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## Toward a Combined Qualitative-Quantitative Approach: Advancing Postmodern Career Counselling Theory and Practice

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### Abstract

Global changes in people's lifestyles and in the world of work (prompted by changes in the global economy) have necessitated changes in the facilitation of career counselling. This article attempts to provide a concise overview of the advancement of postmodern approaches in career counselling. First, it discusses the influence of the different waves in psychology and the economy on helping models in career counselling, and the way in which these waves have shaped the theory and practice of career counselling. Subsequently it evaluates the influence of changes in the economic waves and workplace on people's lifestyles. This is followed by an illumination of the paradigm shift in career counselling from a predominantly quantitative (positivist) approach to an acknowledgement of the value of qualitative approaches. Lastly, this article discusses the development of a combined qualitative-quantitative approach to career counselling and assessment.

Keywords: Postmodern, career counselling, career construction, life designing, economic waves, waves in counselling, qualitative assessment, quantitative assessment;

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### 1. Introduction

The world of work has experienced many changes in the last century. Recent global and economic developments have, in particular, had a profound impact on jobs and careers (Bimrose, 2010; Fouad & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Storey, 2000; Zunker, 2002). In order to enable society and career counsellors to formulate an appropriate response to the changing nature of careers caused by the ever-evolving economic waves (and the fourth wave in particular) (Maree & Pollard, 2009; Sharf, 2010), the authors of this article believe it is important to focus on the historical evolution of career counselling.

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A career was for many years (in the third economic wave) conceptualised as the pursuit of a single occupation over the life-course consisting of upward mobility through increasing levels of duties and responsibilities (Savickas, 2000, 2009b, 2010). This conceptualization is, however, no longer relevant in the information technology era (fourth economic wave). The fourth economic wave (Savickas, 2010) is accompanied by rapid changes in society, communities, the workplace, work content, technology, perceptions of work, values, and the goals and meanings that people attach to their work (Bimrose, 2010; Zunker, 2002).

The world of work has changed so rapidly over the past few years that a major paradigm shift (cf., Kuhn, 1996) has occurred in career counselling theory and practice. Where in the past the practice of career counselling was based on a predominantly quantitative test-and-tell (Crites, 1981) and person-environment fit (Holland, 1997) approach, a gradual shift has occurred toward a qualitative approach (Savickas, 2000). This shift occurred because extant career theories were unable to accommodate the “twists and turns” of careers in the postmodern era (Sharf, 2010, p. 316). The qualitative approach is based on the elicitation of life stories and personal narratives where clients rather than counsellors are considered the expert of their lives. More recently, career counsellors and practitioners are increasingly embracing a combined qualitative-quantitative approach in career counselling (Savickas, 2001, 2009a). The changed or new approach includes, and is based on, both psychometric data (objective/modernist) and a deep sense of respect for clients, and strong emphasis on the meaning clients need to find in their lives and their personal stories (subjective) (cf., Sharf, 2010). Combining both approaches equips practitioners with a possible means to address the shortcomings that characterized the profession in the past, and that can be useful to clients as they construct and design their lives.

### **1.1. Goals of the review**

This article provides a brief overview of the paradigm shift from quantitative to qualitative (postmodern) approaches to career counselling theory and practice and the move toward combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in career counselling. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- a. In which ways have the different waves in psychology and the economy influenced helping models in career counselling and prompted paradigm shifts in both the theoretical approach to, and the practical way in which, career counselling is administered?
- b. How have changes in the economy changed people’s lifestyles, the workplace and the conceptualization of work?
- c. What are the major changes that characterize the paradigm shift from a predominantly quantitative (positivist) approach to an acknowledgement of the value of qualitative approaches?
- d. How is a combined qualitative-quantitative approach able to best serve clients’ needs in career counselling?

### **1.2. Overview of the Interplay between Waves in Psychology, Economy and Career Counselling over the Past 120 Years**

The article commences with an overview of counselling and economic waves in psychology and the influence of these waves on career counselling theory and practice. Given the large impact of changes

in the global economy on helping models in career counselling, it seems important to discuss this matter first. Hereafter, we discuss the influence of the fourth economic wave on the workplace.

