CAREER CHOICES OF RHODES UNIVERSITY ACADEMICS:
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES
ON THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT:
The career choice process, which emphasises the term ‘choice’, is one which is characterised by an ever changing multi-layered progression (Ozbilgin, Kusku & Erdogmus, 2004). This is due to the choice being a result of the on-going interaction between an individual and their social and organisational contexts. It is then safe to assume that this career decision making process involves an awareness of an individual’s surrounding environment and an ability to acknowledge and understand what they regard as being important to them.

In support of this understanding, this research project seeks to draw attention to the career influences of a specific group of professionals rather than researching career choices across a range of professionals within different contexts in efforts to broadly predict career choice behaviour. This study rather focuses on the factors that actively influenced the career choices of ten Rhodes University Academics across a range of disciplines and faculties and their individual career decision making processes. In drawing on “mainstream and heterodox” (Ozbilgin et al., 2004, p. 2) literature, this research aims to apply existing notions presented by past researchers to South African academics, now residing and working at Rhodes University, which is located in the small town of Grahamstown, Eastern Cape. The methods of qualitative inductive research are discussed and the results are explored within the settings and contexts unique to each individual who has been drawn to the specific University context. The purpose of the study is to therefore adopt an inductive thematic analysis approach in seeking to examine the internal and external factors that served to influence the sample of academics into their chosen discipline, their decision to become and academic and their employer of choice, in light of the increasing pressure on higher education institutions to contribute to social and economic transformation within the South Africa (Tettey, 2006).
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

This opening chapter aims to provide an introduction to the purpose and structure of the study, beginning with a brief introduction to the process of career decision making, associated influences on this process and the importance of such a process within one’s life. The purpose of the research is outlined and explained through a brief explanation of the rationale behind the study, bringing to light the institutional context within which the study took place, and the method in doing so.

1.1 Career Choice Decision Making:

“A career is a job that lasts for life, or it is a succession of jobs which follow each other in a progressive, orderly pattern” (Lindhard, 1974, p. 2). It is a way of life and a means to living, and it is therefore impossible to separate one’s life from one’s career as your career generates an income that allows one to survive within today’s modern world of monetary demands (Lindhard, 1974). A person’s career determines how they spend the most part of their day, while it may also influence their life outside of their working hours, because as an individual enters their place of work, they also enter “a society of people” (Lindhard, 1974, p. 2). Therefore, it is a choice that not only determines how one spend their working hours, but also determines the kind of people that one will spend it with. In meeting someone new in today’s world, individuals are often asked the question: ‘What do you do?’ instead of the question ‘Who are you?’ . Individuals are often characterized and identified by one’s chosen occupation, bringing to life the remark ‘We are what we do’. This decision is for many the deciding factor of one’s life, and people are judged by society accordingly.

Consider the phrases below:

- “Your destiny must be your own. This is where the career choice must begin. To choose wisely, to choose for yourself, to increase your ability to control your own choice” (Lindhard, 1974, p. 3).
- “The nature of work and the nature of the worker must be in harmony” (Lindhard, 1974, p. 3).
- “There is somehow a very close relationship between maturing as a person and deciding on a career” (Lindhard, 1974, p. 3).
As described by Lindhard (1974), one’s work is an expression of oneself, and therefore, to choose is a decision that should come quite simply, but in reality it is not as simple as expected. As one’s career influences their life so greatly and basically shapes the patterns of their life, it therefore becomes imperative that when making a career choice one does the molding themselves (Lindhard, 1974). Deciding on which career to adopt or which career path to follow, in most cases ends up being a decision that many spend much time deliberating on and reconsidering. Career development is for many people a continuous process of choosing: getting ready to choose, making a choice and continuing to make related choices that influence a person’s original choice (Brown & Brookes, 1990).

The process of ‘simply deciding’ or ‘making a choice’ is one that is lightly viewed in its ability to be processed from start to end. This is in essence a conceptual activity that drastically impacts an individual’s life, which in some cases is regarded as a multifaceted process (Ozbilgin, Kusku & Erdogmus, 2004). If it was to be simply broken down for analysis, the process of ‘career choice’ is simply explained through its two worded identification, ‘career’ and ‘choice’. As explained by the Encyclopedia Britannica (2013), choice is described as the act of making a preferred selection from two or more things. Such an explanation implies that an individual in fact has the ability to choose from a range of options and is able to identify that which is most preferred. But with internal and external influences such as self-efficacy, economy trends of supply and demand, structural supports (educational institutions and access) amongst many, playing active roles in pushing and pulling at an individual’s career choices, the topic of career choice becomes more layered than what simply meets the eye (Ozbilgin et al., 2004).

For many adolescents, the process of establishing their own identity is challenging in its demand for a person to make a career choice within a mapped time period, develop their chosen career path through formal education (driven by invested time and resources) and stick to the choices with an aim to carry out a purposeful path in life and earn a living in order to survive (Ozbilgin et al., 2004). Simply put, the start of this process is driven by the need to establish career goals to serve as the source of further decisions that actively revolve around the career goals in order to bring the goals to life. A person’s identity is not developed in isolation, but is rather influenced by their social and cultural surroundings. Within this identity establishment, falls the process of career choice, as the one forms part of the other (Ozbilgin et al., 2004).
The founding theory around understanding the career decision making process and career development process is that of Albert Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura’s (1982) Social Cognitive Theory introduced early literature to the process of decision making, and effect of various direct and indirect influences on decision making. From his introduction of this driving theory developed an adapted and more recent version of the theory into what is today referred to as the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Bester, 2011). The Social Cognitive Career Theory, adapted and developed by Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994), refers to principles of career interests/options, goals and related actions as the main structure when considering this vital decision making process. Therefore, the Social Cognitive Career Theory refers to a process in which a person willingly “takes control of their destiny” (Bester, 2011, p. 7).

1.2 Career Choice Influences:

According to the Social Cognitive Career Theory, the main influences on one’s career choice originate from two sides. The first being cognitive-person factors and the second being the interaction of these cognitive-person factors with the surrounding environmental factors (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2000). Lent et al. (1994) explain this influential interaction as a continuous process that consists of personal variables/attributes, environmental variables and learning experiences on a person’s interest in a specific career, which in turn affects a person’s related behaviour (Lent et al., 2000). The theory goes on to explain the highly influential role that objective environmental factors play in an individual’s career choice. Objective environmental influences could, for example, include the quality of educational exposure or teachings that a person experiences, as well as the financial resources available to the individual for such training and exposure.

In agreement with Lent et al. (2000), the researcher acknowledges that the level of influence that these factors have on the individual’s career choice is however based on the individual’s response to these factors. For example, a person may not have open access to sufficient resources and good quality education, but may still rise above their environmental barriers and have a highly influential and successful career in a medicine, economics or law, for example. Although a person is not able to control their surroundings and environment, they are able to interpret their environment, which plays a role in their career direction and level of confidence within a specific career (Lent et al., 2000). This explanation therefore explains why individual differences emerge from environments that are
either the same or similar. This proves true to the explanation that not all economically challenged children produce unsuccessful careers or fail at establishing themselves through their chosen career.

It is therefore assumed that people who are engaging in the process of career choice decision making are in touch with what the optional careers fully involve/offers, are aware of their abilities, strengths and supporting personality traits and are aware of the external factors that influence their decisions. In addition to this, it is assumed that they engage in consideration around which option displays a prediction of a desired outcome, and choose a winning career accordingly. This understanding in fact assumes that people have the luxury of choice. With this in mind, this research aimed to understand such predictions and experiences as described by the case study sample group.

1.3 Rationale and scope of the study:

As described by Portnoi (2009), little literature currently exists on the career choice processes and influences as it relates to faculty and increasingly so within South Africa. The significance of such research allows for increased understanding on which factors serve as influential in motivating a South African graduate into the career field of academia and research, specifically within their chosen field. Such knowledge will enable increased efforts at recruiting faculty staff and address current difficulties in attracting academics within the fields relating to specialised skills. This will in turn allow for increased research output within the country. This study also becomes particularly significant within a sector that is characterized by perceived threats from the private corporate sector, which tends to also employ private consultants from the different academic disciplines.

With this in mind, this research has particular relevance because increases in university student enrollments accompanied by the retirements of aging academics within the next decade will necessitate the employment of large numbers of additional academics. This process explored the personal and environmental factors that played a role in shaping a person’s decision to pursue an academic career and in turn may aid in forming a basis for attracting others to the profession, especially those from previously disadvantaged groups.

Within today’s highly competitive globalised markets, countries and their hosted companies and organisations are required to compete on all fronts within areas such as technology, sport, business, and economy. Central to such success and competition is the notion of knowledge. Knowledge and information may be regarded as the leading characteristic of today’s modern globalised economies,
societies and communities (Dube & Ngulube, 2013). Alongside today’s fast paced generation of technology, is the notion of transferring information, knowledge and skills from one person to another, both nationally and internationally (Lindholm, 2004). Central to this notion, is the understanding that career choices and influences have a direct impact on who associates themselves with which discipline of knowledge. Indirectly, those who serve to pass the knowledge and skills on, are arguably one of the most influential members of significance in this circle of knowledge generation and success.

Contextually, one’s academic experience play an important role in bridging the gap between an individual’s career aspirations and the preparation in making it a reality. Academic institutions play a vital role in knowledge transfer from one generation to another (Janofsky, 1989). South African higher education institutions are increasingly valued and even expected to play a critical role in the country’s social transformation (Mapesela & Strydom, 2004). Pivotal to this understanding, is the topic of globalization and the threat of losing South African professionals and skills to other countries. Linked directly to this are the experiences of South Africa losing its intellectual capital due to various reasons such as the lack of job opportunities, for example (Tettey, 2006).

In full support of literature introduced by Dube and Ngulube (2013), the quality of a higher education institution is highly dependent and measured by the qualifications of its staff and their research and instructional teachings. Much emphasis is placed on the caliber of academics within these institutions who actively pass on the knowledge and skills to further generations (Mapesela & Strydom, 2004). With the ever increasing reliance on globalised knowledge and information sharing, organisations are required to support knowledge generation, innovation and effective performance in efforts to compete on both a national and international level. This can be illustrated through the increasing requirement for qualifications and specialised skills in the recruitment processes of businesses today (Dube & Ngulube, 2013). It therefore makes sense that in order to generate knowledge, knowledge needs to be retained.

It is therefore vital that discussions around motivational factors which serve to influence the career choices of academics are explored, in efforts to retain our intellectual capital and further motivate job satisfaction within the country. With this in mind, this study aims to discuss influential factors related to the career decisions of a small case study of individual academics. In doing so, the areas of
focus include questions concerned with what motivated the participant’s decision to become an academic as opposed to venturing into the corporate industry, specifically the internal and external influences related to their career choice, and motivational factors surrounding their current employer of choice.

1.4 Institutional Context of the Study:

Rhodes University was used as the institutional context for the study. This choice was one that was made with great ease due to many advantageous factors both for the research process and the research itself. Being personally employed by the University, researcher access to various communication tools, vacation dates, meeting venues and access to participants was made easier in terms of accessibility, time and resource saving. However, although these factors served to motivate the context of choice through the associated convenience of the setting, the context itself provided much appreciated quality to the research. Although small in size and somewhat isolated in terms of location, the University offers a rich range of diverse academics as a palette from which to choose established and uniquely different participants (Global Academy Jobs, 2013).

Rhodes University employees are highly regarded academics in terms of research prestige and progress within their disciplines/fields (Global Academy Jobs, 2013). This is something that is worth noting when analysing the location and size of the University in comparison to larger, more lucratively resourced universities such as the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Cape Town. This then highlights queries worth investigating in terms of what served to attract the academics to the University and to discover what work values were regarded as important to the academics being interviewed, which in essence highlights their career influences. All of the aspects above served to act as motivations in support of Rhodes University as a case study.

The study therefore aims to explore social, psychological and environmental factors that influence the career choices of Rhodes University Academics. This research utilized qualitative tools to investigate how newly joined and experienced university academics perceived the social and psychological factors that influenced their career decisions.

Particular areas of focus for the research were structured as follows:

1. Choice of discipline
2. *Why Academia versus Corporate Industry*


Developing on from this, related research questions included:

a. *Which factors attracted the interviewees to their chosen discipline;*

b. *Which people and experiences proved to be most influential in their decisions;*

c. *When and why they decided to pursue an academic career;*

d. *Which factors specifically attracted the academics to Rhodes University.*

An online survey was posted on a communicated website and academics were invited to anonymously take part in the survey. Guided by the inductive method of thematic analysis, the survey data allowed for a coding process that enabled the development of interview questions and focus categories.

With the aims outlined above, the overarching research topic was stated as follows:

*The career choices of Rhodes University Academics: Internal and external influences on the decision making process.*

The data gathered from the various interviews was analysed against the leading Social Cognitive Career Theory as developed by Lent *et al.* (1994) and the results proved to provide much insight into what was considered by the participants as personal influential experiences, values and attractions embedded in their chosen career and current employer.
CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Chapter two provides an in-depth outline of the main theoretical principles that underlie the personal process of decision making, career stage development and career patterns. The chapter then leads on to a discussion of further analysis of the process of career decision making and associated influences following the fundamentals and explanations introduced earlier under the topic of vocational decision making. In doing so, the findings of existing research are presented and further evaluated in chapter four against the data which emerged from this current investigation.

2.1 Career Stage Development:

Career theorists have partnered career stages with life and development stages and stated that career development does not tend to happen in a linear form of progression, but rather develops within stages and circles (Schreuder & Theron, 1997). Linking career with life stages displays how career development is viewed to be aligned with personal life development and is therefore highly influenced by the surrounding contexts and internal and external factors such as biological, psychosocial, social, economic, cultural and even spiritual factors (Schreuder & Theron, 1997).

The traditional approach adopted by career theories was to view career development as taking place within specific life challenges which occurred within the separated life phases beginning with identifying oneself with a chosen career and dealing with the crisis of intimacy versus isolation at the same time. This was regarded as the initial career stage (Riordan, 2007). The second or mid-career phase was explained to involve analyzing one’s career choice and “realignment as the individual resolved the tension between generativity and stagnation” (Riordan, 2007, p. 27).
This approach was initially introduced by Erikson (1963) who divided a person’s life span into eight stages of development, illustrated by the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Age (years)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Trust vs. mistrust (hope)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (will-power)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Initiative vs. guilt (purpose)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Industry vs. inferiority (competence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Identity vs. confusion (reliability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Intimacy vs. isolation (love)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Generativity vs. stagnation (care)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Integrity vs. despair (wisdom)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

He explained that as a person grows and matures, new needs identify themselves with the person, who is then required to satisfy these needs within his or her social and environmental boundaries. Once each need is satisfied and each crisis is overcome, the person moves on to his or her next stage and presented need within the development process.

According to Stewart, Ostrove and Helson (2001), identity development establishes an important base for midlife wellbeing and self-esteem. According to Riordan (2007), this significantly leans on the seventh stage of generativity versus stagnation. Generativity refers to the productivity of one’s life or actions and also leans on the care of one’s self, others and passing of wisdom and cultures. Erikson (1986) explains that this refers to raising children, and generating and producing meaningful work, which prevents a move towards stagnation.

In contrast to Erikson’s explanation, Levinson (1986) described development as occurring within 4 stages instead of 8. Differing from Erikson’s explanation that crises/needs need to be satisfied before moving on to the next stage of development, Levinson explained development through different stages to occur once accomplishing certain tasks, which in turn “provided a base for the next era” (Riordan, 2007). These four stages were labeled by Levinson as “pre-adulthood, early-adulthood, mid-adulthood and late adulthood. In terms of career development, Levinson (1986) described the early adulthood as the time where individuals determine their dreams, identify a mentor and develop their career while selecting their intimate partner.
Alternatively, Feldman (1976), Schein (1978) and Wanous (1980) divide the career development process up into early and mid-career stages (Riordan, 2007).

2.1.1 Early career stage

During this early career stage, an individual develops through multiple stages of career tasks such as managing with reality shock, adjusting oneself to work routines, developing effectiveness, receiving external acceptance at work, taking on responsibility, developing specialised skills, balancing personal needs with organizational demands and deciding on whether to stay with the company or move elsewhere (Riordan, 2007). As described by Riordan (2007), more recent analyses explain that such career stages are becoming less predictable and orderly and believe that companies/organizations should actively support young individuals within early career stages through the form of policies. According to Adamson (1997), understanding the early career period is made easier by viewing it in terms of his three meta-level phase theory, whereby he describes that individuals tend to negotiate through three stages of development. The three stages are referred to as: adjustment/reality shock; a phase of career success and confidence; and lastly a phase of re-evaluation.

In addition to these stages is the notion of “superwomen” (Riordan, 2007, p.27). This term refers to the multiple roles that women play in terms of balancing career and family needs whereby they are involved in full-time employment and have more household responsibilities within the home than that of their partner. The initial career obstacles within the early career stages therefore consist of the establishment of one’s career and then establishing success within the career. According to Dolezalek (2007), those who showed potential and success within early career stages, were recognized as ‘potentials’. According to Riordan (2007), potentials are described to be individuals who were young, motivated and educated individuals who displayed success within their chosen career path or organization.

2.1.2 Mid-career stage

When considering age identification with regard to the different career stages, it is important to note that this should be done with caution as each individual’s experience is different. During the stages of one’s middle adulthood, which ranges flexibly from the ages of 35 to 50, traditional career theory describes career development to occur within a linear fashion. If this was the case, Schreuder and
Theron (1997) state that the mid-career stage would then include an assessment of one’s career progress against their goals and dreams.

According to Erikson (1963), the main task within the mid-career stage is resolution of the generativity versus stagnation crisis. According to many theorists, such as Schein (1978), Levinson (1978) and Gould (1978), the midlife career stage involves questioning the results from career choice re-evaluation. Erikson (1963) describes generativity to be generated from the actions of caring for others, however according to Riordan (1976), Sheehy (1976) states that this is different for women as they have been established as caregivers up to this point and thus the midlife stage for women rather involves phases of attempting new challenges at work and in their personal lives. Therefore, the researcher agrees with Riordan (2007) in that career theories need to be assessed differently for men and women.

