measured by the Pearson-Marr Archetype Indicator), and career orientations (measured by the Career Orientations Inventory) from a postmodern career counselling perspective in facilitating students' employability satisfaction (measured by a single item scale). A random sample of 270 predominantly black and female distance learning undergraduate students (mean age = 32) employed in the service industry participated in the survey. Correlational statistics revealed statistically significant relationships between the participants' current active archetypal life themes, their dominant career orientations and employability satisfaction. The value of the findings lies in the explanatory utility of the identified empirical relationships between the three variables in postmodern constructivist and narrative career counselling approaches interested in combining facets of quantitative with qualitative assessments.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The changing employment climate has increased the importance of career guidance and counselling and development support in maximising individuals' chances of experiencing job and career satisfaction over their life course (Sinclair 2009, 1). The advent of more flexible and diverse career patterns, more frequent career transitions across as well as within organisations, less secure and stable employment opportunities, and a growing concern about employability in a knowledge-driven economy necessitates individuals to take greater agency in their career decisions and development, and find different ways of pro-actively fulfilling their career needs (Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth 2004, 15; Sinclair 2009, 1). In the postmodern careers context, individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their vocational behaviour and occupational experiences (Savickas 2005). In constructing a career, individuals engage in an ongoing process of adaptation to enhance the match between self and situation, and to better realise their self-concept in their work and working environment (Hartung 2007; Savickas 2005).

The changing employment context has heightened the need for higher education students to have access to and participate in ongoing career and personal development activities that stimulate continued self-reflection on their employability, their career preferences, interests and motivations (Pool and Sewell 2007, 284) as aspects of the career construction process. Research has shown that work (as an important aspect of one's career and life) is a personal matter which involves the location of self and identity in an ongoing social process of engagement with the labour process within which individuals operate (Tomlinson 2007, 287). Employability as a form of functional flexibility (Van der Heijden 2002, 44) reflects individuals' self-efficacious beliefs about their possibilities of securing employment (Berntson, Näswall and Sverke 2008, 414) within an uncertain employment context. Although work and educational issues are likely to remain important, many higher education students will need help in dealing with broader concerns, such as coping with the frustrations of redundancy and unemployment, deciding whether to return to study or work, and finding ways to balance different life roles (Kidd 2007). In a postmodern era, career counselling frameworks should help individuals make career-related decisions, effectively construct and manage their careers over the life course, and assist them in developing the perspectives, skills, and attitudes to adapt to and deal intelligently with the challenges that arise as their working lives progress in an unpredictable socio-economic environment (Kidd 2007; Schreuder and Coetzee 2011).

The foregoing trends have led to a renewed interest in the motivations and driving forces patterning individuals' career development into meaningful and coherent narratives over time (Maree 2010, 363). In agreement with this, Savickas and colleagues (2009) posit that postmodern career counselling practices emphasise the understanding of the personal narratives (the motivations and driving forces that underlie individuals' thematic life stories), personality style (the abilities, needs, values, interests, and other traits that typify individuals' self-concepts), individual development (life/career stage tasks and challenges), and career adaptability strategies that people use to negotiate developmental tasks and career transitions over the course of their life journeys.

This research sets out to explore two career-related constructs that form part of the emerging trends in postmodern career counselling, namely archetypal life themes and career orientations in facilitating students' self-expression and identity as important attributes of their employability satisfaction. As research on the relationship between these three constructs and their relevance to the postmodern perspective on career counselling seems to be limited, this study is regarded to potentially add valuable new knowledge to the postmodern careers literature.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In terms of the present study, the constructs archetypal life themes and career orientations which form part of the traditional quantitative assessment approaches to career counselling are studied from a postmodern career counselling perspective. The

literature review on the two constructs is approached from the psychodynamic and the postmodern constructivist perspectives of careers. Psychodynamic approaches to career counselling focus on internal structures of motivation, and the constructs of ego-identity, life scripts and life themes (Schreuder and Coetzee 2011, 125). According to constructivist theory, as defined by Savickas' (2005) post-modern narrative approach, careers are constructed as individuals make choices that express their self-concepts and substantiate their goals in the social reality of life (Amundsen, Harris-Bowlsbey and Niles 2009, 25). Savickas' (2005) career construction theory blends the psychodynamic approach with differential and developmental approaches in understanding the client (Maree 2010, 369; Sharf 2010, 345).

A significant feature of career construction theory is the use of qualitative assessment techniques for discussing vocational personality, career adaptability, and life themes which are all based on understanding the client's narrative, or story, and on helping the client act on a career choice (Sharf 2010, 345). Both Cochran (1997) and Savickas (2005) illustrate how traditional quantitative assessment measures and inventories can be integrated with constructivist methods to understand client narratives or stories, and to help clients find additional information about occupations and their preferences so that they could see if the occupational choice fits into the plot of their narrative (Sharf 2010, 343).

### **Archetypal life themes**

Pearson's (1991) archetypal model of adult development is used as a framework for studying individuals' archetypal life themes in this study. Pearson's (1991) model of twelve archetypes is a spiral developmental model and is more complex than linear developmental models which contain set sequences of archetypes. The model is designed to help people recognise the archetypal stories or narrative that are present in their lives and that provide meaning to their lives and careers. Individuals encounter the same archetypes at different levels of integration as personal development progresses along the adult life journey. Archetypes generally communicate desires and motivations common to human beings in all cultural contexts (Pearson and Marr 2002, 4). Understanding which of the archetypes is active in a person's life enables the identification of psychological needs and potential developmental blocks related to the particular life phase.

The archetypal framework (shown in Table 1) has been developed to guide people on utilising their knowledge of the archetypes in living more consciously and with greater flexibility, gaining narrative intelligence in re-constructing their life stories, and ultimately fulfilling their full potential (Pearson and Marr 2007, 37). Combining adult development and cognitive state, the twelve archetypes are ways of cognitively and emotionally organising life events and experiences in certain preferred manners represented by life themes common to all cultures (Pearson and Marr 2003, 37). As such the archetypes are typically called forth in handling particular life tasks. Although some archetypes may provide the basis for a person's core story, others will flow in and out of his or her life in ways appropriate to life

stages, circumstances, challenges as well as to the unique quality of mind and soul of the individual involved. In this regard, attention to the archetypes in individuals' lives may both help one discover some fundamental source of meaning and/or track where one is in one's life journey (Pearson and Marr 2003, 37).