**Connection between helping models** <sup>\*</sup> in career counselling and economic waves . The first helping model (ca 1850-1910) was referred to as Friendly Volunteers (Savickas, 2006a, 2007a, 2007b). In this era (agricultural era: first economic wave), workers grew up on farms and by and large knew what they wanted to do (it was often a logical extension from their parents' jobs) (Savickas, 2000). Those people who wanted to leave the farms had access to guidance from a self-styled "friendly visitor". Vocational guidance (the second helping model) only occurred during the second economic wave (industrial era: ca 1900-1950), when a myriad of jobs became available and people started flocking to the cities. It was during this wave that Frank Parson's (1909) model of vocational counselling was developed. This model would continue (and still does continue) to have a profound impact on career counselling and assessment (Brown, 1984; Williamson, 1972).

After World War II, during the third economic wave, the establishment of large international corporations characterized by bureaucratic hierarchies occurred (service era: ca 1940-1990). During this period the third helping model (career counselling) emerged. Career counsellors advised individuals on how to choose an occupation and subsequently develop a career in it by climbing the traditional corporate ladder (Savickas, 2000, 2006b). Holland's (1997) and Super's (1949) theories are related to this economic wave. Since the 1990s, with the emergence of the knowledge economy and computer technology (Savickas, 2000) (the fourth economic wave or information era: 1990-current), growing uncertainty among workers about the permanency of their occupations has given rise to postmodern career approaches (such as career construction for life designing—the fourth helping model) with emphasis on empowering persons to make meaning, write their own life stories and construct their own careers and futures instead of choosing a career (Savickas et al., 2009). In this regard Savickas (2000, p. 59) wrote that "[c]areer must become more personal and self-directed to flourish in the postmodern information age".

### **1.3. Impact of Global Changes in the Workplace on People's Lifestyles**

Radical changes in people's lifestyle and career planning—arising from the phenomenal technological advancement and the information explosion of the 21st century (fourth economic wave)—have brought career counselling theory and practice to a crossroads (Schultheiss & Van Esbroeck, 2009). People rarely remain in one job for the duration of their lifetime in the fourth economic wave (Savickas, 2006a; Watts, 2008). New careers requiring new skills and attitudes are constantly emerging, and organizations have become less loyal to their employees (Sharf, 2010). Accordingly, career counselling has to keep abreast of these developments if it is to remain effective and relevant in the postmodern society (Savickas, 2006a; Watson, 2004). Careers have also developed into self-created and self-managed entities where horizontal movement rather than upward mobility (as in the third economic wave) is becoming the norm (cf., Pretorius & Morgan, 2010; Russell, 2001; Savickas, 2000, 2007a; Storey, 2000). Naicker (1994) claimed that people in the major developed economies change careers an average of five times during their career lifetime. Similarly, Savickas (2006b) asserted that individuals in the United States of America born between 1957 and 1964 had an average of ten jobs from the age of 18 to 38. While these figures cannot summarily be applied to all contexts, the general trend globally is for employees to migrate between jobs more regularly. Short-

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\* Additional information on this topic can be obtained from Molitor (1999; 2000) and Savickas (2002; 2006a; 2006b; 2007b)

term assignments, rather than appointment in one job in one firm on a permanent basis are becoming far more common. Also, there is an urgent need to examine the growing gap between what is currently offered in training and the skills needed to execute a job successfully.

The increasing need for both high and low skill workforces to sustain economic growth is not surprising. Many labour market economists have long predicted the 'hour glass' economy, which has now become a reality (Campbell et al., 2001; Keep & Brown, 2005; Moynagh & Worsley, 2005). Keep and Brown (2005, p. 6) contended that the future labour force would be characterised by "increasing polarisation, with growth in high skilled professional and managerial occupations, but also extensive demand for labour in low skilled occupations at the bottom end of the occupational spectrum."

The idea of a small core of permanent employees, a sizeable group of practitioners whose particular and sought-after skills are bought, and a large number of temporary workers was predicted to become commonplace by year 2000 (Handy in Hughes, 1997). Although this has not yet fully occurred, it appears that there is a shift toward short-term contracts rather than life-time employment. To keep abreast of technological changes, employees have to become lifelong learners, receive on-going training, acquire the skill to adapt to rapidly changing career contexts, and deal with repeated transitions (Savickas et al., 2009). Hence, they have to acquire cutting-edge skills associated with the latest technology to remain relevant in a highly competitive job market. This is in a sense the acquisition of 21st century skills that are needed in the workplace (Dede, 2009). The realities of the 21st century labour market should therefore dictate career counselling and assessment strategies and guide feedback that is provided to clients.