Identified work related tasks to be carried out during this stage, as described by Super (1963), included attempts at finding ways/strategies in order to maintain current positions and keep updated with technology and knowledge within the career. In addition to this, according to Riordan (2007), Williams and Savaickas (1990) introduced three additional tasks of retirement preparation, assessment of future goals and “argued that continuing education is as much a coping mechanism in a world of rapid technological change as it is a development task” (Riordan, 2007, p. 32). This is especially true within the educational context where one’s primary responsibility is the pursuit of knowledge (Riordan, 2007).

This midlife career stage of generativity versus stagnation can be associated with advancement within one’s career, specifically related to promotions and increased responsibilities. Where there are no further opportunities for advancement, a person is considered to have reached a ‘plateau’ in their career (Leibowitz, Kaye, & Farren, 1990). Nachbagauer and Reidl (2002) went on to describe the effects of having reached a career plateau on the performance and satisfaction of university academics. They revealed that where the organizational structure did not allow for promotion, this lead to what Nachbagauer and Reidl (2002) referred to as a ‘structural plateau’; they would attempt to find dynamic and varied challenges and jobs, and therefore provide other opportunities where promotion was not possible.
2.2 Career Path/Patterns:

With one’s career development, consideration is also given to one’s career pattern. A career pattern is described as the “shape and direction of an individual’s career over time” (Riordan, 2002, p.34). Brousseau (1990) explained that one’s career shape is able to differentiate from others in three different ways. Stability of a person’s chosen occupation, the direction of movement within the occupation and the amount of time occupied within a chosen career.

Brousseau (1990) went on to introduce four patterns that make up a typical person’s ideal career:

- The linear career – involving upward movement to positions of higher responsibility and authority;
- The steady state – limited movement, however the person has become an expert within the specific area;
- The spiral pattern – involving many changes to different chosen, often similar, fields every 5 or more years;
- The transitory pattern – represented by many changes every couple of years to completely differing occupations.

Brousseau (1990) explains that those with a linear career pattern often have a high regard for power and individual achievement, while those with a steady pattern value the ability to be regarded as an expert within their field and prefer job security. He explained that a spiral career pattern is characteristically represented by those who value personal growth and an ability to add to the development of others, while a transitory career path tends to describe people who appreciate variety and the ability to work independently (Brousseau, 1990).

2.3 Career Anchors:

According to Schein (1996), individuals within their midlife career stage, become aware of the reasons behind why their careers have shaped out accordingly. Schein (1996) described career anchors as career values, which are highly influential in shaping one’s career. He explained that a career anchor is a self-concept of talents and inherent abilities and motives behind their motivation. This tends to remain undefined until a person is faced with a career choice whereby different paths are presented and an individual is expected to make a choice (Lindhom, 2004).
Schein (1996), introduced eight career anchors, some more supported than others within different organizations and contexts. These include:

- **Technical/functional competence (TF)** – allows a person to continuously learn more or gain more knowledge within their field and increase their skills within their chosen field. People with this career anchor highly appreciate recognition for their expertise; however are not entirely effective managers.

- **General managerial competence (GM)** – with this career anchor, a person is determined to achieve a position of authority and power that would allow him/her to manage others. Such a person would have a high regard to promotion and growing levels of authority.

- **Autonomy/independence (AU)** – individuals with this inner career anchor, would seek a career that would allow him/her the freedom to control how and when they work.

- **Security/stability (SE)** – with this career anchor, individuals would have a high need for job and material security and have a high regard for loyalty to a company or organization.

- **Entrepreneurial creativity (EC)** – a person with this career anchor would most likely create their own business, whereby they have a sense of authority, as well as the control and freedom in being able to make their own decisions and in expressing their creativity. Such people would highly appreciate recognition and monetary income.

- **Service/dedication (SV)** – service or dedication to a cause would serve as a career anchor for a person who had an inherent desire to help and care for the needs of other people, as aligned with their personal values.

- **Pure challenge (CH)** – this career anchor would motivate a person who enjoys problem solving and challenges, as well as variety.

- **Life style (LS)** – a person with this career anchor would choose a career that would allow them the ability to balance both their career development and their personal life. Therefore, highly valuing flexibility as well as self-development.

In considering Brousseau’s (1990) idea of career patterns, one is able to align the two theories of career patterns and career anchors as introduced by Schein (1996). For example, Brousseau’s linear
pattern closely aligns with Schein’s anchor of general managerial competence (Riordan, 2007). The steady state would be aligned with Schein’s technical/functional career anchor, or even the security/stability career anchor. Riordan (2007) continues to explain that the remaining five anchors may then be aligned with the spiral or transitory patterns “depending on the extent to which individuals derive satisfaction from their current working environment.

Feldman and Bolino (1996) continued with the knowledge introduced by Schein (1996) with regard to career anchors and explained that in their view, a person is able to hold close to more than one career as a second anchor may support a more dominant one. Therefore, as each individual career is different, this may be due to the combination of different career anchors. They then went on to regroup the original career anchors as introduced by Schein (1996), by rearranging them into three main groups based on their “talent based, need based or value based” grounding (Riordan, 2007, p. 66). These rearranged anchors included “anchors of technical/functional competence, general managerial competence and entrepreneurial creativity” (Riordan, 2007, p. 66) which were regarded as talent-based with a high focus on the manner and type of daily work. Security/stability, autonomy/independence and lifestyle were regarded as need-based, whereby a person would put their personal life first and shape their career accordingly (Feldman & Bolino, 1996). Lastly, the dedication to a cause and the pure challenge anchor would be regarded as value based anchors due to their high regard for occupational and individual identity (Feldman & Bolino, 1996).

According to Callanan (2003), the key to achieving successful career management and development was to choose a career that correlates with one’s internal morals, interests and lifestyle preferences. Aside from this, organizational culture and opportunities play a major role in the success of one’s career. One could therefore agree with Riordan’s (2007) argument that those who had achieved objective success, would possibly appreciate values associated with their organizational culture, while those who felt that they were more subjectively successful, as compared to objectively, would most likely be aligned with Callanan (2003) in terms of choosing a career aligned with their internal morals and lifestyle preferences/interests (Riordan, 2007).

According to Greenhaus and Callanan (1994), who carried out research on vocational decision making within South Africa, the typical job seeker’s career search is made up of two periods, being establishment and achievement. The establishment period refers to the early career period where a person establishes him/herself with the working environment or organization, i.e. the people, in
house processes (technically and administratively), activities, norms and expectations. In doing so, he/she attempts to not only master various requirements to perform one’s job successfully, but also prove oneself within the organization (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994). During the period of achievement, the focus is rather on moving up the ladder and development. Greenhaus and Callanan (1994) explain that these two periods can take place up to 40 years of age. However, this would depend entirely on assumptions that one has continued on the path of one chosen career path and not embraced a new career much later in life, and can also be influenced by factors such as leaving work for varying reasons and reentering the workplace after a number of years. Such ideas introduced by Greenhaus and Callanan (1994) would not only refer to one’s early career period, but would also apply to entering into any organization as a new employee, despite one’s experience within a specific career.

2.4 Introduction to the concept of career decision making:

2.4.1 Career research: historical and more recent contributions

The concept of career choice is subject to different interpretations due to the large amount of interest that this field has received in social, cognitive and behavioral research studies. It can be understood within a context which is subjectively influenced by a person’s unique preferences, goals, personality traits and understandings (Meier, 1991). The process of career choice can also be analysed within a subjective context which is characteristically influenced by surrounding factors of economic, social and political factors. Despite this, it is often over simplified as a process of matching a person with a job (Meier, 1991).

A great deal of research within this area has been motivated by the aim of being able to understand and predict career choice according to a person’s interests and preferences. This approach however needs to take into consideration the impact that external environmental factors have in terms of influencing an individual’s choice (Meier, 1991). Research conducted following the latter approach involves consideration of individual factors which in turn influence career choices and the manner in which such individual factors serve to interact with environmental factors (Meier, 1991). Such factors include “personality-traits or interests, gender, culture, congruence, sex-type, self-efficacy, work values, salience, career identity and career maturity” (Meier, 1991, p. 132).
Within the broader scope of vocational development, research (largely career guidance and counseling) has been predominantly guided on an international scale by five main theoretical frameworks (Leung, 2005). These include: “(a) The Theory of Work Adjustment; (b) Holland’s Theory of Vocational Personality with the Working Environment; (c) Super’s Self Concept Theory of Career Development; (d) Gottfredson’s Theory of Circumscription and Compromise; and (e) Social Cognitive Career Theory.

According to Wang, Lo, Xu, Wang and Porfeli (2007), existing research supports the idea that both cultural and social contexts play an influential role in determining a person’s job search process in the way that a person approaches the process of reaching a career decision. According to Career Construction Theory introduced by Mark Shavikas (2005), people tend to adapt themselves to their individual social and cultural environments through self-regulation, which is influential in aiding to create meaning from experiences, shaping their work lives and shaping and building their careers (Lindhard, 1974). This theory states that by making a career choice, a person translates their values and the ideas of what kind of person they are into their career choice and in choosing an occupation, they aim to translate this self-concept into meaning and by adopting job stability within an organisation, they tend to realise their potential and their confidence increases accordingly (Shavikas, 2005).

One of the earliest theories is that of Super’s (1956) Self Concept Theory of career development. According to Super (1990), self-concept is “a product of complex interactions among a number of factors, including physical and mental growth, personal experience and environmental characteristics and stimulation” (Leaung, 2005, p.120). Super (1956) introduced the idea that career decision making is a process that spans across one’s lifetime and is directly linked to a person’s ability to relate to their self-concept. Super (1956) argued that a person identifies what kind of person they are by the career choices that they make as the decisions represent how they view themselves (Portnoi, 2009). For example, a person with a natural ability to patiently listen well to others and analyze experiences displays well recognized skills required for a counseling career. However, if a person holds no interest in a counseling career, then they would generally not spend large amount of time exploring such a career (Portnoi, 2009).

Super (1956) described that as self-concept is influenced by a person’s personality, values, experiences, environment, and people they meet throughout their life, a person’s interests change.
This change results in a change in one’s self-concept, perhaps leading to career changes and a regard for alternative disciplines.

John Holland’s (1973) Theory of Vocational Personality Traits within the work environment dominates research within career counseling as it focuses on individual interests and personality traits and claims that people within similar career groups share similar personality qualities. Holland (1973) went on to code various vocational personalities used for conceptualizing vocational interests and then linked the personalities to dominant work environment types (Leaung, 2005). His theory therefore explains the fit between a person and their environment whereby job satisfaction is directly linked to the fit between a person’s personality and their working environment (Leaung, 2005). Holland (1997) details this link by explaining that an individual tends to select a career which correlates with and represents their personality traits and that the better the correlation or fit, the higher the level of job satisfaction.

Holland (1997) went on to classify six personality traits, being the ‘realistic, investigative, social, artistic, enterprising, and conventional’ personality categories. These were described to be present in each individual, with one however, being more dominant over the others. Holland (1997) explained that career interests can either be developed through influences of heredity or environments whereby children may be exposed to specific activities which yield a positive effect on them through recognition or praise which in turn develop into interests. In this way, individuals tend to build skills in support of their interests (Holland, 1997).

As described within Lindholm’s (2004) ‘Pathways to the Professoriate: The role of self, others and environment in shaping academic career aspirations’, Astin’s (1984) Need-based Socio-psychological Model of Career Choice provided a moderate structure for understanding of the process involved in the career choice process. Astin’s (1984) theory, initially intended to focus on the career choices of women yet also applicable to men, follows the four psychological and social principles related to motivation, sex-role socialization, opportunities, and expectations, which she described as playing an influential role on one’s career. She explains that an individual is motivated to work to purposely satisfy three fundamental needs, being survival, pleasure and contribution, while adopting opportunities that serve to satisfy these needs. Specifically, Astin (1984) explained that within the principle of motivation, survival refers to physiological survival; pleasure encompasses the internal satisfactions gained from one’s career/work; and contribution refers to an individual’s contribution
Expectations were described by Astin (1984) to encompass an individual’s personal self awareness and recognition of their own skills, perceptions around what career they will adopt and how successful they will be. Astin (1984) describes her understanding of work expectations to be translated into an individual’s capability of their strengths and work related skills, the opportunities which present themselves and the availability of work which can best satisfy for their basic needs. She explains that these expectations differ for both men and women due to their different social experiences. The influence of gender socialization then internalizes itself within an individual as gender norms, which in turn develops work expectations accordingly (Astin, 1984).

Sex-role socialization and structure of opportunity is referred to by Astin (1984) as a process of interaction whereby societies modify over time in terms of their gender norms, and in doing so, the working environments change, for example, the increase in the number of women engaging within the professional industries of law or science, which were previously male dominated.

Astin (1984) described career choice as a process that involves an interaction between factors aligned to the individual’s psychological influences, such as what is considered as motivation in terms of work satisfaction, cultural and environmental factors that serve to influence their career choices, such as experiences and opportunities that finally lead to career and work expectations.

Astin (1984) basically explains that an individual is motivated to pursue a career that in essence satisfies their personal needs in terms of what is considered to make sense to the individual and what is considered to be a comfortable fit for them as it relates to their interest as influenced by their childhood experiences and environmental and structural opportunities (Lindhom, 2004). Astin (1984) described career intentions and choices to be highly influenced by socialization and upbringing as it relates to perceived career opportunities and are modified accordingly should opportunities change in any way. In this way, she explains career aspirations and goals as ever-changing for both men and women as their environments change. This is highly evident in today’s evolving environments, whereby individuals are often seen to change careers or study later in life as they consider changes in their career path. Change in career paths is also linked to the availability of career opportunities or those which tend to best satisfy and individual’s needs.

In essence, Astin (1984) explained the work experiences and career development processes to be different for men and women due to their differences in sex-role socialization, however has been
critiqued in her limited acknowledgement of the differences in work structures, industries and even work barriers for men and women within the workplace (Lent, Brown and Hackett, 1994).

According to Gottfredson’s (2002) theory of Circumscription and Compromise, vocational decision making is viewed as a process of circumscription and compromise whereby a person develops a cognitive range of career choices influenced by images gathered from the surrounding environment and the communicated stereotypes (Gottfredson, 2002). She explained that instead of career choice being considered a process of open selection, it is rather a process of option elimination whereby an individual eliminates options molded and influenced by its context or environment and is therefore a process of self-creation in which a person chooses the best road based on their interests and skills (Leung, 2005). She stated that individuals tend to choose which career they prefer by aligning well-matched careers with the images they hold of themselves and therefore display use of the self-concept theory. Gottfredson focuses on the developmental processes within career decision making by relating such decisions to the resources and options available to a person and argued that a person makes conscious compromises influenced by the realities that a person experiences (Gottfredson, 2002).

Vocational psychologists have spent much time and focus on researching career goal-setting and decision making (Thompson & Dahling, 2010). Existing research focuses on various theories on the different aspects of the decision making process while also focusing on influential factors, such as a good fit between person and environment, social cognitive influences and socialization into what is perceived as ‘acceptable’ career choices in consideration of class and gender (Astin, 1984), (Lent et al., 1994).

Various other psychological disciplines tend to use different theories to make sense of how people make career choices, whether similar or different to others (Thompson & Dahling, 2010). Image theory (Beach, 1990) refers to the personal focus, where a person tends to be influenced by his/her personal standards when making career decisions. Basically, it refers to how the “beliefs, values, and self-views of decision-makers” (Beach, 1990) form the grounding for the goals they set and how they choose to pursue these goals. Therefore, according to Beach (1990), individuals set various goals in their lives in relation to how they view themselves and personal values that they hold for themselves, and in turn, follow out these goals through the adoption of methods or actions that do not threaten their self perceptions and values. According to Swanson and Gore (2000), Image Theory therefore
correlates well with existing research on vocational theory in highlighting the relationship between
the person and the vocational environment.

According to Herr (2001), career development has only come into research since the 1960’s,
therefore being a relatively new development. Career development is commonly referred to as
vocational assessment or development. Shifting from different approaches such as a focus on career
predictions with regard to individual suitability to its current multi-disciplinary focus on all aspects of
the “psychological, social, educational, physical, economic and chance factors that combine to shape
individual experience within a particular organizational and social context” (Herr, p. 196). This is
therefore the basis on which this research will be approached with regard to Rhodes University
Academics.

Since the 1950’s there has been a great deal of research conducted on how personal and
environmental factors shape individuals’ career choices. Such theories have included developmental
approaches, personality-based theories, trait and factor approaches, self-concept theories and social
learning theories, to mention a few. However, little of the literature has focused specifically on the
vocational development of college and university professors (Lindholm, 2004). This view is mostly
related to the forces that shape a person’s decision to pursue an academic career. To a large extent,
the literature on academic careers has primarily focused on issues related to the
underrepresentation of woman and ethnic minorities within academic ranks as well as challenges
arising from the shifting academic labour market (Lindholm, 2004). Various other theories exist on
career choice determinants and influencing forces in career decision making.

Lent et al. (1994), explain that the past 20 years have been marked by much progress in terms of
theories and research on career development, with the expansion of existing research and also the
introduction of new perspectives above those of the theoretical forefathers such as Bandura (1986),
Super (1990) and Holland (1973). This was all done in efforts to deeply investigate individual
approaches to career development while considering influential factors both internal and external to
individuals within constantly changing environments of what is considered to be the more recent
‘modern world or societies’ (Lent et al., 1994). More recent research on vocational decision making
continues to pay attention to the process of interaction between the individual and their
environment when making career choices (Portnoi, 2009). Krumboltz (1996) explained that making
career decisions is aligned with social learning theory, whereby individuals make use of interactions
with mentors or career counselors, for example, who provide guidance to motivate them in making career choices, thus explaining individuals as active drivers in vocational decision making (Portnoi, 2009).

It is clear that past and recent research within the field of vocational decision making has placed much importance on the ability to classify individuals based on individual differences and has recently developed into research the ability to use such differences as predictors in career choices, for example, individual cognitive decision making styles; personality and motivation measures (Gati, Landman, Davidovitch, Asulin-Petretz & Gadassi, 2010). Such research has displayed a trend to restrictively classify and group individuals according to personality types and boxes, whilst recent research is only now showing a trend of acknowledging that individuals tend to take on multiple personality types and that they have the ability to adapt to their surrounding as required in today’s constantly changing environments. This is evident in research conducted by Gati et al. (2010) who refer to the development of personality profiles instead of personality types.