As an extension of Jung's (1968) archetype concept, Pearson's (1991) model uses the metaphor of the 'heroic journey' in order to provide an understanding of the universal challenges and tasks related to adult development. The task of the journey is to identify and generate the inner capacities represented by each of the twelve archetypes. Metaphorically, the individual goes on a journey and returns with a prize or gift, which is a newly differentiated part of himself or herself. That part must be integrated. Individually, this involves discovering and marshalling the full range of one's talents and abilities, including the ability to affiliate and be close with others and to envision what one can become (Pearson 1997, 21). Elements of the hero's archetypal adventure are a starting point in a familiar world; a call to adventure to a new challenge, challenges and trials along the way; to assistance by magical helpers (the archetypes); to victory as the hero confronts the greatest challenges; to new learning and personal transformation through the experiences gained; to a return to the previous world bearing gifts to share from lessons learnt; and to mastery of one's world (Hudson and Inkson 2006, 307).

Table 1: Core life theme goals, values, desires and work attitude underlying Pearson's (1997) archetypes

Construct	Core life theme goals and values	Core story and desire from workplace	Core work attitude
Pearson's Archetypal life themes			
Ego development themes (preparation phase – outward journey)			
Innocent	Goal: To remain in safe, protected, idyllic environment Value: Tradition	Story: Prehero (before journey) lives in paradise Desire: Safety (wants job security and stability, reassurance, to be cared for)	Do what is or has been expected of one (learning with stability)
Orphan	Goal: To avoid further pain, abandonment, or betrayal Value: Survival	Story: Hero falls from innocence, becomes a victim in a world of villains and victims, wants to be rescued, seeks relief from pain–'wounded healer' Desire: Belonging (to be cared for, rescued; job security)	Motivated by survival, security, money, or revenge (people with stability)

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Construct	Core life theme goals and values	Core story and desire from workplace	Core work attitude
Caregiver	Goal: To be good, caring, unselfish Value: Caring	Story: Cares for and empowers others, often sacrifices to do so Desire: Expressing unselfish love (appreciation, care, warmth, sense of mattering)	Work gives a chance to help others, to serve a purpose (stability with people)
Warrior	Goal: To be strong and effective, to win, to overcome fear Value: Winning	Story: Hero confronts villain, rescues victim Desire: Mastery (challenge, chance to compete and achieve)	Work hard for goal, expects reward (results with people)
Soul/spiritual meaning making themes (initiation phase – inward journey)			
Seeker	Goal: To find out who one is, to discover identity and independence Value: Autonomy and independence	Story: Hero leaves home/job/spouse to 'find' self or, Hero stays and feel alienated, alone, an outsider Desire: Freedom (autonomy, independence, to be allowed to solve problems in own way)	Independent, 'just passing through', not yet doing their 'real work' (learning with results)
Destroyer	Goal: To get rid of whatever is not working Value: High quality output	Story: Hero identifies an obstacle and removes it Desire: Perfection (excellence, efficiency; understanding of the positive intent behind the constant pruning)	Tough mindedness, stoic, 'I do what needs to be done' (results with learning)
Creator	Goal: To create something new Value: Artistic integrity, truth to one's own vision	Story: Opens to inspiration, masters the craft necessary to express vision in concrete and beautiful structures Desire: Achievement (the chance to be creative; material and technical support for one's creations)	Love the process of a creative endeavour; work for the work's sake (stability with learning)

Construct	Core life theme goals and values	Core story and desire from workplace	Core work attitude
Lover	Goal: To be in loving relationships with self and others Value: Harmony	Story: Falls in love (with job, career, person, etc.), overcomes obstacles, makes commitment; or falls in love, is miserable at being separated from love object, but is finally reunited. Desire: Intimacy (commitment to and passion for shared task; chance to follow vocational passion; beauty; fulfilling personal relationships)	In love with their work, see work as a great pleasure of life (people with results)
Self-expression themes (return phase – balancing outward and inward journey)			
Sage	Goal: To achieve wisdom; sort out truth from falsehoods Value: Continuous learning	Story: Finds wisdom by learning to let go and detach Desire: Understanding ('Laboratory' or 'schoolroom' where one can seek, try out, and teach ideas)	Focus on concepts, big picture. Passing on one's wisdom and knowledge (learning with people)
Magician	Goal: To find 'win-win' solutions to problems Value: Innovation, growth, transformation	Story: The hero creates a new reality or creatively 'names' or transforms an old one, thus solving the problem. Desire: Power (solving challenging problems; troubleshooting/thriving on chaos; overcoming impossible obstacles; solving unsolvable problems in innovative ways).	Work as a vocation – its own reward – and an opportunity to grow and learn (results with stability)
Ruler	Goal: To find ways for all involved to make their fullest and most authentic contribution for the good of all; to create an orderly kingdom Value: Power	Story: Takes kingdom from chaos to order, finds positive use for everything and everyone Desire: Control (status, power, authority)	Responsibility, harmonizing, allocation of resources (stability with results)

Construct	Core life theme goals and values	Core story and desire from workplace	Core work attitude
Jester	Goal: Lightness, aliveness, engagement Value: Lightness and spontaneity	Story: Little hero defeats bigger opponent through cleverness, clowns it up to enliven a dull situation, or uses humour to speak with impunity what would ordinarily be an 'unspeakable' truth Desire: Pleasure (sense of fun, challenge, zest in life)	Work is play; rules are made to be broken (people with learning)

As shown in Table 1, the archetypes of the hero (or adult) are developmentally clustered as three groups of four: (1) the ego or preparation phase of the adult's or hero's life journey (composed of the innocent, orphan, caregiver, and warrior), (2) the soul or the initiation and meaning-making phase of the internal journey of the hero (composed of the seeker, lover, creator, and destroyer), and (3) the self. The self is regarded as the balancing point of the entire psyche (composed of the ruler, magician, sage, and jester). The ego phase is usually encountered in greatest measure in young adulthood, regarded as the beginning of the adult journey, and the phase of establishing oneself and one's ways in the external world. As a person becomes established in his or her career, he or she often reaches a time of searching, a revisiting of the creation of identity and meaning with the internal life, and the internal soul journey becoming a prominent focus. According to Pearson and Marr (2003, 6–7), having experienced both an outward (ego) and an inward (soul) journey a person becomes increasingly able to manage and balance the outward and inward life; integrating and expressing the self more fully. The hero's journey is an iterative process, which means individuals embark on numerous psychological journeys that together make up their grander journey; thus they may encounter the same archetypes many times in somewhat different forms and at different levels (Pearson and Marr 2003, 37). Research by Pearson's (1991) suggests that the model of archetypes enables individuals to normalise their experiences through the recognition of the universality of certain themes, and their underlying goals, values, desires and attitudes which act as so called invisible psychological forces that drive their behaviour. Individuals are then able to understand these themes in the broader context of life stories which help them to construct meaning in their lives (Pearson and Marr 2003, 10).