Clients should be encouraged to become critical thinkers, creative problem solvers and skilled decision makers in order to become employable, instead of merely be trained linearly for one specific job (Savickas et al., 2009). To enable clients to make meaning (Chen, 2007; McMahon, 2007) in their lives, create holding environments (Savickas et al., 2009) and become more whole (Chen, 2007), career counsellors play an increasingly important integrating role in the effective facilitation of careers in situations that constantly require new skills and increasingly compel employees to use their work to become more whole. In this way it is the life story rather than the organization that enables people to move from one occupation to another (Savickas et al., 2009). Career counsellors therefore have little choice but to become cognizant of the impact of different helping models that have informed career counselling at different stages and that have been influenced by changes in the global economy.

#### ***1.4. Traits Emphasized during each of the Four Economic Waves and Concurrent Helping Models in Career Counselling***

In order to understand why career construction has emerged so strongly over approximately two decades as a theoretical base for career counselling, it is important to understand the traits or qualities that drove the career counselling profession during each of the four economic waves. We shall therefore touch on this issue briefly now.

The first economic wave occurred in a 19th century romantic atmosphere where a career was seen as a vocation. During this period personal character was highly valued (e.g., self-sufficiency, humility and frugality) and "success and fulfilment in an individual's working life depended on self-expression and individual effort" (Savickas, 1993; Watson & Kuit 2007, p. 74). The second economic wave was characterized by empire builders who organized craftspeople into companies and built large cities. Concurrent with the development of science and the emphasis on an objective approach to pure

sciences (cf., Hergenhahn, 2005), career counsellors developed objective assessment instruments to assess personality interests and values. Career counselling favoured an objective (positivist) perspective where tests were able to provide information to clients that could facilitate the process of selecting a career (Watson & Kuit, 2007). Parsons (1909) for example, asserted that whereas scientists objectified the world, counsellors objectified interests, values and abilities by using inventories and tests.

During the third economic wave, logical positivism—the combination of empiricism and rationalism (Hergenhahn, 2005)—started giving way to more subjective perspectives (Savickas, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006b) and meaning making began to emerge. During this period there was a similar shift toward humanistic or third-force psychology. Proponents of humanistic psychology argued that “a model of humans that emphasized their uniqueness” was required (Hergenhahn, 2005, p. 523). The client-centred approach to career counselling, for example, was interested in the unique way in which people construct their reality (Rogers, 1942; Seligman, 1994). Here we see a move away from objective testing toward idiographic differences (Lent, 1996).

In the fourth economic wave, identity rather than personality and vocational personality types is fore-grounded, and the tendency is to help people make sense of their lives, which provides the rationale for identity (Savickas, 2010). According to Savickas (2008) a stable identity includes knowing one's story, having a clear and stable picture of oneself, and understanding the world of work. The increased emphasis on identity coincides with a decreased emphasis on the concept of maturity or climbing the developmental ladder, and a focus on career adaptability and lifelong learning. Here we see a move away from modernism toward postmodernism (Watson & Kuit, 2007). Watson and Kuit (2007, p. 78) argued that the postmodern approach to career counselling “significantly restructures the roles of the counsellor, the client and assessment and moves counselling towards co-constructing preferred career stories, narrative and life stories for clients through dialogue”. Because the prevailing psychological, political, social and economic cultures in which any counselling practice evolves have a significant impact on the advance of career counselling epistemology (theory of knowledge) and practice, we shall now elaborate on the advancement of epistemological approaches that have underpinned and guided career counselling over the past 120 years.

### ***1.5. Epistemological Approaches that have Underpinned and Guided the Practice of Career Counselling over the Past 120 Years***

The underlying paradigm in career counselling shifts once in every approximately 50 years, inevitably influencing the actual practice of career counselling (Savickas, 2006b). To elucidate this aspect we shall begin this section by referring briefly to the traditional approach.