It is in the researcher’s opinion that little research has focused on either specific individual contexts or industries within the context of globalization and its associated influential factors. These factors are directly related to the processes of career decision making, yet research has laid much focus on the individual, as opposed to the context in which the individual directly finds him/herself. With the ever-changing markets and contexts of today’s world, it is necessary to keep up to date with such research as individual motivations and satisfaction alters accordingly as they adapt to changing environments. For example, there is an abundance of research into the field of job or career satisfaction and motivation, which lays focus to research on what motivates an employee within the working environment, however updating and on-going research should continue with investigating the changing motivations around career and discipline/study choices within a country which is rapidly transforming on all social, economic and political fronts.

2.4.2 Career Research within South Africa:

Stead and Watson (1998) describe and critically examine the aspects of South African research carried out and published over the period of 1980 to 1997 focusing mainly on adolescents and young adults (Stead & Watson, 1998). South African research greatly leant on career research developed within the United States, with career theories depending largely on theorists such as Holland (1985)
and Super (1990) and most of the research generated before 1990 largely focused on white samples (de Bruin & Nel, 1996) “and has assumed that the Western heritage of white South Africans would justify the use of theories, constructs, and instruments derived from European and American contexts” (Stead & Watson, 1998). According to Stead and Watson (1998), past research has displayed few efforts to investigating and understanding the applicability of European and American theories to the unique South African multicultural context. Since 1990, Stead and Watson explain that researchers have since started to second guess the suitability of such theories within the South African context. Naicker (1994) has highlighted the significance of considering the sociological factors of South Africa in their career decision making and has criticized the neglect of contextual factors in surrounding theories. In efforts to judge the appropriateness of European and American formed theories to South Africans, various theories produced by Super (1990), Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg (1986) and Holland (1985) have been examined.

Van Niekerk and Van Daalen (1991) examined Super’s (1990) theory with regard to its contextual relevance among black South Africans. The theories related to the developmental stages inadequately reflect black South Africans who (during the time of Super’s research) had limited opportunities to enter into and entrust themselves to long-term careers and were marked by unstable contextual factors. Stead and Watson went on to explain that the “stages, self-concept, career maturity, and decision-making aspects of Super’s (1980) theory need to be reexamined or even redefined if they are to become more meaningful constructs in the South African contexts” (1998, p. 291) and have also gone on to question the appropriateness of Super’s (1980) theory within an environment that is characterized by instability. According to Stead (1996), the developmental-contextual approach according to Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1986) is regarded as a helpful framework for examining the career development of black South African adolescents during both the pre- and post-apartheid years as this approach focuses on the dynamic interplay between individual and contextual perspectives. It encourages researchers to examine career issues from a holistic perspective and not only based on reductionist and linear approaches based mainly on the individual (Vondracek et al., 1986).

In addition to this, Holland’s (1985) theory on career development and career choices has also received criticism. Watson, Stead, and Schonegeval (1997) went on to examine Holland’s (1985) Career Decision-Making System with regard to grade 10 to 12 black adolescents and concurred that the “structure of Holland’s hexagon was misshapen” (Stead & Watson, 1998, p. 291).
The application of western values and beliefs such as individualism, individualized career decision making, and the influence of the common nuclear family structure within South African career research has served to limit the acknowledgement of influential factors relevant in South African cultures. For example, “the Xhosa expression ‘umntu ngumntu ngabantu’. (i.e. a person is a person through others) has yet to be explained in relation to the career choice process” (Stead & Watson, 1998, p. 292). This displayed sense of community within the South African context can be linked to factors such as career maturity and life roles.

2.5 Social Cognitive Theory:

Albert Bandura (1986) is largely known for his large contributions to the fields of psychology with focus on cognitive psychology, social cognitive theory and personality (Lent & Brown, 1996). He is internationally recognized as one of the most influential psychologists thus far within the field of human learning and development (Lent & Brown, 1996). Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory introduces a framework for considering the process of general decision making, and the direct and indirect influences on this decision making process. This framework provides insight into how people are able to direct their own choices and it discussed the interrelated relationships of person specific and environmental variables on choice (Lent & Brown, 1996). This framework introduced the interpretivist view of the individual taking the interactive role as a decision/outcome moulder and explains the influential variables that allows an individual to increase or decrease their personal agency, while considering the outcome of influential social and environmental factors (e.g. gender, ethnicity) that tend to either act as supporters or barriers to one’s decision making process.

Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory focuses on one’s ability in being able to apply self-observation, self-judgment, and self-reaction. Bandura (1986) explains that self-observation is the purposeful act of assessing and observing one’s own actions and behavior. Self-judgment refers to an analysis in comparing one’s behavior to that of a goal or standard, and self-reaction is the response that arises from evaluation or specifically their self-judgment. Therefore, in essence, a person observes him/herself, makes a personal judgment with regard to their progress in relation to personally defined goals and then makes the necessary changes in behavior to achieve the goals (Bandura, 1986).

Bandura (1986) explained that the process of learning influences a person’s self-efficacy and career expectations and these then influence career choices (Wang et al., 2007). Essentially, both bands of
theory believe that there exists three components to decision making. Bandura’s theory explains that in order to fully understand human functioning, one also needs to consider the relative human contexts (Wang et al., 2007). This refers to the reciprocal interaction between the ‘personal, behavioral, and environmental’ relationship as introduced by the social cognitive theory which explains that self-analysis and thinking, genetic makeup, one’s specific environment and their behavior all influence one another and interact with one another in the process of career decision making and understanding (Wang et al., 2007). With this in mind however, these various factors play their part in a “dynamic change process” (Wang et al., 2007, p.576).

In other words, if the contextual conditions change, the requirements for a job changes, and in return, a person may tend to alter their thoughts or behaviors or efforts to match the changing context/environment, where plans or goals may change (Wang et al., 2007). Such changes are specifically evident within the South African context with the introduction of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), whereby job seekers have had to alter their goals or career paths and preparation in efforts to match the changing market contexts and workplace demands. BEE refers to the corrective initiative introduced by the South African government with the aim of balancing the inequalities which developed within the country during their 1Apartheid years by allowing economic privileges to those who were previously denied such opportunities. This is carried out through regulations supporting employment preferences, skills development, and procurement preferences for example (Acemoglu, Gelb & Robinson, 2007).

Other existing career development models however refer to and acknowledge that career decisions are highly influenced by people and their surrounding environments, and they refer to this as a “partially bidirectional account of interaction” (Lent et al., 1994, p.82). This therefore explains that behavior is a by-product of the transaction between the person and environment instead of rather being described as a co-determinant of such an interaction between person and environment. Although adopted by many vocational theories, this explanation however does not recognize that people tend to influence their personal situations and surroundings which in effect tend to affect their thoughts and behavior (Bandura, 1982, p.4). These existing models also tend to illustrate what is viewed as global person characteristics rather than illustrating the unique characteristics that represent individuals who are developing in terms of their vocational choices as well as transforming

1Apartheid refers to a system of racial segregation within South Africa over the period of 1948 to 1994 whereby the rights of the black majority South African population were reduced (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2013).
environments and contexts (Lent et al., 1994). Opposing this idea, social cognitive theory expresses the situation, behavior and the individual’s practice of personal agency (Lent et al., 1994).

Bandura (1986) went on to introduce a model of interaction between the influences of person and environment called the “triadic reciprocality’ (Lent et al., 1994, p.82) which illustrates how personal traits/characteristics, external environmental factors and overt behavior together cooperate as interconnected mechanisms “that affect one another bidirectionally” (Lent et al., 1994, p.82).

### 2.6 Social Cognitive Career Theory

Bandura’s contributions to the field of social cognitive psychology is directly related to this study in that Bandura introduced in-depth research into the area of human learning, which progressed into research on human cognition within the context of social learning, and later developed his work on Social Cognitive Theory into the widely known Social Cognitive Career Theory that dominates today’s vocational research and understanding (Lent et al., 1994).

Career research displays a trend of core reference to personal agency and self-awareness (Lent, Brown & Steven, 1996). With the increased interest in the topic of the choice/decision process, came input from Lent et al. (1994). Their development of Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory led to the development of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994, 1996, 2000, 2002) with a specific focus on career choice. Social Cognitive Career Theory is recognized as being a development from Bandura’s initial theory which combines existing theory within the field of career development and with a constructionist approach. The theory draws on these aspects to form one framework in understanding career development and the influence of human cognition and “emphasizes the dynamic processes that we believe helps to shape and transform occupational and academic interests, choices, and performances” (Lent et al., 1996).

Social Cognitive Career Theory “focuses on the following processes through which (a) academic and career interests develop, (b) interests, in concert and other variables, promote career-relevant choices, and (c) people attain varying levels of performance and persistence in their educational career pursuits” (Lent et al., 1996., p. 311). The theory outlines the relationship between different variables such as personal interests, strengths and abilities that are considered by different career theorists and specifically refers to cognitive and experiential processes that introduce influences to the career decision making process (Lent et al., 1996).
Therefore, in summary, Social Cognitive Career Theory is centered on the interplay between the person, context and behavior factors within vocational development, as illustrated by the diagram below.

![Diagram of Social Cognitive Career Theory](image)

*Figure 2: Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994, 2000, 2002)*

In developing the Social Cognitive Career Theory, Lent *et al.* (1994) stated that existing literature on decision making displayed a lack of recognition granted to cultural differences and influences generated by surrounding contexts and environments (Brown, Lent & Gore, 2000). Lent *et al.* (1994) analysed existing literature on the career development process in attempts to introduce a conceptual framework that lays emphasis on “learning and cognitive phenomena that may complement, and foster conceptual linkages with existing career models” (Lent *et al.*, 1994, p. 80) while largely drawing on Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory. Their research was carried out in efforts to bridge related constructs within the area of career development, expand on related outcomes within different career literature and to discuss and explain relations within a range of different literature on this topic. They begin by focusing on issues that tend to influence career related interests and choices, while focusing on the two periods of late adolescence and early adulthood (Lent *et al.*, 1994).

Social Cognitive Career Theory explains that personal agency and responsibility play a pivotal role within the process of career decision making and explains the process in which internal and external factors play an influential role in supporting or creating a barrier for the individual’s decision making (Bester, 2011). Basically, Social Cognitive Career Theory applies the principles of self-efficacy and outcome expectation, as introduced by Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory, to career choice and development and explains that these two principles inter-relate to form career interests, goals and associated behaviour and action. In summary, the Social Cognitive Career Theory outlines the active
role of the individual in guiding their career path and their motivation to take control of their career outcome and destination (Bester, 2011).

Social Cognitive Career Theory supports Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory in its reference to inter-related relationship of person, environment and behaviour/actions referred to as the ‘triadic reciprocality’. In other words, Social Cognitive Career Theory explains the process in which the effect of a person (race, gender, personality, confidence), context (external support, opportunities, market and economic influences) and actions (prior related experience and performance, success rate) impact the choice of career, work related activities and performance of career related activities (Bester, 2011).

What the researcher found most interesting and beneficial is that Lent et al. focused on what they referred to as “segmented models of career behavior” (Lent et al., 1994, p. 81) instead of adopting and focusing on one main theory of career development. This in effect supports modern lifestyles that are ever changing and markets fast births of new ideas and a culture that supports the increasing ability to change careers and interests. Within their framework, they combine both aspects of academic and career behavior as interests and skills that are adopted during one’s academic years, being the years represented by school and higher education, which often influence one’s career choices. Bearing in mind however that social and economic factors influence the extent to which and the level to which these choices are carried out (Lent et al., 1994). In drawing on Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, it is learnt that the role of the process of self-referent thinking is emphasized in the role that it plays in directing individual motivation and actions, while also focusing on other internal factors such as developmental and biological influences.

Social Cognitive Theory focuses on a mix of “cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes” (Lent et al., 1994, p.82). In order to understand and explain this interplay of three major factors within decision making, the Social Cognitive Career Theory refers to Bandura’s (1986) “triadic reciprocal model of causality” (Lent et al., 1996, p.2). This model illustrates how personal traits/characteristics, external environmental factors and overt behavior together cooperate as interconnected mechanisms “that affect one another bidirectionally” (Lent et al., 1994, p.82).

Within the person attributes of this triadic reciprocal model of causality, Social Cognitive Career Theory explains that a person is able to influence their own behavior and outcomes through the
interplay of three social cognitive variables. These being, self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and personal goals (Lent et al., 1996).

2.6.1 Self-Efficacy:

Self-efficacy is one of the processes within Social Cognitive Theory which has received much focus within vocational research (Lent et al., 1994). According to Lent et al. (1994), self-efficacy is defined as a person’s analysis and judgment of their abilities in being able to carry out required action in attempts to attain chosen types of behavior, which according to Bandura (1989) can all be summed up to constitute personal agency.

Self-efficacy is a person’s personal view on their degree of success within a certain field. According to Lent et al. (1996), self-efficacy is a complex process of self-belief that is influenced by performance and activities, for example, academic performance and work related tasks. Lent and Brown (1996) explain that the main events and sources that tend to generate self-efficacy include a person’s personal performance and achievements, vicarious learning experiences, external social persuasion and physiological and emotional states of mind. The extent to which these factors influence a person’s level of self-efficacy depends on the context in which the person is situated. It is noted that of the factors mentioned, accomplishments and successful experiences tend to result in the most significant influence on self-efficacy as failures tend to act as barriers to high personal confidence with regard to the choice at hand (Lent et al., 1996).

According to Hackett and Betz (1981), past qualitative research on self-efficacy has revealed a trend of support around the characteristics of self efficacy. These include characteristics such as the degree of predictability around a person’s personal belief of their success and the influence that gender differences hold on a person’s level of self efficacy (Hackett & Betz, 1981).

2.6.2 Outcome expectations:

Outcome expectations refer to a person’s view on their output when performing a specific behavior or action, for example, a sporting activity or ability to handle the sight of blood with ease. It is the person’s perception of the end product as related to an action or choice, for example, medical practitioners or lawyers receive high income (Lent et al., 1996). A person’s decision of which career to pursue is mutually affected by both self-efficacy and outcome expectations at one given time as a person would then not generally pursue a medical career if they do not feel confident enough within
the discipline, e.g. intolerance for blood. The outcome expectations are determined through cognitive application of past learned experiences or acquired knowledge, such as through previous actions or through interaction and information received from others within the discipline (Lent et al., 1996).

### 2.6.3 Goal representations:

Thirdly, personal goals refer to the person’s motivation to take part in a specific activity related to their career decision to achieve the expected outcome (Bandura, 1986). Setting goals is directly influenced by the first two factors, self-efficacy and outcome expectations. For example, if a person has positive beliefs about their computer capabilities and perceive positive outcomes related to an IT career, then they will set goals accordingly (research, training, and practice, projects) to ensure that this is possible (Lent et al., 1996).

Social Cognitive Career Theory explains that learning influences a person’s self-efficacy and career expectations and these then influence career choices (Wang et al., 2007). In order to fully understand human functioning, one also needs to consider the relative human contexts (Wang et al., 2007). This refers to the reciprocal interaction between the ‘personal, behavioral, and environmental” relationship as introduced by the social cognitive theory which explains that self-analysis and thinking, genetic makeup, one’s specific environment and their behavior all influence one another and interact with one another in the process of career decision making and understanding (Wang et al., 2007). However, these various factors play their part in a “dynamic change process” (Wang et al., 2007, p.576). Simply put, if the contextual conditions change, for example the requirements for a job changes, a person may tend to alter their thoughts or behaviors or efforts to match the changing context/environment, where plans or goals may change (Wang et al., 2007). Such changes are specifically evident within the South African context with the introduction of BEE (black economic empowerment) introduced in the country after its change of government in 1994, whereby job seekers have had to alter their goals or career paths and preparation in efforts to match the changing market contexts and workplace demands as the country attempts to right the injustices of the past racist apartheid regime.

According to Social Cognitive Career Theory, these influences play a major role in affecting an individual’s career interests, goals and actions/behaviour. For example, a person’s career interests directly influence their career goals, which in turn directly influence their career actions. With this is
mind, environmental factors play a major role in influencing how this process of career decision making and development is carried out. If a person experiences environmental/contextual difficulties such as gender bias or market and economic restrictions, these are viewed as career barriers. According to (Lent et al., 2000), these career barriers then continue to suppress an individual’s motivation to pursue a career that is actively affected by such barriers.

The illustration below summarises the career decision making process, as introduced by Lent, Brown and Hackett’s Social Cognitive Career Theory (1994, 2000, 2002).

![Figure 3: Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994; 2000; 2002)]

Brown, Lent and Gore (2000) criticized Social Cognitive Career Theory by explaining that the model’s focus on self-efficacy excludes those from collectivist cultures who tend to make decisions collaboratively. Interestingly, Blustein et al. (1997) explained that individuals who engaged in collaborative occupational decision making were more likely to experience high levels of job fulfilment, in comparison to those who made decisions independently.

2.7 Developing Vocational Interests

In agreement with Bester (2011), the ability to make a choice around a preferred career is in fact a privilege for a small percentage of people in the world as it assumes that in making a decision/choice, there was a range of options from which the preferred choice was made. This in fact refers to all
choices made as supported by the definition of the word ‘choice’ (being the preferred decision made from more than one option) (Bester, 2011). For many, barriers tend to negatively impact the luxury of career options and therefore negatively impacting the ability to make a choice (Bester, 2011).

A person’s environment/context in which they are situated has a highly influential impact on their career development. As children grow up, they are exposed to and engage in a vast variety of activities that indirectly affect their career choices. The influence of parents, friends, teachers and mentors also has an impact on one’s selected activities that they engage in and therefore indirectly influence their decisions (Lent et al., 1996). With continuation of this process, an individual’s self-efficacy, skills and outcome expectations are formed and developed. This forms the gist of the Interest Model introduced by Social Cognitive Career Theory. Basically, the Interest Model illustrates the development of career interests based on the interaction between self-efficacy and outcome expectations. This is broken down into the explanation that interest in a discipline or career path is formed through continued successful experiences, which increases their self-efficacy as they begin to view themselves as more competent, which leads to the development of related outcome expectations (Lent et al., 1996). Likewise, Lent et al. (1996) states that negative experiences result in avoidance of the activity or engagement.