In the career counselling process, counsellors follow a typical postmodern approach by combining facets of a quantitative approach (the formal assessment of clients' current active archetypes) with stories, narratives and qualitative assessment (Maree 2010, 365). Clients determine the archetypes most active in their current lives by completing the Pearson-Marr Type Indicator (Pearson and Marr 2007). The results of the assessment are then verified or validated during the career counselling

process. Clients are guided toward finding their dominant life stories (based on their personal childhood memories and current personal stories, and problems or challenges they are facing). They are then guided to compare the themes of their stories with the themes and development stage related to the twelve archetypes. Clients are also guided to expand their options by reflecting on current problematic challenges or issues they are facing, or struggling to deal with. They are then guided on how to access the gifts, talents or perspectives of the various archetypes in dealing more proactively or effectively with the problematic challenge or issue (Pearson and Marr 2007, 37).

In the context of career counselling for higher education students, self-awareness of the goals, values, stories, desires and attitudes underlying the archetypal life themes active in an individual's life at a given time in his or her life journey, can assist him or her to achieve an advanced level of career self-management. Understanding the deep psychological structures represented by the archetypes and how these manifest in individuals' lives, makes the individuation process of crystallising the self-identity and fulfilling one's potential a more conscious one. Knowledge of the archetypes can help higher education students and other client groups better decode the underlying logic of their lives, help them find greater fulfillment and satisfaction, and free themselves from living out limiting patterns and behaviours (Pearson and Marr 2002, 5). Formal quantitative assessment of individuals' archetypes along with qualitative narrative approaches help individuals recognise their current developmental/life issues and gain a better understanding of the tasks necessary to move on to the next phase of the journey. Career counsellors conversant with the theories and the assessment of archetypes can help clients deal more constructively with career transitions. In the higher education context, archetypal theory and assessment can help deepen students' understanding of their preferences and motivations. However, since individuals' archetypal life themes change over time as they encounter new situations and evolve as human beings, archetypal assessment should be used with instruments that assess other factors that remain constant over time, such as personality or career orientations assessments (Pearson and Marr 2003, 18–19).

### **Career orientations**

The concept of career orientations has been termed by Schein (1978, 10) as career anchors which refer to a pattern of self-perceived talents and abilities, basic personal values, and the evolved sense of motives and needs (as they pertain to the career), that influences a person's career-related decisions. These self-perceived talents and abilities, values, motives and needs represent the person's career identity or self-concept (Schein 1978; 1990; 1996). A person's dominant career anchor reflects a major career-related concern that forms an integral part of his or her basic self-concept. This concern becomes an overriding issue at every stage of the person's career, and serves as an internal driving force when making career decisions (Schein 1990, 20).



Schein's (1978) theory of career anchors provides a model of career development that takes into consideration the complexity of career development. Career anchors tend to develop over time and individuals generally discover their dominant career anchors when they start to stabilise in their careers or jobs – usually at the age of 30 (Coetzee and Schreuder 2009, 2; Ellison and Schreuder 2000, 2; Van Vuuren and Fourie 2000, 15). The career self-concept continuously evolves based on the insight gained through knowledge and experience (Schein 2006, 20).

Research by Schein (1978; 1990; 1996) suggests that most people's career self-concepts (self-perceived talents and abilities, motives and values) are grounded in eight career orientations or anchors (summarised in Table 2). Feldman and Bolino (2000, 53) reconceptualised Schein's eight career anchors into three distinct groupings along with their inherent motivations. These motivations are described as being talents-based, needs-based and values-based anchors. The *talents-based* anchors consist of managerial competence (willingness to solve complex, whole-of-organisation problems and undertake subsequent decision-making), technical/functional competence (the achievement of expert status among peers) and entrepreneurial creativity (opportunity for creativity and identification of new businesses, products or services). The *needs-based* anchors consist of security and stability (long-term employment for health benefits and retirement options), autonomy and independence (personal freedom in job content and settings) and lifestyle motivations (balancing one's personal and the family's welfare with work commitments). The *values-based* anchors consist of pure challenge (testing personal endurance through risky projects or physically challenging work) and service and dedication to a cause (working for the greater good of organisations or communities). Table 2 provides a brief overview of the core goals, desires and values underlying each of the eight career anchors.

Empirical evidence suggests that when individuals achieve congruence between their career anchors and their work environment they are more likely to achieve positive career outcomes (Feldman and Bolino 2000, 53). Furthermore, research also indicates individuals' need for congruence between their work and personal interests, and that individual preferences shift towards career anchors which are focused on the pursuit of personal interests along with meaningful work (Coetzee and Schreuder 2008, 45). Individuals make career changes based on personal preferences and current circumstances (Coetzee, Schreuder and Tladinyane 2007, 65; Hess and Jepsen 2009, 261).

As in the case of the archetypal life themes, counsellors also combine facets of a quantitative approach (the formal assessment of clients' dominant career orientations) with a qualitative assessment, career narrative approach. Clients determine their dominant career anchors by completing the Career Orientations Inventory (Schein 1990). The results of the assessment are then also verified or validated during the career counselling process. The career counsellor conducts an interview with the client by requesting him or her to reflect on the career choices he or she made in terms of his or her career history and future career plans. Clients are requested to reflect

on their feelings about their choices, reasons (motivation) for their choices, goals and ambitions, major job or career changes, and outcomes of their career decisions. Clients are then requested to reflect on the factors that guided and constrained their careers by identifying patterns or themes in the narrated life events and the reasons behind them (Schein 1990).