**The traditional approach to career counselling.** The traditional approach to career counselling is grounded in modernism (Watson & Kuit, 2007). This implies that measurement is able to provide the necessary information for a client to enter and succeed in a career and that quantification and measurement determine the value of an approach (Watson, 2004; Watson & Kuit, 2007). Ever since its inception at the beginning of the 20th century, career counselling has had an objective (positivist) orientation. The focus on traits (differential psychology) in career assessment became very popular (its popularity was further promoted by the need for measurement in World War 2) and it was thought that traits were able to predict certain occupational outcomes (Seligman, 1994; Williamson, 1972). Proponents of the Trait-and-Factor approach argued that “because individuals differ in their aptitudes, interests, and personalities and because occupations require varying amounts and kinds of these traits

and factors, different individuals choose to enter different occupations” (Crites, 1969, p. 90). Congruence (or person-environment fit) was therefore an important consideration in assessment (Brown, 1984). The concept of congruence has received moderate support (Nauta, 2010) but it is possible (if not likely) that there are factors beyond person-environment congruence that play a role in career-related behaviours (Hirschi & Läge, 2007; Tracey, 2007). It is therefore problematic to focus solely on the fit between a person and environment in career counselling.

The rapidly changing career situation (fourth economic wave) demands a contemporary approach (or paradigm shift) that requires career counsellors to adapt their academic discipline to accommodate these changes. Far too often there is little evidence of the development of decision-making capacity, and indecision and lack of realism (Crites, 1969) in career choice are perpetuated. An approach that regards clients as the sole experts on their own lives appears to be a better basis for helping clients negotiate career transitions, choose careers and design their lives. According to Savickas et al. (2009) it is the life-story that allows people to shift from occupation to occupation. Counsellors should attempt to be useful to clients by, for example, offering spaces where clients can discover their personal characteristics, and develop and share past (and current) stories (experiences) as they attempt to navigate transitions and transcend the weaknesses of the past and present (Chen, 2007; Savickas et al., 2009). The latter threatens clients’ chances of making a decent living, establishing social connections and becoming self-determined (Blustein, 2010), i.e., designing successful lives and making valuable social contributions (Savickas et al., 2009). In the next section, we shall discuss the rationale for post-modern approaches and then elaborate on some basic principles that underlie the fourth wave approach to career counselling.

**Rationale for post-modern approaches.** The rationale for the emergence of a fresh paradigmatic approach in career counselling over the past two decades (or so) is self-evident. According to Kuhn (1996) a paradigm shift occurs when there are “persistent observations that a currently accepted paradigm cannot explain” (Hergenhahn, 2005, p. 10). Many career and vocational theories are entrenched in erstwhile economic waves and therefore their applicability in the 21st century is questionable (Isaacson, 1985; Savickas, 2000; Sharf, 2010). Schultheiss and Van Esbroeck (2009, p. 1), for example, contended that despite changes brought about in the profession, career counselling is at a crossroads and the “longevity and viability of current theories, practices, training and research” are increasingly being challenged.

It has become increasingly difficult to predict the future of persons’ career trajectories and to determine the factors that will determine career and life success (cf., Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Pretorius & Morgan, 2010). Gone are the days of a traditional and predictable movement from school to a work environment, and then to an agreeable retirement (Peavy, 1997, 2001). Accordingly, there is a growing realization among practitioners that objective (psychometric) tests do not fully and accurately measure all variables in interests, personalities and values (such as subjective/phenomenological experiences), and that change does occur over time (cf., Nauta, 2010; Savickas et al., 2009), resulting in initial career choices for young adults (and others) being unsatisfactory later in life (Borchard, 1995). Furthermore, we are currently in the midst of the most transformative moment in economic history (Savickas, 2006a), and individuals are gradually being forced to accept responsibility for their lives: The stable post-industrial world of work no longer exists, and security and stability in the workplace are no longer guaranteed (Maree, 2002). It therefore appears that the paradigm shift is indeed necessary in the fourth economic wave. In the next section we discuss the qualitative approaches to career counselling theory and practice that are aligned to the fourth economic wave.

**A qualitative (postmodern) approach to career counselling.** Interest in qualitative assessment strategies and techniques (used in conjunction with traditional techniques) has grown significantly over the past few decades (cf., Sharf, 2010). Postmodern theoretical assumptions about career counselling are derived from the naturalistic (interpretive) paradigm described by, among others, Savickas (2005, 2006a, 2007a) and Hartung (2007). Postmodern approaches are not a theory in and of itself. Rather, it is a collection of theories/approaches that share similar features (Watson & Kuit, 2007). The general perspective of postmodernism is “that ‘reality’ is created by individuals and groups with various personal, historical, or cultural contexts” (Hergenhahn, 2005, p. 601). The postmodern approaches consider people to be more than test scores (Taber et al., 2011) and that the sole use of quantitative approaches ignores clients uniqueness and marginalises context (Duffy & Dik, 2009). There are three broad career theories/approaches that fall within the postmodern paradigm. These are narrative career counselling (Cochran, 2007), career construction theory (Savickas, 2002, 2007a) and life-design counselling (Savickas et al., 2009). Each of these is briefly discussed here.