In considering the explanation above, it is then in agreement with Lent et al. (1996), that one could explain the formation of interest development as follows: successful activities promote positive self-efficacy, which further promote positive outcome expectations and finally results in continued activity engagement. This then results in supportive goals associated with the activity/discipline, which permit increased chances of success and networking or negative outcomes, which then refresh the levels of self-efficacy and outcome expectations. This process then continues “within an on-going feedback loop” that can repeat itself throughout one’s career (Lent et al., 1996).

It is also possible for one’s career interests to change through further experience, as influential factors continuously work at either encouraging or disapproving their decision. For example, through continued interaction and experience a person chooses a specific career that is later realised and experienced to be the incorrect decision which is no longer regarded as the best fit for the individual at a given time. This could be regarded as being a result of performance experiences. They are then either unhappy with their choice and restart the whole selection process or they slowly become exposed to learning experiences that result in spiked interest. This can be illustrated by an individual’s
exposure to literature or story writing by a peer or friend. S/he then joins a book club and develops a heightened interest in this discipline through successful feedback/reviews from the group. This positive encouragement then results in positive self-efficacy and outcome expectations. The individual then engages in additional related activities and outcome expectations are further fuelled into a new career path or discipline.

According to Whitbourne, Sneed and Skultety (2002), identity development forms an integral part in a person’s career development. Identity is described as “a broad bio-psychosocial self-definition that encompasses the individual’s self-representation in the areas of physical functioning, cognition, personality, relationships, occupation, and social roles broadly defined” (Whitbourne et al., 2002, p.30).

Brousseau’s (1990) work was key in the theories surrounding motivation as to why a person chose a specific career path, i.e., their influences and motivations. He described that individuals within a linear career pattern, held both authority and achievement as valuable, thus choosing accordingly. Those within a steady state of expertise tend to value stability and complete knowledge. Those within the spiral pattern tend to follow personal development, growth and creativity, while those within the transitory pattern leaned more towards variety within a chosen career that is marked by a sense of independence and autonomy (Brousseau, 1990). Through this, Brousseau (1990) explained that a person is thus motivated into a specific career that aligns with their internal values and thus has a degree of control over their occupational choices.

Lindholm (2004) and Finkelstein (1984) explain that two clear components within a person’s development serve to shape their career choices and behavior. These include interaction between early childhood experiences and sources of influence that specifically serve to impact one’s career decision making.

2.8 Influences on Vocational Interests and Decisions:

According to the Social Cognitive Career Theory, three categories of internal and external factors, serve to influence a person’s career decision making. With this framework, Social Cognitive Career Theory provides explanation as to understanding the effect that “personal (e.g. gender, race, mental and physical disabilities, ability, self-confidence), contextual (e.g. opportunities, support,
discrimination) and experiential (e.g. social pressure, modeling, prior failure/success) variables have on career related interests, choice behavior and performance outcomes” (Bester, 2011, p. 8).

Lent *et al.* (1994) explains that these influences tend to either act as barriers to career choices or as supportive facilitators which either directly or indirectly affect an individual’s level of self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, influences will either act as positive or negative influences depending on how they are perceived by the individual. This perception will in turn influence the career choice and goals that are acknowledged and chosen. Essentially, the explanation is summarized as a process whereby internal and external factors influence a person’s career decision making process through a personal cognitive analysis of optional career paths based on perceived skills and strengths, as well as the consequences of performing specific actions (Bester, 2011).

The outcome from the interaction between these three pillars introduced by Social Cognitive Career Theory further assist in allowing an individual to practice personal agency through self-evaluation. This in turn exerts a major influence in developing personal career interests, deciding on a career and achieving the outcome or goals they have been envisioned (Bester, 2011).

According to Lent *et al.* (1994) positive contextual factors include factors that serve to positively promote a person’s career outcome, such as career counseling, parental and social support and likewise from other influential people within a person’s life, such as a teacher, or mentor. These factors all serve to influence a person’s career choice and development through their influence on self-confidence/self-efficacy, realized strengths and traits, and encouragement. These influences however, are not taken for granted as positive, as lack thereof may serve to negatively influence a person’s career outcome or consideration (Bester, 2011).

Social Cognitive Career Theory highly regards the influence of contextual factors or conditions. These include factors such as ethnicity or gender, for example. Although race and gender are rather internal physical attributes, Social Cognitive Career Theory is instead focused on the effect that these two factors have on the person on a psychological, and social level and the outcome within the social-cultural environment and the effect on a person’s career opportunities (Lent *et al.*, 1996). This form of discrimination has impacted South Africa through the introduction of employment equity regulations (for whom it has created a choice barrier). The discrimination, serves as a barrier which negatively affects self-efficacy, outcome expectations and thus surrounding actions and goals are
avoided. More specifically, gender and race are good examples of how learning experiences can mould a person’s career choice.

Work values play an influential role in the determination of one’s career path through the effect it poses on outcome expectations. This is carried out through a combination of a person’s values around what they regard as preferable working conditions, e.g. flexible working hours, or career values can influence decisions through reinforcers that are important to the individual, such as high income or authority within their work role (Lent et al., 1996).

Some individuals tend to make career choices that accommodate both work and family demands. This is especially true when it comes to educated women who have the opportunity to make choices aligned to what allows for salience for them, as compared to uneducated women whose careers are most often subjected to chance influences (Riordan, 2007). This idea is supported by Scott and Hatalla (1990), who described that educated people are more likely influenced by contingency factors in terms of their career patterns, as they hold a high self-acknowledgement when it comes to self-awareness of skills and their own abilities, personal interests and recognized intelligence in terms of an educational qualification. Therefore, the above explanation does not hold true within all cases, as many people tend to be personally aware of their inherent and dominant skills and abilities within specific areas aligned with their personal interests. Individuals are not able to support and enhance such skills in the manner of further education or training. These internal factors however do not stand alone. External factors have a high influence on one’s career pattern. External factors include family, community and cultural influences, job specific factors, sufficient funds for school and awareness of available occupations, social expectations with regard to career choices, discrimination and economic circumstances. In addition to these factors are unexpected personal factors playing an influence on career patterns and progress such as those related to death, divorce or events related to children and or geographical location (Scott and Hatalla, 1990).

Astin (1984) described that sex-role socialization plays an important role within the determination of a women’s career pattern. The three main influences or factors that Astin (1984) referred to with regard to the social-psychological model of career choice was that of work motivation, sex-role socialization (playing through family, school and organisations, and media), and lastly structures of opportunity. Astin (1984) believed that the dealings of these three factors tended to be the driving force behind a women’s career expectation. However, adding on to this, Farmer (1997) believed that
although sex-role socialization plays a role in a woman’s perception of her available opportunities, social learning theory states that a woman plays the agent within her own learning and therefore makes up her own mind in terms of her opportunities and destiny.

Within the South African context, where women previously had limited opportunities with regard to career development in early careers in respect of access to education and job experience within specific fields, the context has led to a now more supportive environment with regard to gender equity legislation in efforts to encourage development (Bester, 2011).

2.8.1 Gender:

The significance behind understanding gender/woman experiences around career choice is due to the increased number of women in the workplace today. The introduction of career research on the barriers to career choice and development was motivated by the view that women “were experiencing a gap between the underestimation of their abilities and their performance/achievement” (Bester, 2001, p. 13).

To a large extent, the literature on academic careers has primarily focused on issues related to the underrepresentation of woman and ethnic minorities within academic ranks as well as challenges arising from the shifting academic labour market (Lindholm, 2004). There has been a substantial amount of research that has been produced about women within academia and specifically the challenges they face, managing work and family commitments and responsibilities and the challenges that women face within the organizational culture (Riordan, 2007). Leading researchers within this area include, Bagihole, 1993; Caplan, 1995; Lindholm, 2004; Morley, 2000, 2001; Saunderson, 2002; Schaupp, 1995; West and Lyon, 1995; and Wilson, 2003 (Riordan, 2007). Past research displays differences with regard to career outcomes and gender, restriction with regard to women and high percentages of women in lower-paying careers (Meier, 1991). However, more recent research explains how such trends seem to be transforming as social pressures tend to decrease with regard to expected gender occupations and display representation of women in male dominated occupations (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997).

Society plays a role in predetermining what vocational roles are appropriate for men and women (Wroblewski & Huston, 1987). These ideas are formed early and examples can be seen in various children’s stories, activities and attributions (Weisner & Wilson-Mitchell, 1990). Media plays a major
role in reflecting societal expectations with regard to social and occupational roles for each gender, which has in turn received much inquiry and research. Studies reveal that media reflection has become less stereotypical of women and towards greater accuracy surrounding the diversity of women’s roles (Sullivan & O’Connor, 1988). The dominant conclusion that is revealed through the study of general publications, television and children’s materials is that the portrayal of men and women continues to be quite traditional (Wroblewski & Huston, 1987).

Such restrictive ideas around which roles are appropriate for which gender is also carried out in secondary school and college years (Taber & Breen, 1992). According to Alpert and Breen (1989), there is evidence that males are more restrictive in their ideas about which roles are more appropriate for which gender as to that of females. However, according to Janman (1989) and Pfost & Fiore (1990), despite what may seem to represent increasing flexibility regarding women’s vocational roles within society, negative consequences can still be predicted if women continue to engage in gender role nonstandard behavior, such as academic accomplishment or career success. However, the researcher tends to disagree with this. Although it may have been evident in the past, feminists have fought for gender equality and the female activists in society have made remarkable cognitive changes with regard to such gender equality. Women are increasingly embarking on successful career paths and even within the ‘male career domain’. This is evident in the number of women who have enlisted in various armies worldwide and can be seen within various other disciplines or careers adopted such as doctors, architects and even within the academic domain. Additional research surrounding gender related perceptions regarding occupations reveal that although stereotyping of occupations is still evident, there seems to be a decrease in this regard (Beggs & Doolittle, 1993).

Previous career development research explains the importance of “positive reinforcement from significant others in an individual’s life” (Whitmarsh et al, 2007, p. 230). Within the study conducted by Whitmarsh et al in 2007, they explained two different patterns of encounters. Career women who had made the decision to participate in women dominated careers found that in the early educational stage of their lives, their decision to enter into such a career was highly influenced by their parents who influenced them to believe that social work and teaching were the best suited careers for women (Whitmarsh et al, 2007). Whereas women who took on careers outside of the dominant and stereotypical ‘female careers’ were influenced and supported by people outside their immediate family, from either “teachers, professors, and guidance counselors” (Whitmarsh et al, 2007, p. 230),
while their bosses and co-workers played roles in motivating them within their current career. However, women from both these groups drew on the importance of support from their partners, which support the finding from Whitmarsh et al (2007). Support from partners within successful dual-career relationships need support that manifests within a strong and supportive partnership with one’s partner whereby household responsibilities are shared and do not solely rely on the women (Whitmarsh et al, 2007).

Previous studies conducted on gender and racial-ethnic experiences and perceptions of barriers related to their careers have served to increase awareness of such differences. Arising from such increased awareness around specific barriers have been interventions which aim to promote equal opportunities in the marketplace and workplace (Bester, 2011).

2.8.2 Ethnicity/Race

Previous research conducted by Lopez and Ann-Yi (2006) on the influence of race/ethnicity with regard to students’ career barriers revealed that those grouped within the minority racial-ethnic groups expressed a higher level of perceived career barriers as opposed to majority grouped students (Bester, 2011). In a study conducted by Luzzo (1993), differences in terms of career barriers experienced and perceived by black and white students from a state university in California were expressed when concerning the process of career choice. This was largely afforded financial barriers (Bester, 2011).

In a study conducted by Luzzo (1993), considerable differences were found between the “lack of study skills, racial-ethnic identity and finances” (Bester, J. 2011). In support of this explanation, research carried out by Perrone, Sedlacek and Alexander (2001), revealed this to be the case, as financial constraints served as the leading barrier to racial-ethnic minorities around the process of career choice and development. As stated by Bester (2011, p. 18) research carried out by McWhirter et al. (1998) revealed that “racial bias, lack of appropriate role models, financial issues, lack of study skills and having to work while attending university, were the primary factors mentioned to hinder minority students’ career advancement”.

The current South Africa context however, tends not to support this trend for South African learners as current market requirements and pressure serves as a negative influence for the majority group
who were white learners (Stead et al., 2004); 350 grade 11 and 12 South African learners revealed that race/ethnicity proves to be a barrier for career choices, career development and career opportunities. This is owed to the “post-Apartheid labour practices in South Africa where affirmative action policies are introduced to address the workforce inequalities of the past” (Bester, 2011, p. 20).

2.8.3 Personality

Personality traits and occupational choice has been a topic of a great deal of research conducted within the fields of Psychology (Nieken & Stormer, 2010). Research within this area focuses on attempting to understand and establish methods of using personality traits as predictive factors in its linkage to occupational choice (Nieken & Stormer, 2010). However, due to the great variety of jobs on the market in today’s constantly evolving environments, labour markets are not so easily determined in terms of choice and pattern prediction. This is owed to the factors driving the career choices that are made. People are motivated into choice by personal preferences and these preferences are influenced by many factors, with one being the influence of personality traits on an individual’s career preference.

According to Schmidt & Strauss (1975), career choices are made in accordance with the skills that a person has to offer. This is represented in the form of education and experience. With this in mind however, personality traits act as common factors in differentiating two people with the exact same education and experience. Many companies/employers desire different personality traits in accordance with their company values, hence the use of personality assessments as a useful tool in the process of recruitment and selection. Such tests serve to provide information on a person’s working personality and behaviour.

Nieken and Stormer (2010) researched the relationship between personality factors and occupational choice, within Germany. They reported that there was a noticeable difference between manual workers and other occupational groups with regard to career personality traits. It was reported that “manual workers are less extraverted and more conscientious than most other occupational groups” (Nieken & Stormer, 2010, p. 5).
According to Holland (1985), personality traits have an impact on vocational choice and went on to introduce six personality and work place traits known as RIASEC (Holland, 1997). These six types include “realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional” (Holland, 1997, p. 6). According to Holland (1997), people with realistic personality traits prefer to work with their hands, for example, work requiring the use of tools such as farming or mechanical work. Investigative personalities tend to navigate towards analytical reporting and information detailed jobs such as, mathematically or statistically orientated jobs. Artistic personalities are characterised by jobs that involve creative outlets such as acting, artwork and design or décor. Such individuals are perceived to be extraverts with a creative outlook on life and don’t easily stick to trends and normative approaches (Holland, 1997). Social types are regarded by Holland (1997) as being attracted to social contexts and professions that allow for personal relationship building such as nursing or teaching type jobs. Dominant personality traits are characterised by jobs that allow for leadership and authority such as management level jobs within the financial or insurance industries. Lastly, conventional personality types lean towards jobs that are task orientated and process focused, for example, accountants, IT or software development jobs (Holland, 1997).

However, one’s personality does not directly translate or predict their behaviour. Instead, it is described as rather reflective of what the environment or context requires, which corresponds with a person’s natural tendencies and the manner in which they have adapted to their context or environment (Berens, Cooper, Ernst, Martin, Myers, Nardi & Smith, 2001).

2.8.4 Parental Influence

Another major influence on an individual’s career decision making is the influence that parental figures play on one’s chosen career path. The term “dynasty hypothesis” (Nieken & Stormer, 2010, p. 7) explains the process whereby individuals make the same or similarly focused career choices to that of their parents. According to Laband and Lentz (1983), reasons for this include the transfer of human capital from parents to children, such as education or exposure or lifestyle or even the influence of culture where sons are expected to follow in the footsteps of their fathers or carry on their family heritage.
Personality is recognised by employers as a key factor for consideration in finding the best fit between an employee and an organisation, which is believed to result in a happier and more productive employee (Holland, 1997).

When considering Bandura’s (1977) construct of self-efficacy, it is not regarded as a personality trait, but rather a trait that is context dependant which directs one’s behaviour. However, self-efficacy is seen to influence one’s choices in the same manner as personality traits do. For example, when performing a certain task, a person may reflect high self-efficacy and self-belief/confidence, but due to the influence of the shyness (personality trait), the person will rather opt to independently carry out the job, instead of working alongside another person and training them (Bandura, 1977).

2.8.5 Career Counselling

The service and benefits of career counselling and guidance is dominant within the western world (Leung, 2008). Gibbens (2004) outlines that the major views of career counselling are the following:

- A number of people refrain from choosing specific careers because they actually adopt incorrect self-efficacy views or outcome expectations

- If a person views a challenging barrier to a specific career, such as gender stereotypes for example, the less chance there is that the person will venture along entertaining the related career choice and would more easily opt for a choice that involves fewer barriers.

- Correction of incorrect personal self-efficacy and outcome expectations, either by a career counselor, parent, teacher, or anyone of influence, a person can learn about and consider options that were previously overlooked or deemed as irrelevant.

With counseling strategies aimed to realign these views, a person is able to adjust their personal acceptance of self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals, which will welcome new opportunities in support of directing a person to the most suitable career choice possible for the individual (Gibbens, 2004).

Through Watt’s (1980) analysis of the state of career counseling and career guidance within South Africa’s apartheid years, he stated that career counseling in general presumes that one has a degree
of freedom of choice. During the apartheid years, for many South African’s, career choice was to an extent denied (Stead & Watson, 1998). During this time, De Bruin and Nel (1996) explain that South African research on career counseling has been marked by limitations with greater focus on diagnosis instead of issues related to who the process is carried out with and the related outcomes.

According to Hickson and White (1989), the reaction to what career services to supply has to a great extent been influenced by external factors. To illustrate this is the example of the lack of career guidance within the formal educational institutions which has lead to the replacement of previous guidance lessons/periods by examinable subjects as well as the lack of investment for the purpose of developing career guidance services to students. Hickson and White (1989) describe that this has therefore resulted in black matriculants leaving school with a deprivation of career knowledge and sufficient information that would have served to support individual career decisions.