Table 2: Core goals and concerns, desires and values underlying Schein's (1990) career orientations

Construct	Core goal/ career concerns	Core desire from workplace	Core value
<i>Talents-based career anchors</i>			
Technical/ functional competence	To exercise talent and develop knowledge of one's expertise	Challenging work that tests one's talents, abilities and skills	Specialisation Further learning and development in one's specialty
General managerial competence	To rise to organisational levels where one is responsible for major policy decisions and where one's own efforts will make the difference between success and failure	High level of responsibility; challenging, varied and integrative work; opportunities for leadership, contributing to the success of the organisation	Power and influence; advancement up the corporate ladder
Entrepreneurial creativity	To create new businesses of one's own; developing new products or services; building new organisations	Challenging opportunities to create own enterprises, create or invent new products or services	Power and freedom to create wealth High personal visibility and public recognition
<i>Needs-based career anchors</i>			
Autonomy/ independence	To do things in one's own way, at one's own pace, and against one's own standards at one's own terms	Clearly delineated, time-bounded kinds of work within own area of expertise which allows one to accomplish tasks/goals at one's own terms, in one's own way	Freedom to achieve and demonstrate one's competence
Security/stability	To feel safe and secure	Job tenure and job security; retirement plan and benefits; rewarding steady, predictable performance	Predictability and being rewarded for length of service
Lifestyle	To integrate one's work/career with one's personal and family needs (balancing a total lifestyle)	Respect for personal and family concerns and openness to renegotiate the psychological contract in line with changing lifestyle needs	Flexibility and freedom to balance work-family life

Construct	Core goal/ career concerns	Core desire from workplace	Core value
<i>Values-based career anchors</i>			
Service/ dedication to a cause	To improve the world or society in some fashion; serving humanity and one's nation	Opportunities to influence the employing organisation or social policies in the direction of one's personal values; serving a higher purpose in line with one's personal values	Influence and freedom to operate autonomously in the pursuit of one's personal values or higher life purpose/ goal
Pure challenge	To overcome impossible obstacles; solving unsolvable problems, or winning out over extremely tough opponents	Tasks or situations that provide a constant variety of challenging opportunities for self-tests	Power and influence to be competitive and win

### Employability satisfaction

The concept of employability has emerged as a key contributor to career success and satisfaction in an increasingly globally unstable and chaotic business environment (Coetzee and Beukes 2010, 441). Moreover, the enhancement of student employability is a growing priority for higher education institutions (Wright 2001, 1). Tomlinson (2007, 287) regards student employability to be values- and identity-driven, relating to students' own dispositions and biographies. In line with Savickas' (2005) constructivist theory, McArdle, Waters, Briscoe and Hall (2007, 248) view career identity and adaptability as key aspects of individuals' self-perceived employability.

In the context of the present study, employability satisfaction is defined as the self-perceived level of satisfaction students have in terms of their beliefs that they have the attributes, skills, knowledge, experience and occupational expertise to create or attract employment with ease (Schreuder and Coetzee 2011). Employability satisfaction thus represents students' self-efficacious beliefs about their capabilities of securing employment. Bandura (1997) and Van der Velde and Van den Berg (2003, 46) suggest that employability is largely dependent on self-efficacy, which in turn, has been shown to be positively related to job search behaviour and positive employment outcomes (Kanfer, Wanberg and Kantrowitz 2001, 837).

### Archetypal life themes, career orientations, and employability satisfaction

In accordance with Jung's (1968) archetypal theory of the psyche the archetypal values underlying Pearson's (1991) twelve archetypes can be regarded to represent unconsciously determined psychological drives that reside in the collective unconscious. Archetypes are constructed from the generalised content of the collective unconscious and generated from repeated experiences from earlier generations (Jung 1968). The career orientations included in Schein's (1978) career

anchor theory and individuals' self-perceived employability are hypothesised to form part of the conscious content of the psyche. This hypothesis is motivated by the fact that Schein's (1978) career anchors are based on an individual's experience, systematic self-diagnosis and self-insight, and interests and abilities. These career anchors are stabilising and consistent values that influence decision-making (Du Toit 2010) and individuals' career and job satisfaction (Coetzee, Bergh and Schreuder 2010, 1).

The characteristics of career anchors and self-perceived employability are consistent with Jung's (1968) conceptualisation of the conscious including an individual's process of structuring reality, and the structuring and creation of an individual's awareness of himself or herself. Jung (1968) further proposed that the individual constructs an identity of himself or herself through the internal functioning of the conscious, while Schein (2006) consistently states that career anchors consist of individuals' personal views of themselves, their views of their life and their self-concept. It therefore stands to reason that viewing career anchors and individuals' self-perceived employability as being part of the conscious seems to be consistent with both Jung's (1968) conception of the psyche and with Schein's (1978) conception of career anchors.

The collective unconscious (archetypes) is independent and not influenced by the conscious (career anchors). However, the collective unconscious is active and influences the conscious through thoughts, emotions and reactions (Jung 1968). In this regard, research by Du Toit (2010) indicated that people's archetypal life themes are significantly related to their career orientations, their perceptions of their career success, and the meaningfulness of their careers. Although there seems to be a paucity of research on the relationship between archetypal life themes, career orientations and employability satisfaction, research by Coetzee et al. (2010, 1) indicate that people's career orientations are significantly related to their subjective work experiences, their career and job satisfaction and the meaning they attach to work.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the study was to explore the constructs of archetypal life themes and career orientations from a postmodern career counselling perspective in facilitating students' self-expression and identity as important attributes of their employability satisfaction. In order to achieve the overall objective, the relationship between the participants' dominant archetypal life themes, their dominant career orientations profile, and their employability satisfaction was empirically assessed to explore the explanatory utility of the identified relationships between the three variables. Should the results reveal statistical significant relationships between the variables, the study may potentially contribute to the advancement of postmodern career counselling approaches concerned with constructing theoretical frameworks that combine facets of a quantitative approach (using objective career-related constructs and measures)

with the postmodern approach of story, narratives and qualitative assessments (Maree 2010, 365) to enhance students' employability satisfaction.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Research approach**

A quantitative survey design using primary data was used to fulfil the research objectives.