The basic premise of the narrative approach is that people are the main actors in their own life story, and, therefore, career counselling should elucidate this story in the counselling process (Cochran, 1997, 2007). Sharf (2002, p. 291) wrote that “[t]he narrative model is more similar to that of a play or psychodrama, in which individuals enact their lives.” By elucidating the client’s story, the client and counsellor are able to construct a career decision by uncovering and shaping the client’s life plot (Cochran, 2007; Sharf, 2002). An attempt is made to facilitate personal agency by viewing clients as active agents in their own personal development and by emphasizing clients’ emotions and passions (Savickas, 2007b).

Career construction theory is a hallmark contribution by Savickas (2005), which blends the major career counselling theories—the developmental approach, psychodynamic approach and differential approach— into one grand (meta) theory (Hartung, 2007; Savickas, 2005). Career construction theory (and narrative counselling) is built on the philosophical foundation of social constructionism. According to social constructionism, knowledge and meaning are actively constructed through social interaction and relationships within a specific context. The meaning an individual ascribes to a specific experience is therefore inseparable from the context in which the actual experience takes place (Blustein, Palladino Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004; Maree, 2004; Palladino Schultheiss, 2005).

Career construction theory posits that people construct their own lives and careers by identifying (imposing meaning on) their vocational (work-related) behaviour and numerous experiences in the workplace. This theory views individuals’ careers as potentially central parts of their lives and emphasizes the construction of career meaning in a unique context. It implies that individuals have the opportunity to identify the way in which they want to fit a career into their lives. The focus of career construction theory is on career choice, adaptability and development as integrated processes. The four core concepts emphasized in this approach are: (a) life structure (the assemblage of work and other roles that constitute a person’s life); (b) career adaptability strategies (the coping mechanisms used by individuals to negotiate developmental tasks and environmental changes that accumulate in the course of a lifetime); (c) thematic life stories (the motivations and driving forces that pattern lives); and (d) personality style (personality traits such as abilities, needs, values, interests and other traits that typify a person’s self-concept) (Hartung, 2007; Savickas, 2005). Career construction theory uses the narrative paradigm to transform these four theoretical dimensions into practice, and comprises a constructivist career counselling strategy and methods that encourage clients to (re-) author their lives and career stories. In achieving this, they enhance their opportunity to experience work as a

personally meaningful endeavour, as a context for further development, and for making a social contribution.

Life-design counselling is a natural extension of career construction theory that incorporates Guichard's (2005) theory of self-construction with career construction theory (Savickas, 2005). The life-design model recognises that career concerns are only one aspect of a person's life. It has, therefore, become necessary to help people design their life by exploring their career within their greater life story. Savickas et al. (2009) maintain that a new social arrangement of work poses a series of questions and challenges to people who attempt to be useful to others as they develop their working lives. The authors explain that life designing is based on five assumptions about people and their working lives, namely (a) contextual possibilities, (b) dynamic processes, (c) non-linear progression, (d) multiple perspectives, and (e) personal patterns. Life-design counselling is structured to be life-long, holistic, contextual and preventive (Savickas et al., 2009)

Individuals who need to adapt to continuous change have to develop various skills that can facilitate adaptation, not only in their careers, but also in their lives (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006). Career and life planning should be an action-oriented, constructive process that can be executed in accordance with other aspects of an individual's life, such as personal beliefs and needs (Greene, 2006). A career may be viewed as a central part of life design, not an isolated part of a person's life, and should therefore be integrated into the individual's lifestyle instead of being de-contextualized. Through a process of life design, the individual is afforded the opportunity to develop a preliminary scheme or framework in which relevant concepts and ideas, specifically with regard to his or her life, can be incorporated (Zunker, 1998). One should consequently not focus on career development in isolation, but rather design a life that can be experienced as satisfactory by the individual and that can be redesigned as needs, interests and experiences change (Campbell & Ungar, 2004; Savickas, 1993).