One may argue however that this may have been the case during South Africa’s apartheid era when Hickson and White (1989) conducted their research. With efforts made to empower the country’s youth, especially with regard to black South African’s, this may no longer the be case with regard to the prevalence of career guidance within educational institutions.

According to Lamprecht (1989), South African research has largely focused on career education programs, with little emphasis on career counseling, while much of the research leant on samples of predominantly white, middle class high school students. During the past, there has therefore been a lack of knowledge on career guidance and counseling with regard to black students, as only 14% of such research between the years of 1980 and 1990, consisted of samples of black South Africans (de Bruin & Nel, 1996).

2.9 Academia:

2.9.1 Why academia as a career choice

Since the 1950’s there has been much research conducted on how personal and environmental factors shape an individual’s career choices. Such theories have included developmental approaches, personality-based theories, trait and factor approaches, self-concept theories and social learning theories, to mention a few. However, little of the literature has focused specifically on the vocational development of college and university professors (Lindholm, 2004). This view is mostly related to the forces that shape a person’s decision to pursue an academic career.
Internationally, the academic sector is an influential sector within society as it forms a relationship between an individual’s dreams of a specific career and the preparation for such a career. Within society, academics play a significant role in coaching the growth of intellectual ability, and society places much of their trust in universities and educational institutions (Janofsky, 1989). An academic refers to a teacher or researcher who is specialized within a specific discipline, and who holds a specific academic rank such as lecturer or professor within a higher educational institution (Janofsky, 1989). Within South Africa, academic institutions are increasingly being regarded by society as having a larger social responsibility to contribute to the welfare of the communities (Bitzer, 2009). With this in mind, a need for a new generation of academic faculty that is more demographically representative of the diverse populations that higher education serves is also increasing. Within this context, consideration of who becomes a professor and why they decided to do so holds added significance (Lindholm, 2004).

Lindholm (2004) explains that those who choose the academic route tend to have experienced a rewarding schooling experience, while their parents tend to have high education achievements which in turn serves as further motivation for the students to continue to achieve qualifications of a similar nature or level. However, the intellectual enthusiasm is explained by Finkelstein to be less motivated by income and money but rather by an interest in generating research and striving to contribute to enhancing existing qualities (Lindholm, 2004). What is interesting however is that Lindholm (2004) explains that academics display a trend of making faculty or discipline choices that differ to that of their parents.

In agreement with Lindholm’s (2004) explanation on the existence of various explanations around determined and predicted influences on career choice, factors specifically linked to certain career choices have changed over time as social and economic contexts have changed. Lindholm (2004) illustrates this through her explanation that since the 1990’s research conducted within vocational psychology indicate that the decision to become a professor has shifted in motivation as it was found that focus on the choice to become a professor lay more on the status associated with the title, as compared to the lifestyle that accompanies this specific career choice (Lindholm, 2004). This has been reasoned to be due to the rising governance of tertiary “managerialism”. A pattern in academic career choice since the 1980’s illustrates the decision to leave South Africa, referred to as making the decision to “drift” (Lindholm, 2004, p. 606).
In light of the information above however, Lindholm (2004) explains that research conducted through the form of national surveys show that the most common factors motivating career choices into academia, is that of the level of challenge and freedom offered by the academic career choice, and that this proved to be a common set of factors across most public and private colleges and universities. For example, Lindholm (2004) reported that “86% of full-time teaching faculty cite intellectual challenge as a very important reason for choosing an academic career” (Lindholm, 2004, p. 606), while 80% mentioned intellectual freedom and interest driven research as highly influential factors in motivating career choices. It is therefore evident that in the sample that Lindholm (2004) focused on for her research, autonomy is a highly regarded part of an academic career. These findings were explained by Lindholm (2004) to consistently lie across the genders of male and female academics, with a higher regard by women towards the motivation of driving social change however, as playing an influence on their academic career choice.

Lindholm continues to explain that the “Higher Education Research Institute’s 2001-2002 national faculty survey” (2004, p. 607), which focused on investigating the influence that people posed on the career choice of going the academic route, showed the following responses:

1. 40% of academics from different universities explained that school and university personnel or advisors had a major influence in their career choice.

2. 35% of men and 31% of women academic participants listed their faculty experiences and interactions as a major influence on their decision to become and academic.

3. One third of the sample indicated that parents played “a prominent role in the career determinations” (Lindholm, 2004, p. 607). However, of this group, the role of one’s parents on career choice was more highly regarded by women than men. (36% of women as compared to 29% of men regarded their mothers being a major influence on their career choice). Likewise for the influence that one’s father played on career choice for this group (34% for women and 30% for men). Lindholm (2004) continues to explain that the survey lastly categorized the influence of “other relatives” on the career choices of existing academics hold a worthwhile influence on 13% of the women sample and 11% on the men.

Finkelstein (1984) explains that from a developmental level, academics are in most cases either the first born child or an only child and that they tend to come from families that regard intellectual
achievement as an important trait. Finkelstein (1984) continues to explain that academics tend to have a high regard for achievement and autonomy and prefer intellectual approaches as compared to action-orientated approaches to experiences. However, Finkelstein (1984) did explain that the preference for autonomy varies across academic disciplines whereby social sciences displayed a higher regard for interaction and collaboration in comparison to other faculties (Lindholm, 2004).

Central to the purpose of a university is that of its academics. Any university would not be able to successfully succeed and boast quality without qualified and dedicated academics to carry out its primary function of education. Therefore, universities are imperatively dependent on the intelligence and abilities within their profession, creativity, and interpersonal skills to ensure the development of future generations (Pienaar & Bester, 2008). Therefore, within such contexts where financial survival, quality and sustainability rests so highly on a group of talents, knowledge and abilities, then the organization’s human resources team plays a vital role in ensuring such survival and sustainability. This role becomes further important within unstable markets where trends of company loyalty are no longer an integral part of the working culture and securing these ‘skills’ becomes a difficult job in terms of attraction and retention (Pienaar & Bester, 2008).

The issue of academic employee retention is also experienced within South African universities, as according to Koen (2003), research has shown that between 5% and 18% of South African academics leave universities, therefore creating the difficulty of retention for higher education institutions. The management of this issue should therefore be built into institution’s strategic planning and actions as, according to Simmons (2002, p.32), “it is difficult to replace the knowledge, skills and experience of academic staff”. Simmons (2002) also goes on to explain that such skills and abilities are only attained through experience within the industry. It is therefore important for post-graduate students considering the prospects of the academic career to be properly guided and mentored into such a career.

Despite the above negative influences on an academic career, it is also however characterized with many benefits as well. The academic career path offers a culture of autonomy and flexibility. With this in mind, for some graduating or already graduated post-graduate or post-doctoral students today who sought the attractions listed above and who thrive in academia, securing an academic position may be an immediate objective (Wang et al., 2007). Some of these students may view this time as
exciting, however the job search process is one that in most instances proves to be stressful, time consuming, demanding and exigent (Wang et al., 2007).

According to Wang et al. (2007), within recent years, the fields of Psychology and Sociology have experienced a research influx regarding the desirable factors that essentially lead to successful placement within academia, which together offered useful insight into two areas of the job search. The first aspect being insight into “several contributing determinants that were likely to result in an on-campus interview invitation, including evidence of a good fit between the candidate’s credentials and the requirements of the department” (Wang et al., 2007, p. 575). The second aspect being insight into some influential factors serving to predict a job offer, such as research that displayed organized and inspiring studies/research that was timeously delivered and well presented during the colloquium, as well as favorable interpersonal skills and performance throughout the interview process (Wang et al., 2007).

One may question their choice of academia as a career path when they could alternatively make a higher income within the corporate environment; however Enders and Kaulisch (2006) explain that academia is chosen by students as a profession due to their heightened interest in the specific fields and research over financial reward and competition. When faced with the choice of taking the academic profession or opting for the corporate world, students are faced with specific deciding factors. According to Mohan (2013), academia and the industry context are drawing closer to one another as time passes. For example, governmental budget restrictions and limits on funding has resulted in some academic research opening up the option of accepting funding from their corporate counterparts, while industry increasingly relies on academic research in efforts to enhance development and competitiveness. For example, industry drives to adopt ‘green’ approaches to manufacturing and development. The decision process for students involves an analysis of the characteristics that each of the two paths have to offer, and in turn matching these against their goals and personalities/preference (Mohan, 2013). What drives these two paths apart however is their outcome expectation.

According to Riordan (2007), women academics tend to be more involved in teaching and men more involved in research. With this in mind, it would therefore make sense to say that should this be the case, then research focused universities would be characterized by men in leadership positions, with women in senior positions who tend to focus more on teaching and learning (Riordan, 2007).
and Kaulisch (2006) argue that the academic profession represents a different lifestyle to that of bureaucratic competitive organisations. This lifestyle is characterised by a movement of free agency, academic freedom in terms of research and focus, progress evaluation through peer review processes, career self-management, less competitive interactions with established networks, and flexible working conditions in an environment that fosters deliberate support in terms of development and growth (Enders & Kaulisch, 2006). At the same time however, the profession is marked by high mobility, boundaryless associations and fluctuations. For example, the occurrence of travelling to different universities and countries to share knowledge through the form of seminars and training/conferences. Such affiliations build on academic reputations.

Career promotion is based on academic performance and reputation based on portfolio evaluation, research funding and publications, with less emphasis on traditional reliance on age and length of time within an organisation (Enders & Kaulisch, 2006). In this way, academics hold a high level of control over job promotions and job title application processes, instead of having to apply for vacancies or wait for suitable openings and vacancies within their companies.

Academia seems to adopt an understanding of the academic as a ‘free agent’ (Enders & Kaulisch, 2006) in that they are able to move freely between universities should their focus and research support such mobility, and their working conditions being less structured through deliberate focus on working hours and adherence to organisational working structures, such as high focus on 8 to 5 office time frames. This mind-set therefore allows the academic more control and choice over ‘time and space’ in opposition to that demanded in organisational working requirements. What also serves as an attraction to this profession is its flexibility on career co-ordination, for example, a professionally qualified academic is not controlled in his/her inability to freely network with other universities or organisations (Enders & Kaulisch, 2006). Through this, they are able to lecture/teach and also offer consultative services to corporate companies, provided that the two approaches don’t clash in terms of commitments. This is adopted by Rhodes University in its motivation to attract academics to the University through offering flexibility in consultative relations to increase income generation and boost its attractiveness. This serves to attract those with more of a focus on monetary gain.
2.9.2 Academia: International Arena:

Education, specifically higher education, is a highly influential factor in the determination of success on both an individual and national level. Education contributes to the building of a united country. As described by Nelson Mandela, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Brainyquote.com, 2013).

Historically, post graduate students considered the career path of academia as their top most desired outcome; preferably within a research-orientated university, failing this, a position within a smaller teaching-focused university would be ideal. It was in the past that academia was regarded as the number one option for a post graduate and regarded as a career that implied class (Janofsky, 1989). However, today’s academic market resembles great change in this area. The academic world is now harder to access, as vacancies are fewer because of lower turnover as academics are less likely to seek another faculty position. In competition with the Higher Education arena, is that of the corporate market which has become a rising competitor in the job market. Graduates are increasingly showing interest in corporate ladder climbing in terms of displaying one’s success and less interest is given to the culture that academia offers, in terms of the independence, publishing, research, teaching and service focused traditional characteristics of an academic. (Janofsky, 1989).

According to Pienaar & Bester (2008), Anderson, Richard and Saha (2002) state that the academic arena is marked by a sense of instability as the retention of academics becomes increasingly challenging as this specific career path slowly decreases in its previous attractiveness. Bester and Pienaar (2008) explain that in research conducted in Australian universities, varying averages of 79% and 71% of participants revealed feelings in support of this claim in describing an academic career as slowly decreasing in desirability. If this is in fact the attitude adopted by South Africans, in particular university students, then this poses great consequences for both higher education institutions and the South African society.

2.9.3 Academia: The South African arena:

With the downfall of apartheid and the introduction of a democratic government, the South African higher education sector has been involved in initiatives and policies aimed at transformation in efforts to redress past inequalities in line with the Employment Equity Act (Portnoi, 2009). In addition to this, other programs have been implemented to enhance this. For example, a measure named
“growing one’s own timber” (Portnoi, 2009, p. 413), which is a program “for graduate students or faculty development programs for emerging academics” (Portnoi, 2009, p. 413).

The issue of academic employee retention is also experienced within South African universities. According to Koen (2003), research has shown that between 5% and 18% of South African academics leave universities, therefore creating the difficulty of retention for higher education institutions. The management of this issue should therefore be built into institution’s strategic planning and actions as, according to Simmons (2002, p. 32), “it is difficult to replace the knowledge, skills and experience of academic staff”. Simmons (2002) also goes on to explain that such skills and abilities are only attained through experience within the industry. It is therefore important for post-graduates considering the prospects of the academic career to be properly guided and mentored into such a career.

Universities are completely dependent on the skills and resources that academics offer, in the same manner as schools are dependent on their teachers for education. It is, then, the intellectual abilities of academics that determine the existence of universities. According to Koen (2003), unsatisfactory financial remuneration in exchange for their intellectual knowledge and abilities is regarded as the main reason for the difficulty in securing young South African academics and retaining their talents. It can therefore be deemed that the attractiveness of the University possibly lies within other internal factors or within external factors that the surrounding small town environment has to offer academics and their families. Koen (2003) further explains that this challenge is further enhanced as an estimated 15% of South African academics leave the profession every year, while existing academics continuously retire. This depletion of a vital resource is evident in considering the number of academics on post-retirement contracts.

In addition to the decreasing perception of the academic profession, there is also the factor of remuneration with regard to the academic profession (Pienaar & Bester, 2008). As supported by Anderson et al. (2002); and Ssesanga & Garrett (2005), lower financial remuneration is regarded as the most influential contributing factor for academics internationally and in South Africa, experiencing job dissatisfaction, as previously discussed and eventually resulting in labour turnover (Pienaar & Bester, 2008). With the event of an academic vacancy within Universities, lies the problem of temporary support during the recruitment and selection procedure of filling the vacancy, as many
academic vacancies take a longer period of time to fill as compared to that of professional or corporate positions (Pienaar & Bester, 2008).

According to Pienaar and Bester (2008), and supported by Barkhuizen et al. (2004), the academic profession is increasingly characterized by stress and decreasing status and prestige and as economic labour market conditions develop, the task of securing newly graduated academics becomes more challenging.

It is therefore important for educational institutions to correctly consider and manage the career and job dissatisfaction of academics within their institutions. Job satisfaction is a popular theme within career development and is manifested in much existing research. According to Pienaar and Bester (2008), one of the major factors contributing to job dissatisfaction as experienced by early career South African academics is the performance appraisal system utilized within the institutions. According to Pienaar and Bester (2008), dissatisfaction amongst South African academics within the early career period was expressed with regard to the inconsistent use of performance appraisal systems and many were described as unfair and non-transparent. Another factor expressed, was a limited number of promotional opportunities. Research conducted by Oshagbemi (1996) and Gillepsie et al. (2001) and Pienaar and Bester (2008) further explains that other factors contributing to job dissatisfaction are “role conflict and role overload due to parallel medium teaching, increasing pressure on research outputs, increasing administrative obligations and a shortage of support staff” (2008, p.32). Dissatisfaction was also expressed by academics within the early career period, with regard to developmental areas and progression as well as the lack of support with regard to personal research through mentoring from experienced researchers within their departments/areas (Pienaar & Bester, 2008). The multicultural and economic contexts of South Africa are important factors in understanding career development and yet they have received insufficient attention in South African career literature (Stead & Watson, 1998).

In attempts made at rectifying social, economic and legislative discrepancies caused during the apartheid era, South Africa has been and is still undergoing multilayered transformation. Universities, included in this transformation, have been undergoing levels of change within management as well. Many international higher education institutions have experienced pressure and tension with regard to becoming more “market-driven and managerial in their approach” (Riordan, 2007, p. 2). Within these changes, South African higher education institutions in general have undergone cultural,
managerial and structural transformation (Riordan, 2007). According to Shackleton et al. (2003), the following three factors have subjugated South African higher education institutions:

“The pressure in institutions to become more market-driven and managerial in their *modus operandi*; the recent restructuring of the higher education landscape; and the need to address racial inequalities from the *apartheid* years” (Riordan, 2007, p. 2).

In many views, universities are slowly becoming less recognized as receptacles of knowledge in a society and many publicly-funded institutions of “higher learning all over the world are being required to justify their existence and in particular, their expenditure” (Riordan, 2007, p. 2). The traditional stone walled towering buildings are increasingly branded with terms such as “new managerialism, marketization and corporatism” (Riordan, 2007, p. 2). This aside, there exists a belief in the benefits of new managerialism, such as increased outcomes of economy, increased efficiency and success. According to Saunderson (2002, p. 380), the values that underlie this newly adopted approach does not align with the values that higher education intends to concern themselves with such as transformation and social justice, by stating that “the new managerialism, had effectively handcuffed equal opportunities in the academy” (Saunderson, 2002, p. 381). Within South Africa, there is a view that this approach serves to limit opportunities within South Africa. The argument in support of this is due to the country’s past with regard to social inequality, higher educational institutions are now required to carry out a role that serves to redress these social inequalities and serve a function that plays an economic function in ensuring education of future professionals (Riordan, 2007).

South African universities, in comparison with other African universities such as Nigeria for example, tend to function under an umbrella of substantial autonomy (Riordan, 2007).

Heads of universities such as Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors are elected into their leadership positions by the universities themselves and not by the state or government (Shackleton *et al*., 2003). However, with this in mind, the state is placing increasing pressure on the universities in terms of their responsibility and accountability in bettering past injustices. “This included compiling and reporting against 3 year rolling plans and the revision of the state funding formula to ensure compliance with (racial) equity and quality requirements (Riordan, 2007, p. 3). Higher education institutions receive government funding as low as 40%, while remaining funding and income is generated from fees, donors, fund-raising and income generated from research. However, aligned
with this, research output expectations have increased (Riordan, 2007). The standard of international universities is associated closely with the research output and publications of the university. With this in mind, South African universities have increased their admittance of international students in possible efforts to increase their international prestige (Riordan, 2007).