### **Research method**

#### ***Participants***

The participants were a random sample of distance learning students ( $n = 270$ ) who were registered for undergraduate studies in the economic and management sciences at a South African higher education open distance learning institution for a particular year. The sample constituted 74 per cent females and 26 per cent males. Blacks represented 71 per cent (Africans 55%, Coloureds 7%, and Indians 9%), and whites 29 per cent of the sample. The sample was represented by single (66%) and married (34%) participants in the early adulthood life stage (25–40 years) (86%). The mean age of participants was 32, which implies well-established internal career preferences and values (Schein 1996, 80).

The sample predominantly represented students who were employed in the service industry. The participants occupied managerial level (40%) and staff level (60%) positions with occupational expertise predominantly in the financial (21%), education (11%), human resource management (9%), protective services (9%), and health care (8%) fields.

#### ***Measuring instruments***

The Pearson Marr Archetype Indicator (PMAI) (Pearson and Marr 2003) was used to measure the archetypal life themes of the participants. The PMAI is a self-rated, multi-factorial measure that contains 12 subscales (innocent, orphan, seeker, warrior, caregiver, destroyer, creator, lover, sage, magician, ruler and jester) consisting of a total of 72 items. Responses are captured on a five-point Likert scale. As the PMAI has not been standardised for South African populations internal consistency reliabilities were conducted for the sample group. As shown in Table 3, in the present study, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each scale were high overall, ranging between 0.71 and 0.76.

The Career orientations Inventory (COI) (Schein 2006) was used to measure the career orientations of the participants. The COI is an established instrument that has been used to measure career orientations both internationally and in South Africa. The COI is a self-report measure that contains 40 items. Responses are captured on a six-point Likert scale. The COI has evidenced good psychometric validity and

reliability in other South African multi-cultural samples (Coetzee and De Villiers 2010; Coetzee and Schreuder 2008, 2009; Coetzee et al. 2007; Ellison and Schreuder 2000; Van Vuuren and Fourie 2000). High Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were obtained in the present study, ranging between 0.77 and 0.81.

The biographical questionnaire contained an additional item that measured participants' perceptions of their level of employability satisfaction on a four-point scale, ranging from very dissatisfied to highly satisfied.

In accordance with the guidelines provided by De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2009) and Foxcroft and Roodt (2001), the construct validity and internal consistency reliability of the measuring instruments were regarded as acceptable as the study merely aimed to measure broad, group-based trends for research purposes.

### ***Research procedure***

Ethical clearance and permission to conduct the study was obtained from the management of the higher education institution that participated in the study in accordance with the institution's Research Ethics Policy. Questionnaires were mailed to 3 000 randomly selected students who were registered at the higher education institution for the particular year. Only 270 usable questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 9 per cent. The postal facilities of the institution were used to mail these questionnaires. Each questionnaire included a covering letter to obtain informed consent from the participants. The covering letter explained the purpose of the research, procedure, potential benefits, confidentiality, anonymity, participation and withdrawal. Participants understood that by completing and returning the questionnaires they permitted the researcher to use and publish their responses for research purposes only. Participants were requested to complete the questionnaires and return them by mail to the researcher using an enclosed return envelope.

### ***Statistical analyses***

The Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 17.0 (2008) was used to analyse the data. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency of the measuring instruments. Descriptive statistics were performed, and correlations were calculated to assess the direction and strength of the relationships between the variables. In order to counter the probability of a type 1 error the significance value was set at the 95 per cent confidence interval level ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). For the purposes of this study,  $r$  values larger than 0.30 (medium effect) (Cohen 1992, 153) were regarded as practically significant.

## **RESULTS**

### **Archetypal profile**

The results shown in Table 3 indicate that the three archetypes associated with the self-expression or return phase of the hero's journey (sage, ruler, magician), and the

warrior archetype (associated with the ego development phase and outward journey) obtained mean scores in the highest score range (Pearson and Marr 2002, 40). The mean scores indicate that these four archetypes may currently be very active in the participants' lives, serving as their allies and defining the stories they are living and the gifts and lessons they are gaining. They may also be related to their sense of identity and calling, or be related to current life stages or challenges (Pearson and Marr 2002, 40).

With the exception of the orphan ( $M = 17.89$ ;  $SD = 3.75$ ), which seems not to be often expressed in the participants' lives, all the other archetypes seem to be either ascending or descending into the participants' consciousness. The mean scores indicate that these archetypes are likely to be available to the participants when they need them but do not necessarily determine how they see the world (Pearson and Marr 2002, 40).

Table 3: Means, standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha coefficients: PMAI & COI (n = 270)

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
COI (Scale overall)			0.81
Technical/functional	20.04	4.26	0.77
General management	17.42	4.04	0.79
Autonomy	18.88	5.24	0.80
Security/stability	22.88	4.01	0.81
Entrepreneurial creativity	19.37	5.87	0.78
Service/dedication to a cause	22.00	4.22	0.78
Pure challenge	20.87	4.47	0.77
Lifestyle	21.59	5.03	0.78
PMAI (scale overall)			0.74
Innocent	18.43	3.80	0.75
Orphan	17.89	3.75	0.76
Caregiver	21.93	3.92	0.72
Warrior	23.10	3.54	0.73
Seeker	21.67	3.35	0.72
Destroyer	18.17	4.07	0.75
Creator	22.57	3.49	0.70
Lover	21.81	3.98	0.71
Sage	24.64	2.96	0.71
Magician	23.83	3.50	0.70
Ruler	24.08	3.45	0.72
Jester	22.98	3.78	0.71

## Career orientations profile

Table 3 shows that security/stability ( $M = 22.88$ ;  $SD = 4.01$ ), service/dedication to a cause ( $M = 22.00$ ;  $SD = 4.22$ ), and lifestyle ( $M = 21.59$ ;  $SD = 5.03$ ) are the three dominant career orientations of the participants. These career orientations are needs-based (security/stability and lifestyle), and values-based (service/dedication to a cause).

## Employability satisfaction

The participants were mostly satisfied with their level of employability, with 52 per cent indicating they are satisfied, and 29 per cent indicating that they were highly satisfied (total satisfaction 81%). Only 2 per cent indicated that they were highly dissatisfied and 17 per cent indicated that they were dissatisfied.