**Factors that can influence the life design counselling process.** Savickas et al. (2009) explain that because occupational prospects appear far less definable and predictable nowadays, job transitions have become more frequent and complicated. Workers have to develop skills and competences that differ widely from those that were needed to find an occupation and design a life during the previous century. Several unique factors currently play a role in the process of (and actually encourage) life-design counselling. Greene (2006) identifies these factors as the individual's potential and ability, interests, personality and characteristics, expectations of significant others, and membership of a particular population group. According to Zunker (1998) an individual's perception of success, motivation to work, need for intrinsic satisfaction, different roles, relationships and developmental and contextual changes, play a key role in life design. Here we begin to see the value of integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to best serve a client's needs where the more quantifiable aspects (such as interests and personality) are melded with subjective experiences (such as motivation to work and need for intrinsic satisfaction). Career adaptability in particular is a fundamental aim in career counselling for life designing

Savickas et al. (2009) maintained that the usefulness of career counselling can be measured by its ability to effect important changes in the life stories of individuals (Soresi, Nota, Ferrari, & Solberg, 2008). To achieve important changes in the life stories of individuals, adaptability, narratability (the ability to articulate a life story), activity and intentionality (the intention to make meaning in one's life) have to be promoted. Adaptability is crucial in postmodern society because it impacts on an individual's general well-being (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006). Individuals are considered adaptable when they act in an appropriate manner in a specific situation. Different coping mechanisms are implemented by different individuals to promote their adaptability to different situations. These



coping mechanisms tend to be consistent and include problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and avoidance behaviour (Kohn, O'Brien-Wood, Pickering, & Decicco, 2003). Adaptability can be further divided into a number of dimensions, such as creative problem solving, handling of unpredictable situations, mastery of new assignments, demonstration of personal and cultural ability to adapt to changes, and ability to handle work stress and crisis situations (Pulakos et al., 2002). In the next section, we shall briefly delineate some practical implications of the movement towards a qualitative-quantitative approach to career counselling.

### **1.6. Practical Implications of the Movement towards a Qualitative-Quantitative Approach to Career Counselling**

As indicated earlier, career counselling as a discipline traditionally favoured an objective (positivist) approach and career counsellors depended on proven assessment methods. This is seen in the popularity of the Trait-and-Factor approach and psychometric testing in career counselling and assessment (Stead & Watson, 1998). Sophisticated media such as psychometric tests, work sheets and computer programs were used to form an objective image of an individual. This image was then matched with the character traits suited to a specific career (person-environment fit and congruence). If the values, interests and abilities of the individual were considered congruent with the requirements of a specific career, it was assumed that the individual would find that career stable, productive and satisfying (Holland, 1997; Nauta, 2010; Watson, 2004) For example, one of the background principles of Holland's (1997) theory is that person-environment congruence is able to predict satisfaction, stability and achievement in a person's occupation. The matching, objective image was therefore accepted as real and true (Watson, 2004).

Maree et al. (2001) argue that current career-counselling practice still relies mainly on the results and profiles of psychometric tests. Psychometric tests are however problematic in diverse contexts, because the majority of these were developed in contexts that differ vastly from, for instance, developing country contexts. In this regard, career theory, practice and assessment globally have been accused of failing to meet the needs of non-white, non-Western, non-standard populations (McMahon & Patton, 2002). This is not unique to career counselling and practice. Psychology as a whole has come under critique for its strong Eurocentric focus (Lopez Levers, May, & Vogel, 2011; Muthukrishna & Sam, 2011). Therefore, for career counselling to remain relevant the theory and practice needs to take cultural, educational, gender and socio-economic factors into account (Alika & Egbochuku, 2009; Maree, 2010a; Metz & Guichard, 2009, Morgan; 2010; Nkoane & Alexander, 2010; Watson et al., 2011). It is particularly important to explore gender differences where a variety of gender related factors can have an impact on women's career identities (Gangl & Ziefle, 2009; Sharf, 2010). Furthermore, the value of the test results are often exaggerated and career counsellors are often regarded as experts (cf., Crites, 1981) whose recommendations should be unquestionably trusted and accepted. As a result clients tend to avoid the responsibility of making their own choices regarding a future career, and are therefore often deprived of the opportunity to explore and develop their life and their life story. Career counselling therefore needs to move away from the almost sole use of psychometric tests to an approach that recognizes the individual's social and historical background.