In concert with Riordan (2007), the researcher agrees that regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with managerialism; it has become clear that South African universities are experiencing changes, which in turn has served to influence the subject of work as well as the environment in which it is performed.

As the role of work within women’s lives is swiftly changing, it is important for research to focus on the processes of career planning, career decision making and even both past and present influential factors within female and neutral dominated careers (Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rogers, & Wentworth, 2007).

According to Whitmarsh et al. (2007, p. 225), Gottfredson (2005) “has provided an alternate view of career development with an emphasis on gender appropriateness and status as critical developmental factors in career decision making. They explained that children start off holding generally positive perceptions towards most occupations, yet as one matures and develops and self-concept and gender identity grows, children tend to group and limit desirable occupations to those viewed as male and female occupations (Whitmarsh et al., 2007). Statistics representing gender proportions within different academic levels display slow transformation in favour of women. Cooper and Subotzky (2001) reported this South African trend. In 1998, 37% of the South African higher education workforce of academics and support staff were females. This percentage had then increased to 43% in 2005 (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001). In many other universities, the ranking of the gender component is highly represented by males higher up the academic ladder. Regardless of the increase of women within leadership positions over the years, men still tend to dominate the higher positions (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001).

Sarah Riordan (2007) introduced a thesis entitled ‘The career psychology factors as antecedents of career success of women academics in South Africa’. According to Riordan (2007), in January 2005, Larry Summers, who was the President of Harvard University as the time, was the cause of an outcry amongst academics. The reason for this was his statement related to women within academia, whereby he claimed that women rarely proceeded to senior academic positions as they were not
prepared to make sacrifices matched to those that men were prepared to make, as well as the reason that they did not have the intrinsic ability and were victims to discrimination (Riordan, 2007).

However, in contrast to this, Lindholm (2004) went on to interview academics in efforts to understand what attracted them to the life of academia, how their career interests developed and what pattern was displayed within their career paths. She explained that her findings revealed no dramatic difference between that of men and women in terms of the attractions to academic life. Such reasons included the high regard for autonomy and unique individual expression, while being excited by the challenges, excitement and freedom that an academic career would allow for (Lindholm, 2004). Summarized, Lindholm (2004) found that the internal and external influences on career choice were also similar between men and women as both groups explained the following to play a role in determining their career choice to move into the field of academia: “childhood experiences, university experiences and personal perceptions of competence” (Riordan, 2007, p. 14). The difference emerged in the finding that more men as compared to women confessed to having followed unintentional paths into the academic field. However, further differences were revealed in that women within their mid-career stage were more influenced by socio-cultural factors in terms of shaping their career paths and choices as they explained their difficulties in being seriously recognized as an academic.

Despite the large amount of research conducted within the area of vocational decision making, Lindholm (2004) explains that little of this literature has focused specifically on the vocational development of college and university professors (Lindholm, 2004). This view is mostly related to the factors that shape a person’s decision to pursue an academic career. To a large extent, the literature on academic careers has primarily focused on issues related to the underrepresentation of woman and ethnic minorities within academic ranks as well as challenges arising from the shifting academic labour market (Lindholm, 2004).

Lindholm’s study on American faculty members explored the individual and environmental factors that served to influence their career decisions (Lindholm, 2004). Her study revealed that her participants felt a personal attraction to academia and felt an inherent relationship between their personalities and their work (Portnoi, 2009). This finding supported earlier vocational choice theories (Portnoi, 2009). Lindholm’s study showed that her participants were attracted to academic work due to factors such as “intellectual curiosity, opportunity, and encouragement” (Lindholm, 2004, p. 614).
Despite a few participants being described as “accidental academics” (Lindholm, 2004, p. 618), many of them had experienced motivation to join the specific arena due to encouragement from role models and advisors early on in their lives, particularly within their undergraduate years (Lindholm, 2004).

Poole and Bornhold (1998) studied the career advancement of academics in the eight locations of “Australia, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Sweden, Mexico, Great Britain and the United states of America” (Riordan, 2007, p. 8). This research described that an academic can be represented by three components, being “research, teaching and consulting, and by the rewards of the occupation (high income and involvement in policy-making)” (Riordan, 2007, p. 9). Through their research, they also explained, that in most cases, (not all), men are more likely to focus on research and in turn receive higher monetary rewards, and women tend to focus more on teaching and student related activities. Within South Africa, however, Schaupp (1995) identified that the role of academia for South African female academics include that of higher amounts of teaching, admin and community care than that of research, while according to Riordan “service to the university and the community was less likely to assist career development than research activities (2007, p. 9).

In light of the above, it is clear that past South Africa career research represented that of international trends. Researchers need to make use of the findings generated from other countries within their studies while also laying more focus on career factors that are unique to their country, for example within South African career research attention should be focused on “unemployment, economic factors, career barriers, school to work transition, and the role of culture in career choice specific to South African experiences” (Stead & Watson, 1998). Therefore, such research within South Africa will be relevant and hold meaning as it draws on Western psychology while socio-cultural factors of the country guide reasoning and understanding.

In this post-apartheid era, South African universities are facing much change in efforts of transformation (Portnoi, 2009). One of the major goals is to attract and retain academics from diverse backgrounds (Portnoi, 2009). With a history of discrimination and separation within the higher education sector, universities strive to host a diverse range of faculty members that represent the South African population. With additional drive by the 1998 Employment Equity Act, which basically requires South African organizations employing more than 50 employees to submit employment equity plans, transformation within universities have become a driving force for the recruitment and
selection processes (Portnoi, 2009). As crucial as this is, however, it is also important to consider the factors that serve to influence masters and doctoral students in their decision making processes with regard to becoming academics. As this study served to research the internal and external factors that influenced the career decision making process of current Rhodes University academics (during the era of apartheid in SA), it is also beneficial to keep in mind how these influential factors and decision making processes might undergo transformation amongst individuals who have grown up within the post-apartheid era.

In efforts to contribute towards bridging the gap between theory and reality/action within the South African context, it is necessary that research is conducted around the job search process relevant to a specific context in order to analyze the specific influences related to such an environment/career field. Previous studies have adopted particular models in exploring and analyzing the job search process, but according to Wang et al. (2007), no studies went on to present and analyze the process as a whole and introduce social and cultural influences with regard to an applicant job search process within higher education. This domain of research would be of particular importance in South Africa, which hosts diversely multicultural societies and is marked by highly influential factors such as Black Economic Empowerment and supporting labour laws and regulations.

2.9.4 Academia: Rhodes University (Demographics, History and Transformation Changes)

Rhodes University, classified as a public research university, is situated in Grahamstown, a small city (through classification of a cathedral) within the Eastern Cape of South Africa. According to Botha (2005), a research university is characterized by its direct focus on research generation and output with lighter teaching responsibilities and international standards with regard to degree progression. The University was established in 1904 initially as Rhodes College and is the fifth oldest University in the country (Wikipedia, 2013). Despite the various local and international wars, and the Great Depression experienced during the new century, the University continued to grow and was established as a fully self-governing university in 1951 (SAURA, 2013). According to Business Day Live (2013), Rhodes University is the smallest traditional university in South Africa, educating just over 7 000 students, yet delivering unexpected quality as well as quantity of research (Business Day Live, 2013).
Although the University continues to steadily grow, it is considered a small university in size in comparison to other leading universities within the country, employing 319 academics, 1001 administration or non-academic employees and educating 7274 students during 2011 (Rhodes University Digest of Statistics, 2012). The size of the University however is what is believed to be the propeller behind its progress and success. The size of the University means that students are able to receive individual focus and enjoy the benefits of tutorial groups, a system tailored from the century old Oxbridge model (SARUA, 2013). In adapting such an invested educational approach, it is easy to understand why in 2006 it was reported that of over 1000 registered post graduate students, 35% focused on research. The University has established recognition for academic excellence and although small in size, the University boasts one the best graduation rates within the county and boasts the best research output per academic staff member (Answers Africa, 2013). The University employs prestigious academic staff members who are nationally and internationally recognized within their fields (Business Day Live, 2013).

The University is a “contact residential university with 47% of the student body residing on campus” (Rhodes University Digest of Statistics, 2012, p. 27) due to the location of the University. Such a structure provides the students with a safe learning and living environment away from home and may possibly be linked to the fact that the University attracts more female students to male students (Rhodes University Digest of Statistics, 2012).

According to Polous (2010), the University does experience some challenges in attracting and retaining academics due to the location of the University. The size and location of the city means that spouses/partners of academics employed at the University battle to find employment within the city due to limited opportunities outside of Rhodes University, being main employer within Grahamstown. To combat this, the University has introduced a policy regarding the employment of employee’s spouses in that the University acknowledges this problem and ensures that the University will attempt to place employee spouses where possible, should they meet the requirements of the job. According to Polous (2010), the Human Resources Director, Mrs. Sarah Fischer acknowledges that the University is not market competitive in their salary offerings as compared to other South African universities and the private employment sector. This is slowly increasing however as the University’s salary scales ranking around the 50th percentile of the market is showing an improvement as compared to various other South African universities.
According to the Rhodes University Digest of Statistics (2012), Rhodes University has 35 academic departments within 6 different faculties. The university had 7274 enrolled students during 2011, of whom 20% were international students, while the success rate for 2011 was 83%. The University employed 1320 staff employees in 2011 which equates to a total of 24% being academic staff, of which 19% were Professors and 29% were Senior Lecturers. Lecturers formed 33% of the academic staff compliment, with 2% being Junior Lecturers and 1% being Teaching Assistants.

The Digest of Statistics (2012) confirms that the University has amongst the highest proportion of academics with PhD’s and equivalents amongst other universities within the country. Rhodes University internal statistics show that 94% of the permanent Professors hold a PhD. Of the 319 number of academic and research staff employed by the University in 2011, more than 85% have Masters or Doctoral degrees (Rhodes University Digest of Statistics, 2012), which proves to be a strong point in comparison to the estimated national average of 30% (Business Day Live, 2013).

In support of promoting academic careers and increasing the skills for such a profession, the University established the Mellon Foundation for Accelerated Development in 2001, in the support of “growing your own timber” (My Virtual Paper, 2011, p. 10). This foundation was specially developed to “increase the diversity of academic staff and to accelerate the academic careers of individuals from formerly disadvantaged groups” (My Virtual Paper, 2011, p. 3). The programme is structured in such a way whereby individuals are offered working contracts for a period of three years to South African university post-graduates with the aim of increasing the competence and numbers of academic staff within the University. This placement and development programme takes into consideration upcoming academic retirements, shortages of staff within specific disciplines or with specific skills and the equity statistics/representation of departments. This programme is also intended to assist with the difficulties experienced in attracting staff to the University due to location barriers (My Virtual Paper, 2011). The programme provides mentorship by suitably matching existing academics with the appointments. By March 2011, 20 lecturers had already been appointed as Mellon lecturers and have successfully increased capacity within the University. Various existing permanent staff members were once members of the Mellon Programme, and were since appointed on a permanent basis by the University.

Another example of academic career promotion and support is the Kresge Foundation Accelerated Development Programme. This refers to a Rhodes University employment protocol which also aims
to develop the diversity of staff at the University by accelerating the academic careers of those from designated groups (Kresge Foundation Accelerated Development Programme, 2008). This programme aims to develop academic careers through a system of mentoring, and supportive opportunities to gain teaching and research experience, as well as opportunities to further teaching related qualifications (Kresge Foundation Accelerated Development Programme, 2008).

Although in many regards the location of the University is viewed by some to be an advantage in terms of student safety and access, and has sustained a unique campus culture, regarded by students and staff as being unique amongst all other universities, it is regarded as a barrier by others in terms of the growth and development of the University resources. For example, the location poses a level of difficulty for the attraction of skilled and professional staff to the University, employment of staff partners/spouses and the city’s capacity to fully support the growing University’s needs (Business Day Live, 2013). The University is the city’s main employer and in being so, cannot freely lay off staff during tight times and has to therefore find alternative ways of cutting costs (Business Day Live, 2013). The size of Rhodes has also lead to the development of a researcher-teacher model which, as described by Dr Peter Clayton, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and Development for the University, as a model which is prized at the University as it does not have the resources to employ full-time researchers (Business Day Live, 2013).

Dr Clayton explains that this model does place additional pressure on the academics to produce research output. Research output is evidently higher in the sciences area, “notably radio astronomy, marine biology, biosciences, chemistry and nanotechnology — but these subsidise research in other areas and faculties” (Business Day Live, 2013). Alongside this, Rhodes University and the University of Cape Town unfortunately don’t align research output with financial rewards, which in itself serves as a threat to the University’s academic staff members as the shortage of skilled educators, means that top academics constantly receive job offers from elsewhere. Dr Clayton explains that in efforts to prevent academics from leaving, the Institution needs to ensure that the laboratories are of good quality and administration does not become an overpowering element of the academic role. In this way, Dr Clayton explains “If we get that right, they are more likely to stay. If you create an intellectual environment, you attract people,” (Business Day Live, 2013). In acknowledging the aforementioned fact that 85% of the academics staff at the University has doctoral degrees, it is easy to accept Dr
Clayton’s explanation that this directly translates into quality output from Rhodes (Business Day Live, 2013).

In understanding that the city is not situated en route to anywhere else in the country, it holds true that if you are driving to Grahamstown, it is mostly likely that you are visiting the University. The staffing structure of the University therefore includes a diverse range of notably different social, cultural, religious, linguistic, and national backgrounds, coupled with a diverse range of lived experiences (Bradfield, 2013).

2.10 Moving forward:

Existing literature provides us with a framework in understanding the logic and analysis behind the career choice into academia and the significant influences on career choices. In agreement with Lindholm (2004) it can be argued that research into career choices and studies carried out in efforts to allow for vocational decision prediction does not equally explain the reasoning that rests specifically with different people and those within different contexts. Such a qualitative approach allows us to understand the reasoning behind career choices specific to individuals, contexts, institutions and internal influences of personality, self-affiliations and motivations.

Motivated largely by an American study by Jennifer Lindholm (2004), titled: ‘Pathways to the Professoriate: The Role of Self, Others and Environment in Shaping Academic Career Aspirations’, this research aimed to investigate the forces that shape an academic’s decision to pursue their chosen discipline, as well as an academic career. This was carried out by qualitative research methods focusing on the career decision making processes of Rhodes University academics through focusing on issues such as: what attracted academics to their discipline, when did they decide to pursue academic careers, and what people and experiences were most influential in their decisions. This process explored the personal and environmental factors that played a role in shaping a person’s decision to pursue an academic career and in turn may aid in forming a basis for attracting others to the profession, especially those from previously disadvantaged groups (Lindholm, 2004). This study becomes particularly significant within a sector that is characterized by perceived threats from the private corporate sector, which tends to employ private consultants from the different academic disciplines, while also focusing on Rhodes University as an environment comprised of its own unique characteristics in terms of location, size and culture. The research has particular relevance because
increases in university student enrollments accompanied by the retirements of aging academics within the next decade will necessitate the employment of large numbers of additional academics.
CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This chapter will outline the research design and methodology used to structure the data collection process of the study. In doing so, the chapter will describe the instruments used to collect the data, the participants involved in the process, the method of analysis and finally the associated ethical considerations that guided the process.

3.1 Introduction:

The research adopts the principles of the interpretive tradition within the qualitative research paradigm in efforts to fully encapsulate and understand the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants. This approach fully supports the research focus as it allows for a data collection method characterised by flexibility in being able to uniquely immerse oneself with each participant in encouraging open interaction, trust and narrative flow to understand their experiences. This is done in aiming to gain an understanding of experiences and perspectives through their eyes, which results in being able to generate theory while making use of the interpretive research paradigm. While allowing for supportive research guidelines in terms of the research focus, it also directly supports the academic environment in which the research takes place, which employs individuals from different walks of life with unique paths of how they came to be at the current employer, as well as how they came to acknowledge and make active choices in support of their chosen career.

3.2 Unpacking the interpretive research paradigm

In attempting to describe and explain the career decision making processes and experiences specific to each participant, the interpretive paradigm was considered to be most suitable. This method allowed for an inductive approach whereby the researcher began with unclear and broad assumptions and through the process acquired an understanding of the phenomenon through investigation (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). This method supported the study as attempts were made at understanding the participant’s career choices through the interpretation of their specific experiences and perspectives. The interpretive paradigm adopts a relativist ontology, whereby it assumes that a person’s reality is constructed through the meanings and understandings that are developed socially and through experience. The interpretive paradigm involves seriously considering
people’s subjective experiences as the core of what is real to them (ontology) (Terre Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006), while attempting to make sense of their experiences through engagement and interaction (epistemology), and using qualitative research techniques to attempts to gather and analyse information (methodology) (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

The aim of interpretive research and investigation is to adopt an idiographic focus by investigating how individuals make sense and attach meaning to particular experiences and events, as it is an approach that offers insight into how an individual makes sense and understands a specific phenomenon (Smith & Osborn, 2003). With origins in hermeneutics and phenomenology, this approach provides for a detailed description of a lived experience of personal significance through active involvement of the researcher. Interpretive research is motivated by a researcher’s need to investigate and explain specific experiences while respecting what is unique about a specific social phenomenon (Kelly, 2006). This formed one of the main reasons for deciding on the use of the interpretive paradigm, as it allowed for research on career choices in general, as well as a specific focus on each individual within the context of Rhodes University as a case study in investigating their unique experiences and personal interpretations.

This paradigm was best suited as the gathering of data involved interaction and interpretation of each individual’s career decision making experiences (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). This interpretive phenomenological approach recognizes that humans are not value-free and that the researcher pays a role in helping the participants explore the specific experience (Hunter, 2004). The interpretive process introduces a double hermeneutic process, whereby the participants are attempting to make sense of their own worlds, while the researcher is attempting to understand and make sense of the participants who are trying to make sense of their realities (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The research thus followed a qualitative methodological framework supported by the interpretive paradigm, with roots in both hermeneutics and phenomenology.