## Correlations

Table 4 reports the significant correlations between the PMAI, COI, and employability satisfaction variables. It is interesting to note that the orphan archetype does not relate significantly to any of the COI and employability satisfaction variables. The observed significant correlations range between  $r \geq 0.12 \leq 0.29$  (small practical effect), and  $r \geq 0.30 \leq 0.44$  (medium practical effect). In terms of the current active archetypes in the participants' archetypal profile, the sage, ruler, and warrior archetypes correlate positively and significantly with all the COI variables and the employability satisfaction variable. Similarly, with the exception of the COI autonomy career orientation, the magician archetype relates positively and significantly to all the COI variables, and the employability satisfaction variable. Only the technical/functional, service/dedication and pure challenge career orientations relate significantly to the employability satisfaction variable.



Table 4: Correlations: PMAI, COI & employability satisfaction (n = 270)

PMAI	COI								
	T/F	GM	AU	SEC	EC	SV	CH	LS	ES
Innocent	0.12+ *					0.20+ **			
Caregiver	0.12+ **					0.31++ ***	0.17+ **		0.18+ **
Warrior	0.21+ ***	0.35++ ***	0.22+ ***	0.15+ **	0.27+ ***	0.18+ **	0.43++ ***	0.12+ *	0.24+ ***
Seeker	0.25+ ***	0.19+ **	0.32++ ***		0.34++ ***	0.15+ **	0.24+ ***	0.16+ **	
Destroyer	0.19+ **		0.14+ *		0.14+ *				
Creator	0.21+ ***	0.21+ ***	0.25+ ***		0.27+ ***	0.26+ ***	0.24+ ***	0.15+ **	0.19+ **
Lover	0.22+ ***		0.18+ **	0.18+ **	0.16+ **	0.31++ ***	0.15+ **	0.23+ ***	0.25+ ***
Sage	0.25+ ***	0.20+ **	0.16+ **	0.14+ **	0.20+ ***	0.32++ ***	0.36++ ***	0.15+ *	0.18+ **
Magician	0.29+ ***	0.14+ **		0.20+ ***	0.16+ **	0.44++ ***	0.32++ ***	0.23+ ***	0.19+ **
Ruler	0.26+ ***	0.36++ ***	0.23+ ***	0.15+ **	0.25+ ***	0.16+ **	0.27+ ***	0.12+ *	0.19+ **
Jester	0.18+ **			0.15+ **		0.21+ ***	0.17+ **	0.17+ **	
Employability satisfaction	0.17+ **					0.13+ *	0.18+ **		

\*\*\*p ≤ 0.001 \*\*p ≤ 0.01 \*p ≤ 0.05

+++ r ≥ 0.50 (large practical effect size) ++ r ≥ 0.30 (medium practical effect size) + r ≤ 0.29 (small practical effect size)

T/F: Technical functional; GM: General management; AU: Autonomy; SEC: Security/stability; EC: Entrepreneurial creativity; SV: Service/dedication to a cause; CH: Pure challenge; LS: Lifestyle; ES: Employability satisfaction

## DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to explore the constructs archetypal life themes and career orientations from a postmodern career counselling perspective in facilitating students' employability satisfaction. This was done by empirically investigating the relationship between the constructs by means of quantitative measures to assess the explanatory utility of the identified relationships between the three variables in postmodern narrative approaches to career counselling. Figure 1 provides a conceptual overview of the core empirical findings.

Overall, the biographical profile of the participants indicated that they were mostly represented by blacks and females employed in the service industry, and in the establishment phase of their careers. The establishment phase of adult career development is the phase in which the person finds his or her occupational niche and has become part of the work organisation and larger community (Schreuder and Coetzee 2011, 50). This is also reflected in the dominant archetypal profile of the participants which suggests that the participants are currently in the stabilisation

and integration phase of their life’s journey, and may be psychologically influenced and motivated by the responsibilities and wisdom represented by their most active archetypal life themes (Pearson and Marr 2003). Moreover, the overall archetypal and career orientations profile seem to corroborate research by O’Neill and Bilimoria (2005, 168) which found women in their 20s and early 30s to be in a phase of idealistic achievement. The idealist achievement phase emphasises concerns about personal control, career satisfaction, achievement, and having a positive impact on others.

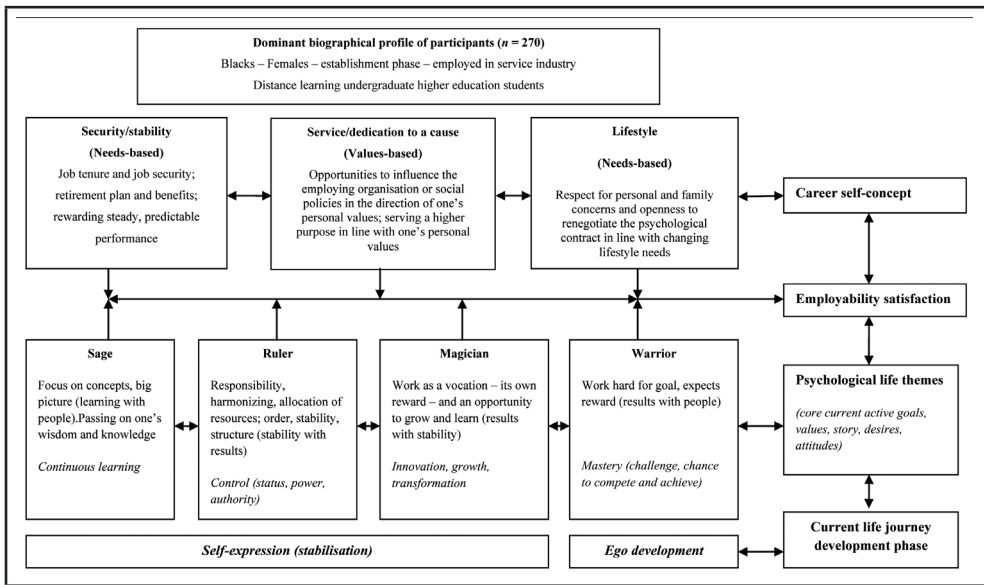


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of empirical relationship between participants’ current active archetypal life themes, career orientations and employability satisfaction

In terms of the participants’ dominant archetypal profile, the sage, ruler, magician, and warrior were indicated to be their most active archetypal life themes. In this regard, the findings seem to be in agreement with Pearson’s (1991) observation that dominant archetypes at a particular point in time are often related to an individual’s age or life stage. The sage, ruler and magician represent the return phase of the hero’s journey, a stage of self-expression and stabilisation. According to Pearson (1997, 21), these archetypes become active when individuals integrate the lessons of the journey and begin to function at a cognitively higher level and think more contextually. The return phase also reflects the establishment of stability and structure. Individuals tend to show a readiness to share their wisdom (sage), power and vision (magician) with others, and exercise greater personal responsibility (ruler). On the other hand, the warrior archetype is an aspect of the preparation phase, representing the inner parent who feels at home in his or her work, and is determined to succeed at achieving his or her goals. The warrior is mostly concerned with making the world a better place by taking decisive action that he or she believes will help others (Pearson 1997, 51; Pearson and Marr 2002, 15; Pearson and Marr 2003, 39).