The introduction of a theoretical framework that combines facets of a quantitative approach with story, narratives, and qualitative assessment (a postmodern approach) seems essential. It must be

understood that the qualitative approach<sup>\*</sup> is not superior to the quantitative approach (Cochran, 1997; de Bruin & de Bruin, 2009; Sampson, 2009). Rather, there is growing awareness that both qualitative and quantitative approaches should be used together to best assist the client (Hartung & Borges, 2005). In this regard Savickas (2002, p. 59) wrote that “[t]here is no attack on the trait-and-factor camp”. He (Savickas, 1993, p. 210) also emphasized the fact that it is not a matter of accepting either a quantitative or a qualitative approach. Quite the opposite, the legacy of the modern era, viz. objective methods, could be integrated into the postmodern career-counselling context: "To foster self-developers, we need to augment these objective constructs, not replace them". It therefore appears that a combination of both approaches “provide[s] a complementary process, where the strengths and limitation[s] of each approach are counterbalanced by the strengths and limitation[s] of the other” (Whiston & Rahardja, 2005, p. 379).

Whereas McMahon and Patton (2002) argued that both these approaches should be key elements of the assessment process, Amundson (2006) contended that the counselling continuum should start with some of the more traditional counselling and assessment methods and then go beyond them to include other, more dynamic approaches. He argued that one could, for example, imagine one pillar of Super's (1957) Archway bearing the more quantitative and rational counselling methods, and the other pillar bearing more dynamic methods, such as metaphor and story-telling. A typical mixed (multi) approach will usually include psychometric tests and qualitative techniques. The former may, for instance, include the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI) (Briggs & Briggs Myers, 1994) and the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011). The latter may, for instance, include in-depth (one-to-one, semi-structured) interviews and discussions with the participant and observing him or her. In addition, the following techniques may be employed: the Collage, the life line technique (Cochran, 1997), the career construction interview (Hartung, 2010; Savickas, 2009b), informal questionnaires and the Three Anecdote Technique (TAT; Maree, 2010b). Together both approaches allow for the measurement of aptitude, personality, interests and values, as well as providing a more in-depth and constructivist approach where the life story of the participant is elucidated.

## 2. Conclusion

Career counselling as a profession has been influenced by four main shifts in psychology and the global economy over the past 120 years. There is an increasing realization that it is essential to advance a theory base for developing appropriate assessment instruments and an approach that will help clients see meaning in their careers, accept responsibility for their actions, become able to adapt to new demands, find new holding environments, and design successful lives. It is essential to narrow the gap between the practice and theory of career counselling by ensuring that the client's subjective experience is considered during career counselling, in addition to the usual consideration of objective results obtained by means of (often antiquated) instruments and (often obsolete) career orientations. In this way deficiencies in contemporary practice could be resolved (Porfeli, 2003).

A viable, 21st century approach that yields results that are demonstrably related to work and life success is required. Savickas (2010, personal communication) asserted that a crucial element of 21st century career counselling is the following: whereas in the past career counselling was aimed at highlighting individual differences, these days its emphasis has shifted to individuals themselves. Clients should, after career counselling, be better equipped to start confronting the complexities of

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\* See for example McMahon and Patton (2002); Morgan (2010), Patton & McMahon (2006), Reid (2006) and Whiston and Rahardja (2005) for some cautions on the qualitative approaches.

negotiating a career pathway and become motivated to realize specific goals that could stand them in good stead in their career and life development. The ultimate aim is to enhance the design of individuals' lives so that they can negotiate transitions as and when challenges arise.

Several researchers emphasize the importance of empowering clients to design lives that are experienced as satisfactory and that can be redesigned as needs, interests and life experiences change (Campbell & Ungar, 2004; Savickas, 1993). Savickas (2002, 2005) and Hartung (2007, 2010) take this idea one step further and assert that the career-story interview (Hartung, 2010), a signature strategy in career construction for life designing, augmented by the use of the TAT (Maree, 2010a, 2010b), offers counsellors an innovative, exciting and respectful way of being useful to clients who wish to find deeper meaning in their lives. It also enables counsellors to help clients as they reflect on ways in which to negotiate transitions, write their life stories and design their lives.

Although much is written about combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in career counselling, there is a need to research the efficacy of these approaches (cf., Maree, 2010b) and the application of these approaches in diverse contexts (cf., Nkoane & Alexander, 2010). Furthermore, there is a need to explore the efficacy of a combined approach with people from different cultural, socioeconomic and educational contexts, as well as with women and marginalised people. We hope that this article can stimulate research in these areas and serve as a springboard for future research and practice of a combined qualitative-quantitative approach.

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