3.3 Interpretive Paradigm within Qualitative Research:

This study adopted a qualitative approach in its data collection and analysis processes. The process began with an online survey which was developed with multi-faceted questions relating to career choice literature guided by existing literature and similar studies. The main structure comprising of general investigative questions was adopted from Lindholm (2004) in her study ‘Pathways to the Professoriate’. The online survey was developed to allow for the generation of categories of focus for
the purpose of the interviews. This therefore allowed for a more streamlined focus on categories for interview investigation specific to the case study. The online data gathered from the surveys were formulated into categories, which served as focus areas and bookmarks for individual supporting questions. The data gained from the study was categorically analysed according to the principles outlined by thematic data analysis.

Within the paradigm of qualitative research, the study was conducted using the interpretive approach. Durrheim (2006) describes qualitative research as a method that allows one to gain insight into an individual’s experiences, behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, lifestyles and culture. This method involves the exploration of issues, answering questions, or understanding particular phenomena through in-depth investigation. This method of research was therefore of benefit to the research aim, as it allowed for in-depth interviews, and open, flexible conversation, which proved essential in gaining an understanding of specific life experiences and decision making motivations and influences as well as their associated self-interpretations. In analysing the narratives shared by the participants and how they understood their experiences and made sense of their choices, this process introduces a double hermeneutic process, whereby the participants are attempting to make sense of their own worlds, while the researcher is attempting to understand and make sense of the participants who are trying to make sense of their realities (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The research was carried out through application of qualitative research techniques, while taking on an interpretive approach. The benefit of this is that analysis of the narratives shared by the participants and how they understand their experiences and make sense of their choices, is supported through an understanding that people’s shared experiences and explanations of their realities is what essentially results in value rich data where it is possible to inductively develop theory that is embedded within the raw data offered by the participants (Boyatzis, 1998).

3.4 Research Design:

The research followed an inductive thematic analysis structure of returning to the process of data collection in efforts to fuel the process of data analysis, as driven by the emerging theories from collected data. These multiple occurrences of data collection allowed for categories to further develop and be further linked and analysed through more polished and focused data collection.
The thematic analysis approach allowed the researcher to enter the data collection stage with preconceived research questions due to past experiences, shared experiences of others and through increased knowledge of the topic at hand due to existing literature analyses. In understanding the implications of this alongside the benefits of referring to existing preconceptions around the topic, the researcher adopted an approach of open-mindedness to each participant’s shared narratives and experiences (Boyatzis, 1998). While adopting an open minded approach to gathered data and emerging perspectives, alongside awareness of preconceived ideas and learnt literature, the researcher was able to advance to the level of asking focused questions, direct further data collection and analyse the material. This approach was therefore regarded as supportive of the current research for all of the reasons above.

The research design consisted of both an online survey and interview sessions. The purpose of the survey was to draw out focus areas from the target population, being Rhodes University and home in on characteristics applicable to the population. The focus points of the survey were influences on career choice within an interplay of five categories (career aspirations, internal personal influences, external institutional influences, external structural influence, location), which were identified though in-depth literature reviews, such as Sarah Riordan’s (2007) ‘Career Psychology Factors as antecedents of career success of women academics in South Africa’. Items supported answer modes such as open text answer options as well as options range selections of 'yes, no maybe, sometimes' etc. The results were then used for interview question formulation.

3.5 Aims of study:

As discussed, the aim of the research is to make use of qualitative research techniques to explore social, psychological and environmental factors that influence the career choices of Rhodes University academics, resulting in the formation of empirical theory which either serves to support or disprove existing theory. This approach was selected as it offers techniques which allow for open flexible investigation while exploring the perspectives and experiences of the participants (Durrheim, 2006). The focus was not intended to aim for career choice prediction but rather understand each individual participant’s experiences related to their specific career paths and reasons motivating their choice of current destination. The research has particular relevance because increases in university student enrollments accompanied by the retirements of aging academics within the next decade will
necessitate the employment of large numbers of additional academics. Through the adoption of the interpretive research approach, the data collection took on a nature of continuous development.

The aim of the study was to investigate the direct and indirect factors that served to play an influential role in shaping the career choices of academics within markets that shaped various self-efficacy and expectations for the different participants involved in the current research. In light of the demand for academics within our globalised markets and attraction of corporate industries, this investigation investigated academics specifically employed by Rhodes University, while investigating the influences that directed them to this specific higher education institution, characteristically marked by its own unique characteristics. These explanations were then analysed against existing theory on career decision making, with large focus on the principles introduced by the Social Cognitive Career Theory which dominates recent years of vocational development research.

Particular areas of focus were: which factors attracted Rhodes University academics to such a career; when and why they decided to pursue an academic career, which people and experiences proved to be most influential in their decisions to become academics; and which factors specifically attracted the academics to Rhodes University.

Therefore, with these aims, the research topic was broadly stated as follows:

*The career choices of Rhodes University Academics: Internal and external influences on the career decision making process.*

3.6 **Case study:**

Rhodes University was used as a case study in efforts to understand the social, psychological and environmental factors that influenced the career choices of Rhodes University academics. A case study is an empirical investigation on single units, individuals, groups or communities that examines an experience or event within its specific context (Lindegger, 2006). Case studies are therefore investigations whereby individuals are investigated within their own context, instead of being regarded as members of the larger population (Lindegger, 2006). They are descriptive and allow for in-depth longitudinal information about the individuals or an experience (Lindegger, 2006). This approach was considered as ideal as it allowed for comprehensive contextual analysis of an individual academic staff members’ narrative explanations of their career paths, outlined by their choices, experiences and influential relationships (Soy, 1996). The use of a case study provided valuable
methodological functions to this specific investigation as it allowed for focus on a specific organisation as well as experiences within a broader context of career decision making processes within the South African academic context. Rhodes University was chosen as the context for the data collection as it introduces various characteristics unique to itself. First, in considering the University’s internationally recognized ranking in terms of quality and research output, its context is one that employs academics from various areas both within South Africa and internationally. In considering the number of academics the University employs, and the context in which it finds itself in terms of location, it is clear that the University offers an attraction that is deemed to be advantageous to academics in terms of their career or lifestyles. The size of the University and campus also served as a motivation to make use of the University as a case study in terms of ease of accessibility. Lastly, being employed at the University, the researcher was able to access email addresses for the academics and make contact with them for interview participation and offer flexibility in terms of such discussions taking place within student vacation periods. The Rhodes University Registrar and Human Resources Director were both consulted with in terms of receiving authorization to carry out the research with Rhodes University staff members.

3.7 Participants:

The aim of the survey was to generate interview focus areas based on the emergent data and filter questions for the interviews with the intention of exploring narratives which serve to support or disprove existing theory. Therefore, the survey served to refine research focus for the purpose of the interviews due to the broad scope of the research topic and reveal themes that relate to the Rhodes University context.

The data collection followed a dual sampling method. For the purpose of the online survey, convenience sampling was used. This allowed for interested individuals to anonymously partake in the survey after having received an invitation to participate, which was sent to all University staff members via the use of a Rhodes University email. This correspondence method was selected as it directly accessed each individual staff member, providing them with information on the research and provided them with a link to the online survey which hosted both an introduction letter and associated questions. This also allowed each participant’s input to be anonymously answered as input was submitted to a host database instead of requiring a direct response.
The table below illustrates the participant characteristics of the voluntary online survey respondents:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
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<td>Indian</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 60</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children in the University/local school</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic level</strong></td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Lecturer</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Lecturer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Assistant / Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof Emeritus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4: Survey Participant Characteristics**

The interview structure and design followed a method of purposive sampling, which refers to a specific group of people chosen because they hold distinct characteristics that allow for detailed understanding of a specific phenomenon or event (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This method allowed for purposive selection of participants based on predetermined criteria in what was understood to introduce a collection of participants from varied disciplines with a mix of characteristics related to race, gender, age, and discipline.
In considering the research question and focus, the criteria for inclusion was guided by the following requirements:

- The participants needed to be academics employed by Rhodes University;
- The range needed to include a collection of hierarchical academic titles/levels from various disciplines and departments within the University;
- The participant range needed to include a few individuals who were raised and schooled outside of the country;
- The participant range needed to include a mix of both males and females from different races.
- It was decided best to include academics who were permanently employed or appointed on long term contracts within the University as this meant that they were grounded within both the University and Grahamstown.

The University was able to meet the pre-determined sample requirements with ease. This is due to the diverse range of employees that the University employs. Therefore, each individual would differ in terms of background and experiences with regard to career choice, but would be parallel in their employment at the University. Although the context would relate the participants to one another, it was still recognised that each individual’s career related experiences at the University would differ, therefore proving to be advantageous to the study.
The table below illustrates the biographical characteristics of the interview participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>Below 35</td>
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<td>50-54</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 60</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children in University/local school</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic level</td>
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<td>Professor</td>
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<td>Research Assistant / Teaching Assistant</td>
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<td>Dean</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5: Interview Participant Characteristics**

What is interesting and subsequently only emerged after discussions with the individuals was that two of the participants were linked to the Rhodes University Mellon Foundation Programme. One
being a past appointment who was since employed permanently within the University’s Pharmacy Faculty and the other being a current Mellon Foundation Programme staff member within the Department of Computer Science.

Within the group of participants who were approached and agreed to take part in the research, only two of the participants, (one white female and one Indian male) were originally from Grahamstown, with 6 participants indicating that they came to work at the University from elsewhere within South Africa and the remaining 2 participants confirmed that they were employed by Rhodes University from outside of South Africa.

The purposely sampled academics were asked to sign an Informed Consent form (Appendix A). This form described the focus of the research, outlined the research supervisor, associated department, and requested confirmation regarding the use of the data and the use of an audio tape for data recording. The form also stated that the participant was able to withdraw at any given time and was not forced to provide information which they were not comfortable providing while confirming their anonymity within the research.

3.8 Data collection:

Data collection under the guidelines of thematic analysis follows a more qualitative method supported by methods such as interviews, observation, focus groups etc. Qualitative methods of data collection prove to be advantageous in gathering rich data that requires individual explanation and in-depth understanding in gaining substantive and factual research with regard to answering a research question (Lindegger, 2006).

As previously described, through the use of electronic email, academics were invited to participate in an online survey, while being provided with an overview of the study. Participants were provided with a website address and were requested to complete an electronic survey to be submitted to a specific location once completed. The data generated from the online survey was then analysed to formulate focused interview questions in preparation for the ten interviews. Procedures were used to restrict any personally identifying information. According to Fink (2003), qualitative surveys allow for the collection of meanings and explanations attached to experiences and views.

Ten semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with participants to amplify themes in data initially gathered by the surveys. Kelly (2006) describes interviews as a relatively natural technique
for gaining data through interaction, allowing for increased understanding of experiences and reasoning. The semi-structured interview discussions and the survey broadly focused on the participant’s attractions to their chosen discipline, the processes through which their specific career interests developed, the individual experiences that guided them to academic employment, as well as any specific attractions related to Rhodes University. In a discussion on ensuring quality of data within qualitative data collection methods, Bryant and Charmaz (2007) explain that rigorous interviewing allows the researcher to explore experiences and events described by the participant while allowing the participant to openly interpret their experiences and perceptions with the researcher within an open-ended and flexible structure. It is for this reason that one-on-one, face-to-face interviews were conducted, as the researcher had to try to understand the participant’s experiences through their unique interpretations. The interviews were audio-taped to increase reliability of data collection. This also allowed the researcher to engage with the participant without the distraction of note-taking.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used as a guide in terms of directing the interviews, but remained flexible in that discussions were open to being directed by the participant’s narrative sharing. This allowed for ensuring that the topics which the researcher intended to introduce were covered as well as introduction of new topics as introduced by the participant. This method allows for flow and encouraged stories, leaving the researcher to focus on what the participant was sharing instead of looking for emerging topics of discussion (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The data was therefore detailed, included perceptions and was context descriptive.

Memoing was used as a reflective tool in addition to the interview audio recordings. This allowed the researcher to record key words and abstract thinking during the time of the narratives. Such memoing allowed for the recording of what is seen as bookmarks and reminders during the process of data analysis. The benefit of such memoing was that the researcher was able to record initial ideas during the time of data generation and was reminded of such thoughts during the data analysis phase. Such actions meant that there was less room for interpreting the data differently during the data analysis phase due to subjective influences such as current moods, experiences, further data collection and analysis, and underlying hypotheses. This directly decreases researcher bias associated with qualitative research methods.
The interviews were arranged with the participants via email as per their choice of time and date. Each interview took place in their office for convenience purposes. An effort was made to balance the power of relationships with each participant and establish a relaxed atmosphere during the interview sessions through the use of an icebreaker funny story related to previous interviewing experiences related to a previous study conducted. Such an attempt to establish rapport was necessary as the participants needed to feel comfortable enough to open and share their experiences.

3.9 Data Analysis:

3.9.1 Thematic Analysis

The data gathered by the survey and the ten interviews was analysed according to the guidelines of thematic analysis. Aronson (1994) explains that the thematic analysis approach is a suitable structure in which to review narratives as it focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of living and/or behaviour. It is described by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane as an analytical “search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon” through continuous steps of reading and analysing the data (2006, p.3). According to Richard Boyatzis, thematic analysis is flexibly characterised by multiple purposes and can be used by researchers as either, “a way of seeing; a way of making sense out of seemingly unrelated material; a way of analysing qualitative information; a way of systematically observing a person, an interaction, a group or a situation’ or as a way of converting qualitative information into quantitative information” (1998, p. 5).

Thematic analysis refers to a process of data analysis which takes place according to the themes emergent within the data and is inductive in the manner in which the themes emerge from the data (Aronson, 1994). The analysis involves a process whereby the data collection phase takes place alongside the data analysis phase, as they serve to support and drive one another. The process of thematic analysis can be described as an inductive process of data collection, represented by a large amount of qualitative data usually through the means of interviews, which are analysed according to emergent themes or categories (Bryne, 2001). The interview transcripts and memos are then filtered and re-examined in efforts to identify simulations, differences and links between the data. As described by Bryne (2001), thematic analysis represents the researcher’s way of viewing the data as well processes for coding qualitative narratives.
Thematic analysis, through its support of high quantities of qualitative data, promotes the usage of memoing, transcripts and recordings as a method of data reliability in the form of retaining an audit trail of data. The large amounts of data are then increasingly possible to label, code and summarize into diagrams or illustrations as a means of categorizing, linking and assigning themes to the data (Bryne, 2001). With this simplistic and flexible structure in mind, the researcher regarded this data analysis process as highly supportive of the subjective narrative inquiries which the research design adopted. This data analysis process proved to be supportive of the use of the survey as a means of gathering initial data sets to understand the context in which the data collection took place as it allowed for the generation of common data categories for the purpose of focus the interviews which took place.

As described by Boyatzis the process of thematic analysis proves to be highly advantageous within the early stages of research inquiry, where one may decide on using a pilot study for example, as it “enables the researcher to access a wide variety of phenomenological information as an inductive beginning of the inquiry” (1998, p. 5). Although the survey was not regarded as a pilot study, it was used as an inductive method of identifying core similarities and characteristics specific to the case study context to allow for a more focused inquiry for the interview data collection phase.

Through adoption of the thematic analysis approach, the initial interpretations which developed during the interviews were recorded in memos to allow for self-awareness of any subjective preconceptions during the analysis phase of the data. A reflexive approach was adopted and addressed the issues of interpretive validity by ensuring openness about the researcher’s interpretations.Participant validity was addressed by discussing interpretations with the participants during the interviews. Within the interpretive paradigm, reliability refers to the degree of dependability of the gathered data whereby the reader is certain that the findings truly occurred as the researcher states they did. In order to ensure dependability, rich and thick descriptions are necessary to display how particular actions and opinions are embedded in, and emerge out of the interaction (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

Following the guidelines of thematic analysis, as introduced by Boyatzis (1998), this reflexive analysis process followed three steps of inductive coding, categorizing and inductive theme formation and analysis. The coding of the data involved a flexible analysis process which consisted of two main phases of data coding, being initial coding and selective coding. This coding involved analyzing and
managing the data sets and included an initial coding of the gathered data in a manner whereby the researcher engaged with the audio taped data by identifying common topics and categories as described below. This was only possible through active engagement with the data as follows:

1. Narratives/experiences shared by the individuals were actively listened to and summarised through the form of coding. This lead to the identification of categories, as illustrated by the example below:

   **Narrative:**
   “A woman came to see me who wanted to get divorced from her husband. Her child committed suicide over the weekend and she blamed her husband, who blamed her, and she had the children with her crying in my office. I remember being given strict instructions by the company partners to send her downstairs where she would need to pay a R3000 deposit before I could assist her” (audio-recording)

   **Category:**
   - ACADEMIA VS CORPORATE INDUSTRY

This process was carried out through constant analysis and modification. Each participant’s data was analysed by coding the categories across participants and analyzing each category. Therefore, instead of wholly analyzing each participant’s narrative data, categories were analysed across participants. For interviews yielding data that did not form part of data provided by other interviews, these bits of data were analysed independently. This assisted in identifying trends across data by grouping similarities together, while also highlighting data specific to certain contexts and experiences.

Once the data had been coded, examples and patterns were theoretically categorized through the continuing process of data analysis, allowing for constant comparisons. These two steps involved segmentation, synthesizing and naming of large amounts of data, allowing unpredicted areas and new questions to emerge, therefore leading to further data collection (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

2. Following the coding, common categories of information were grouped together based on shared characteristics which emerged through close study of the data and explanations in terms of process, experiences, meaning attached to experiences, internal and external environmental factors and views/beliefs. Such category development allowed for the formation of theories of explanation and meaning. After themes emerged, related sub-themes were developed through the process of theme clustering to form subordinate themes. The clustering of the data through this process of
coding allowed for the principles that were naturally embedded within the data to be organised into the various themes (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). An example of theme and sub-theme formation is illustrated below:

Theme:

- CORPORATE INDUSTRY: FOCUS ON FEES/PROFIT DRIVEN

Sub-themes:

- Individual Personality Traits
- Personal values

This process was however continuous as once the survey data was analysed, multiple phases of interviews were conducted in efforts to establish and investigate emergent themes. As supported by the flexibility of thematic analysis, the data analysis process identified areas which required more detail and focus, enabling the researcher to re-enter the field and gather additional data through modification of existing interview questions (Boyatzis, 1998). Initially, five participants were interviewed and in analyzing the gathered data, the researcher was able to slightly modify question structures accordingly for the remaining five interviews. This method is supported by Creswell (2007) and is referred to as a ‘constant comparative’ method of data analysis and collection. This process became illustrated by the audio-recordings of the last few interviews in comparison to the first few interviews. The last two interviews were more focused and in-depth, as the researcher knew what questions she wanted to focus on in order to fill the gaps in her data or draw out topics of particular interest.