The results further suggest that the current active life themes contributed positively and significantly to the participants' level of employability satisfaction. This may be attributed to the particular development phase represented by the dominant archetypal life themes which suggest inner confidence in one's ability to express one's gifts and talents in effective ways (Pearson 1997). The low mean scores obtained on the orphan archetypal life theme seem to confirm this finding. High scores on the orphan archetypal life theme represent a sense of powerlessness, cautiousness and lack of confidence (Pearson and Marr 2003, 33). Low scores indicate that the particular archetype is not often expressed in the person's life and that the person consistently disassociates from the archetype in his or her PMAI responses (Pearson and Marr 2002, 41). It is also interesting to note that the orphan archetypal life theme is not either significantly related to the career orientation variables, nor to the employability satisfaction variable. The midrange mean scores obtained for the other archetypes suggest that the gifts, talents and perspectives underlying these archetypal life themes are likely to be available to the group of participants when they need them. However, they do not determine how the participants see the world (Pearson and Marr 2002, 40).

In terms of the participants' dominant career orientations profile, the participants indicated the security/stability (needs-based), service/dedication to a cause (values-based), and lifestyle (needs-based) career orientations to be the dominant career-related concerns that guide and constrain their career choices and decisions. These three career orientations are also significantly related to the participants' dominant archetypal life themes.

Considering that the participants are predominantly employed in the service industry, these findings seem to make sense. According to Schein (1990, 28), people with security/stability as a dominant career concern tend to be attracted to jobs relating to or in the government and civil service. These findings are also in line with research conducted by Coetzee and Schreuder (2008, 45) which found both black and white women, and males and females employed in the service industry to be mostly concerned with steady and stable employment opportunities due to their overriding concerns about raising and educating a family, and having employment that offers financial security in the form of benefit packages. Coetzee and Schreuder's (2008, 45) study also found that both black and white women, and males and females tend to value work situations that permit them to balance and integrate their personal needs, their family needs, and the requirements of their career, as expressed by the lifestyle career orientation.

The expression of the magician archetypal life theme in the security/stability career orientation is mostly focused on empowering others to perform their work by providing a clear focus and vision of how to get the work done in the most easy, efficient way possible (Pearson 1997, 109). The warrior is focused on working hard to achieve goals (even competing with others), being loyal to the team and expecting a reward for his or her performance. Similarly to the career desires of the security/stability career orientation, these include financial reward and benefit packages and

non-financial recognition incentives (Pearson 1997, 51–53). The sage seeks to act as mentor or coach, passing on his or her wisdom in helping others to develop their skills and abilities, and accomplish their tasks (Pearson 1997, 116). The ruler focuses on managing the performance of others to ensure steady performance, establishing systems, and developing policies and procedures in order to ensure successful results – thus creating order, structure and stability in the ‘kingdom’ (Pearson 1997, 101). With a similar concern for financial security, the ruler archetype is also associated with a need to have and display materialistic tokens of success such as, cars, houses and clothes (Pearson 1991). Within the work environment this can manifest as a need to create something new. These individuals express a strong need to show others that they are good enough (Du Toit 2010).

The participants’ concern with service/dedication to a cause (in other words pursuing work that achieves something of value for others) makes also sense in the light of their current employment context. Similar findings are reported by Coetzee and Schreuder (2008, 45). Participants with service/dedication to a cause as their preferred career orientations appear to be most strongly associated with the sage and magician archetypal life themes. While the expression of the magician archetype in the service/dedication to a cause career orientation is concerned with transforming the reality of others by creating a new, inspiring vision (Du Toit 2010), the expression of the sage archetype is mostly concerned with sharing wisdom, taking a long-range perspective on matters, and continuously reflecting on the effectiveness of ideas, services or products (Pearson 1997, 117). Du Toit (2010) found the magician archetypal life theme to be a significant predictor of the service/dedication to a cause career orientation. Within the work environment, the ruler archetype is focused on fulfilling management or leadership roles, meeting task roles and creating a better work environment for others through the establishment of systems to ensure successful results (Pearson and Marr 2003, 39). The warrior tries to make the world a better place by taking decisive action that they believe will help others (Pearson and Marr 2003, 39)

Individuals whose identity is tied up with the lifestyle career orientation are concerned about their total lifestyle, where they settle, how they deal with their family situation, and how they develop themselves (Schein 1990, 60). In this regard the magician strives to be as creative and authentic as they can be in establishing balance and harmony in their lives. They have a clear personal mission and vision for their lives (Pearson 1997, 106). The sage focuses on continuous learning, and using rational analysis and intelligence in achieving personal goals (Pearson 1997, 117). Du Toit (2010) found the sage archetypal life theme to be a significant predictor of the lifestyle career orientation. Rulers take leadership and responsibility for harmonising their efforts and lives, and allocating appropriate resources in ensuring peace and prosperity for all (Pearson 1997, 101). Warriors are assertively focused on their intent to achieve their personal goals, they are courageous in confronting challenges and willing to work hard to live the life they desire (Pearson 1997, 50).

In terms of the participants' employability satisfaction and its relation with their dominant career orientations, only the technical/functional, pure challenge and service/dedication to a cause career orientation related significantly to the participants' beliefs that they have the attributes, skills, knowledge, experience and occupational expertise to create/attract employment with ease. The technical/functional and pure challenge career orientations are concerned with challenging opportunities to use, develop and demonstrate one's talents, abilities, and skills which are related to employability. Similarly, the career concerns of the service/dedication to a cause career orientation relate to opportunities to influence the employing organisation or social policies in the direction of one's personal values, which also involve demonstrating skills and abilities in achieving one's goals (Schein 1990, 15). These findings are in agreement with Berntson et al.'s (2008, 414) view that high levels of employability lead to strengthening individuals' efficacy beliefs, and reflect individuals' ability to solve specific work-related problems and handle difficult situations. The findings of the present study suggest that the participants' efficacious beliefs about their employability may have been strengthened by their current active archetypal life themes.

### **Limitations and recommendations**

Although the results contributed new insights that may be of value to postmodern career counselling frameworks, a number of limitations need to be considered before final conclusions are made regarding the utility of the constructs measured in the present study in constructivist and narrative career counselling. Since the present study has been limited to a sample of predominantly black and female undergraduate higher education distance learning students in the establishment phase of their careers, and predominantly employed in the South African service industry, the findings cannot be generalised to other occupational, age, race, gender and industry contexts. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the research design, this study can yield no statements about causation. Associations between the variables have therefore been interpreted rather than established. These findings need to be replicated with broader samples across various occupational, age, race and gender groups, as well as economic sectors before final conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between individuals' archetypal values, their career orientations, and employability satisfaction

In the postmodern career counselling context, it is recommended that the study be replicated by using the PMAI and COI in adjunct to the follow-up qualitative and narrative career counselling processes suggested by Pearson and Marr (2007) and Schein (1990). This may help to validate the relationship between the active archetypal life themes and the career orientations of the participants of such a study. Considering that people's archetypal life themes evolve and change as they encounter new situations or transitions in their lives, it may be useful to conduct a longitudinal study to deepen one's understanding of the relationship between people's archetypal

life themes, career orientations and employability satisfaction over their life course.

Although the focus of the present study was not to explore differences between the various gender, race and age groups regarding the variables measured, it is important that career counsellors and future studies take note of the role of gender, race and age when utilising the PMAI and COI in the postmodern constructivist and narrative career counselling context. Pearson and Marr (2003, 32) pointed out that the expression of archetypes tends to vary by culture and gender, and is often unique to a person's circumstances. According to Pearson (1991, 10), different cultures place different values on certain archetypes. Research by Du Toit (2010) showed for example that in the South African science and engineering context, black people display a stronger preference for seeker, destroyer, magician and caregiver archetypal values while white people show a stronger preference for the caregiver archetypal value. Gender differences exist in the way individuals experience their journey, the way they experience the different archetypal values and even in the sequence of the archetypal values (Pearson 1991, 10). With regard to career orientations, research is often contradictory, pointing to both differences and similarities between the career orientations of males and females, and blacks and whites in specific occupational contexts (Coetzee et al. 2007, 65; Coetzee and Schreuder 2008, 45; Du Toit 2010).

Although both gender and culture seem to guide how individuals develop attitudes, skills, and values (Sharf 2010, 343), children tend to begin to question the ethnic values and traditions of their families as they move out of the dominant culture with peers of other backgrounds (Phinney 1992, 156). Duffy and Klingaman (2009, 294–295) also found that ethnic identity plays a minor role in individuals' career decidedness and career maturity. In this regard, the constructivist and narrative approach to career counselling is seen as an asset in dealing with many diverse cultural attitudes and traditions regarding work and individuals' career decisions by valuing their individual narratives (Sharf 2010, 343). Adopting a postmodern constructivist and narrative career counselling approach when using quantitative assessment measures such as the PMAI and COI allows the career counsellor to attend to cultural and gender components of clients' stories, as well as stories about culture and gender. Each client's story, whether referring to gender or culture, provides a way of perceiving that client's unique construction of reality (Sharf 2010, 344). Considering that individuals' dominant archetypal values (Pearson 1991) and career orientations (Coetzee and Schreuder 2008) appear to be related to their particular life stage or age, the constructivist and narrative approach may also help to deepen insight regarding how the particular life stage and age of the individual influence each client's narrative or story.

## **Conclusions and implications for practice**

In line with the stated objective of the present study, the value of the findings lies in the explanatory utility of the identified empirical relationships between the three variables in postmodern constructivist and narrative approaches to career counselling interested in combining facets of quantitative with qualitative assessments. Overall,

it can be concluded that the values and qualities underlying the current active archetypal life themes act as psychological forces that give impetus to the expression of the career self-concepts associated with the three dominant career orientations, leading to higher levels of employability satisfaction. Moreover, it appears that the archetypal life themes (as the sub-conscious psychological drivers of behaviour) tend to be related to the life and development stage of the individual, and may provide broader meaning in understanding the career orientations that drive individuals' career choices and decisions at the particular stage of their life journey. However, on an individual career counselling level, each of the identified archetypal life themes is important only with regard to the conceptually related career orientations, and the link between the variables needs to be validated by means of qualitative follow-up counselling processes.

Considering the apparent significant empirical relationship between the participants' archetypal values, their career orientations and their self-perceived employability, it is recommended that career counsellors integrate both the quantitative and qualitative assessment procedures of the PMAI and COI in the career construction counselling process suggested by Savickas (2005). In a career construction approach, the career counsellor would typically integrate both the quantitative and qualitative procedures of the PMAI and COI after Savickas' (2005) Career Style Interview has been completed. This approach would provide an open way of viewing the student as client, focusing on how he or she sees the world, and dealing with the diverse cultural attitudes and traditions regarding work by valuing individual narratives (Sharf 2010, 345). The career construction process will also help clients to see how their archetypal and career anchor motives and values relate to their life themes and career issues, problems or level of employability satisfaction. Both the Career Style Interview and the PMAI process address the deep-seated unconscious psychological forces, while the COI addresses the more conscious level of the self-concept. Once the dominant life themes become more conscious, clients can be guided on how to play out their life themes through their work and career choices in more meaningful ways (Amundsen et al. 2009, 25). This in turn may enhance their employability satisfaction.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that the PMAI and COI may be useful instruments that could be combined with qualitative postmodern career counselling approaches. Kidd (2007, 106) states in this regard that quantitative assessment techniques complement postmodern narrative approaches by helping clients not only to organise their knowledge of themselves and their situation, but also gain better self-understanding. The constructs studied in the present study seem to provide a useful theoretical framework for increasing student self-awareness and employability satisfaction, helping them to expand their perspectives and options, and find greater fulfillment and meaning in crafting their life journeys in an uncertain employment context. This study represents original research that contributes new knowledge to the field of career psychology that can be used to augment postmodern career counselling practices.

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