The steps below summarise the analysis process which was carried out:

1. Analysis of audio taped interviews recordings and formation of a summarised narrative, while referring to the memoing carried out during the interviews.
   - Familiarized with and immersed in the data
2. Coding of data into categories
   - Coding of all relevant data from the various interview summaries into the different identified categories.
3. Identification of underlying themes.
   - Inductive approach
4. Reviewing the emergent themes and naming/defining each theme

5. Subordinate themes identified

6. Producing an analytical report on the themes.

A two-stage interpretive process or double hermeneutic process was adopted in attempting to gather the insider’s perspective (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Meaning is central to this idea and requires the researcher to engage in an interpretive relationship with the data. Initial interpretations were recorded in memos to allow the researcher to be aware of preconceptions in the analysis. In analysing experiences specific to the individuals, the experiences were assessed with regard to similarities and internal coherence, therefore ensuring dependability.

Thematic analysis allowed for both the emergence of theory from the gathered data and also analysis of the collected data in light of existing theoretical knowledge. The gathered data was analysed according to the existing Social Cognitive Career Theory. This theory acted as the guiding framework which served to conceptualise the data gathered from the research in terms of the career decision making process and the influences that served to shape the processes for each of the participants. The theory guided analysis through an informative process that focused on the interaction of the social cognitive variables (e.g. self-efficacy, goals) in directing career development. The theory also served as a guide in attempting to understand how the social cognitive variables as discussed in this theory, interact with influences posed by person related traits, such as race and gender and environmental factors which influenced the learning experiences for the individuals.

3.10 Data quality and ethics:

As described by Polous (2010), traditional theory related to the quality of research refers to discussions on the reliability, validity and generalisability of the research. In contrast to this however, Pidgeon and Henwood (1993) explain that it is necessary to look at research quality in a different manner, while considering the fact that researcher subjectivity is not viewed as eliminated and non-existent (Polous, 2010).
3.10.1 Data Reliability and Validity:

Within the interpretive paradigm, reliability refers to the degree of dependability of the gathered data whereby the reader is certain that the findings truly occurred as the researcher states they did. In order to ensure dependability, rich and thick descriptions are necessary to display how particular actions and opinions are embedded in, and emerge out of the interaction (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). The use of in-depth interviews enabled the collection of rich and detailed data, therefore allowing for increased dependability and reliability on the data collected.

Internal validity refers to the level to which a measure actually achieves what it intended to (Durrheim & Painter, 2006) and refers to the credibility of the gathered data (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). To ensure the credibility of the data provided, the interviews followed a similar structure, therefore allowing for the analysis of the similarities and differences between answers and experiences. It is stated that validity in qualitative research is closely tied up to the quality of the participant or the knower and is therefore “personal, relational and contextual” (Marshall, 1986, p. 197). Participant validity was addressed by discussing the researcher’s interpretations with the participant’s during the time of the interviews.

Attempts were therefore made to keep close to the raw data during the coding process as a means of increasing reliability. The researcher also made efforts in ensuring a relaxed atmosphere, while guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality to allow for trust and honesty in descriptions and answers. An effort was made to ensure that all the terms and wording used throughout the interviews were understood, and efforts were made at asking interviewees to further explain specific terms and phrases, and describe events in full detail, to minimize uncertainties. Participants were also requested to attempt to ignore the recorder to the greatest of their ability.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

In adopting a qualitative methodological approach, various ethical considerations were required to be considered. Informed consent had to initially be gained from the University’s Registrar and HR Director. Thereafter, participants were requested to sign a consent form (see Appendix A) which permitted the interviews to be recorded. Both the survey and interview data collection methods ensured that the aim and procedure of the research and research tools were explained to the participants and through the form of an online covering letter in the case of the survey (see Appendix
B), and verbally by the researcher in the case of each interview. The survey was completed anonymously which was enabled by the means of the website requiring input online, forcing the data to be stored on an online database whereby submission was irretraceable. The participants involved in the interviews were also ensured of their anonymity with regard to their role in the research process and were all requested to sign informed consent forms detailing the use of an audio recorder for data capture reasons and were aware that the data would be destroyed thereafter.

3.12 Credibility and dependability

Van der Riet and Durrheim (2006) explain the use of validity and reliability as being advantageous within the framework of quantitative and measurable research, while qualitative research requires attention to credibility and dependability as well (Polous, 2010). Due to these requirements within qualitative research, the idea to display the researcher’s coding within the research as appendices was learnt from Polous (2010). (See Appendix D-I).

Credibility and trustworthiness of the research is important for validity purposes (Durrheim & Painter, 2006). Participant validity was addressed by discussing the researcher’s personal interpretations with the participants. Reflexivity was adopted to ensure that the researcher was open about personal interpretations and position during the research process. The themes and sub-themes developed from the analysis were then reported and discussion of these then commenced, which allowed for analysis of the data as a case study, as well as analysis of the data against existing literature.

3.13 Subjectivity and Reflexivity

With the researcher being regarded as the author of the research, the investment of oneself as a researcher in the data falls very deep. In considering the arguments concerning the nature of subjectivity within qualitative research, it was necessary for the researcher to reflect on her role within the research process and analyze the level of subjectivity and influence as a means of control and measurement (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1993). It was therefore required the researcher to be aware of the influence of personal bias/projection on the research. This was assisted with the use of audio-recordings of gathered data and memoing as it outlined the difference between the researcher’ views and actual data generation. The researcher was constantly aware of her role in the research, being a staff member at the University, working with some of the academics prior to the
research, studying at Rhodes University and having grown up in Grahamstown, and most importantly having undergone the career decision making process as well. Due to these factors, it was not possible for the researcher to accept a neutral objective stance within the research process, but rather continuously acknowledge her stance and be aware of bias influence. Reflexivity was adopted to ensure the researcher was open about her interpretations and position during the research process.

3.14 Validation

Validation of the data was possible through the use of memoing. This allowed for confirmation of code interpretation. Continuous reference to such memoing, interview audio-recordings and coding of the interview data assisted in promoting data validation. The data analysis process also served as a measurement of validation as comparisons were made to existing literature on the subject. In a similar fashion, the survey data, which was an illustration of the direct input from the participants, served as a method of validation, when compared to the interview gathered data.

3.15 Transferability

As described by Polous (2010) and Creswell (2009), qualitative research is not intended as a means of generalizing theory across different contexts, but to rather focus on individual contexts and their associated characteristics. Instead, Pidgeon & Henwood (1993) suggest reference be made to the level of transferability instead (Polous, 2010) whereby the findings of one study conducted in a specific context is transferred to another context of similar characteristics. Although it is not possible to apply experiences of one person to another person, it might be possible to draw similar characteristics and career decision making influences from one discipline to another similar discipline or within an academic environment similar to the context of Rhodes University.
CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS:

Chapter four outlines the research findings from both the online survey and the interviews that were conducted. The findings are structured according to the emergent categories within which coded data assists in detailing the participant’s accounts and explanations of events associated with their career decision making and their interpretations of how they found themselves to have reached their current academic posts. The categories are interpreted and emergent themes are presented. The survey data therefore served as an initial conversation and pilot run to gather experiences from the broader Rhodes University context and allowed for a more detailed focus on relational views and experiences associated with career decision making and associated influences as it relates to the context.

4.1 Introduction:

As explained, the aim of the study was to develop an understanding of the internal and external influences that played a significant role in the career choices of the sample of Rhodes University academics with specific attention being given to the choice concerning their discipline and choice to venture into academia.

As outlined by Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis provides a useful flexible framework of research principles and guidelines that compliment qualitative research analysis. Following the interpretive process of qualitative research inquiry, as described within the previous chapter, this reflexive process followed three steps of coding, categorizing and inductive theme formation and analysis. Thematic analysis allowed for both the emergence of theory from the gathered data and also the use of previous theoretical knowledge in the different stages of research. Initial interpretations were recorded in memos to allow the researcher to be aware of preconceptions in the analysis. This assisted in the adoption of a reflexive approach, therefore addressing issues of interpretive validity by ensuring openness about personal interpretations. Participant validity was addressed by discussing interpretations with the participants. Within the interpretive paradigm, reliability refers to the degree of dependability of the gathered data whereby the reader is certain that the findings truly occurred as the researcher states they did. In order to ensure data dependability, rich and thick
descriptions were necessary to display how particular actions and opinions were embedded in, and emerged out of the interaction (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

4.2 The survey:

The motivation behind the use of a survey was to initially gain insight into the influences around career choices, as it relates to Rhodes University academics. Although voluntary, the survey allowed for a collection of data from a diverse range of participants. The survey questions were guided by existing research and previous studies, while the results were used to generate a module of interview categories and questions that allowed for hypothesized model construction and pattern recognition which formed the embedded data for the interview stage.

The survey focused on the following themes:

1. Career aspirations
2. Internal personal influences
3. External institutional or relational influences
4. External structural influences
5. Location/contextual influences

These themes, adapted from Riordan’s (2007) study on the career psychology factors that serve to influence the career success of women in academia in South Africa, revealed the following information. (See Appendix C for tabulated data).

4.2.1 Career aspirations:

44% of the participants indicated that job safety and security were regarded as a relatively occasional motivation around their career choice into academia, while 42% of the sample reported this is often the case. With continuation of the topic of career aspirations, 51% of the participants revealed that they were directly motivated towards their career choices due to the need for a challenging environment that supported problem solving. This was also directly supported by 51% of the survey participants who regarded the idea of making use of personal skills in efforts to improve the world in terms of living and working as more important in comparison to concern for high managerial posts. 30% supportively argued this to be mostly true, 16% agreed this to be occasionally true, while 2%
indicated ‘never true’. The bulk of the participants revealed that success is regarded as being achieved through the ability to balance their personal lives with family and career requirements. 40% of the participants cited the idea of contribution to humanity or society as having a direct influence on their career choice. The ability to balance personal, family and career responsibilities proved to be related in the decision making for all of the participants, with 37% indicating always true, 51% citing this to be often true and 12% occasionally true. Not surprisingly, 0% indicated this to be ‘never true’ or unrelated.

4.2.2 Internal personal influences

91% of the participants indicated that they had freedom of choice around their vocational decision making, while 37% indicated that a significant other played a role in influencing their career choices. 14% of those who referred to the influence of a significant other, cited that 71% of these significant others came from influence subjected from parents/family. Others included teachers, colleagues and friends as having played an influential role in their career choice.

4.2.3 External institutional or relational influences

74% of the participants confirmed that the state of the labour market influenced their career choices. Exactly half of the participants revealed that their career choices were influenced by their past or upbringing. This was largely linked to explanations that parents held university degrees or postgraduate qualifications, which in essence supported such a chosen path. Further explanations included structural exposure such as locality and a supportive infrastructure as it relates to knowledge exposure and education.

4.2.4 External structural Influences:

The next section of inquiry focused on the influence of gender and race on career choice decision making as explained by the survey participants. The data reveals that according to 77% of the participants, race was not an influential factor in their decision making process. This was quite interesting considering the ages of the participants and the historical political context of South Africa. Unequally so, 23% of the survey participants indicated that gender acted as a motivating factor in their decision to become an academic as they had to initially stay home and raise children, while the
choice to become an academic was favoured as it allowed them more flexibility in terms of office hours, which directly and positively influenced their mothering responsibilities.

4.2.5 Location/contextual Influences:

The questions asked within this section focused on the locality of Rhodes University and Grahamstown. The gathered data shows that 50% of those who took part in the survey studied at Rhodes University. It can perhaps be assumed that such statistics show an influence of association as knowledge of the University’s working environment served as a motivator to enter into the University’s workforce at a later stage in their career path. 76% of the survey participants did not grow up in Grahamstown prior to their employment at the University. This can be translated into an argument that they were therefore attracted to the University for another related reason worth interviewing.

With the information above resulting from the online survey, it was possible for the interview questions to be developed. (See Appendix D).

4.3 Interview Data:

Drawing on Lindholm’s (2004) research conducted on the influences of the career choices of academics and the attraction to academia within the United States of America, it is clear how similar the results for this present study correlates with Lindholm’s study.

The conversations that took place with the academics focused mainly on their explanations concerning their attraction to their discipline, the process that led them to the decision to take on an academic career path and lastly, focused on their perceived internal and external influences along the way. The conversations were structured according to the data categories developed from the online survey, while also following a similar structure that Lindholm followed in efforts to allow for a light comparison of the gathered data to Lindholm’s data gathered in an American context. The analysis of their career choice was initially two-fold, being the analysis of their decision to engage in their chosen discipline and the analysis of their decision to become an academic as opposed to corporate/industry practice.

Through discussion of each participant’s pathway that led them into their current career, it became clear that the process of career choice is indeed unique to each person in that each narrative is
individualised through different contexts, influences, barriers, motivations and personalities. Through the various interviews, the gathered data was coded and themed to reveal the following categories and supporting data:

4.3.1 Multiple paths to the same destination: The development path concerning the interest of chosen discipline and academia:

The gathered data reveals a common denominator in that the choice leading to both the choice of discipline and the choice of academia were fuelled by an individualised passion related to a specific skill. Within each case, the skills were characterised by a history of performance success or positive outcomes, coupled with the available opportunities presented to the participants. Going forward from there, the main influences and drivers were expressed to be internal values or life goals and better development opportunities. It is this above mentioned passion that played out into driving individual choices into identified disciplines and academic fields. The passion then positioned itself beneficially for most of the participants as they all expressed a true love for their focus areas and work life. One of the participants described her work as her hobby and this being so; she experienced less stress and pressure surrounding her success as passion drove her teachings and research.

In most cases, the choice to enter into the academic world as opposed to corporate industry was altogether fuelled by the benefits academia has to offer, and influenced by various factors such as existing academics within the family and the desire to carry out research interests. The data revealed no differentiation between the race and gender with regard to processes surrounding choice processes and pathways to the participant’s current careers.

4.3.1.1. Following your passion:

Steve*, a 30 year old male lecturer in the Department of Computer Science, explained that his decision to enter into academia was decided before his movement from his studies into the corporate working world. This is due to the dynamic nature of computer science or the information technology industry in that it required hands on experience and understanding as opposed to just research and theory related understanding. The decision to enter into academia was therefore planned and in

* Please note that for the purpose of retaining participant anonymity, pseudonyms have been used for each of the individuals.
support of this choice, the participant, being fully aware of the need for practice in support of theory, moved into the corporate world to gain experience and become a better academic. He explained his choice by saying:

“Theory and practice are the same in theory...in practice, they never are.....and so I needed to get the practice to know where my theory wouldn’t meet up”.

The participant then returned to academia once he had gained 5/6 years of experience and explained that he felt that “...it was time to come back”.

The notion of one’s chosen discipline being driven by an internal passion for the discipline underlies all of the participant’s motives regarding their career choice. Even in times of frustration, a participant explained his desire to continue with researching and investigating within his field due to an internal passion he has for the subject.

“It has been a consistent positive experience throughout my life, even when it is frustrating, it is understandably frustrating. And if it is not understandably frustrating, then it is certain that the reason is because I do not yet understand enough, so I go and investigate, and learn something new, and am once again humbled by the breadth and depth of the field. Building larger things, putting blocks together in different ways, experimenting with esoteric abstractions...it’s like an infinite supply of mental lego”.

He then went on to illustrate his passion for his programming discipline by explaining that:

“If I had to take on a job in another field, I’d probably be thinking about programming while I washed dishes or mopped floors or whatever I ended up doing”.

As described by a lecturer from the Faculty of Pharmacy, passion drives energy to continue pushing and enjoying one’s chosen career or discipline, even in times of difficulty or frustration.

An interview discussion with an Indian female associate professor from the Faculty of Pharmacy explained how she was good at her school studies. In India, however, this referred mainly to science and maths, in that if one had to say:

“I am going to study social sciences, it meant ‘oh you are going to be a good housewife’ and this was an immediate conclusion people came to”.

As she explained, the logical link to these two subjects, as a girl, was to become a doctor. If she had been a boy, the logical link would be to become an engineer. This therefore explained why growing up, her aim was to become a medical doctor. The academic then explained how she came to end up in her current career by detailing her context whereby in order to study in her province in India, she
was required to write a provincial medical exam whereby the marks obtained would determine where she would study. The resultant place of study was in her neighbouring city which was 500 kilometres away. Growing up as an only child, however, her parents had indicated that she would not be allowed to study away from home, so the decision not to study medicine was therefore clear to her. Having no interest in engineering, she then decided to take up pharmacy, being explained as her next logical choice. This choice was one that proved to be a discovery at every stage as she was the only person in her circle of family and friends who had embarked on a career in this discipline. Today, she describes her career as something that has made her a fulfilled person who lives with content and satisfaction as it allows her to carry out her goals in life, being her life goal to touch the lives of many. The participant then went on to explain how her dream growing up was to receive a letter from the United Nations asking her to work on a project for a while. This dream developed from conversations that she had with her uncle who worked for the defence establishment in India, and later become the Director. Many years down the line, in 2008 while lecturing at Rhodes University, she then received this long dreamed of letter from the United Nations-Geneva, inviting her to work on a specific project in Geneva for three months. She explains how she has accomplished everything she wanted from her life and goes on to explain:“

“It can happen to anyone, it’s just a matter of visualising your dream and everyday asking yourself what you have done today to get closer to that dream. So every day is one step forward to getting wherever you want to be. For each person it’s different. I will never forget the day I landed from Geneva back to Port Elizabeth and my husband picked me up from the airport. He looked at my face and said ‘If it only meant that you would come back like this, I would have sold myself to send you there 20 years ago’, but I told him that I wouldn’t have come back the same person, I had to earn it myself....each thing that you do to get to your goal is what makes you who you are...So I have lived a full life, and I am absolutely grateful”.

4.3.1.2 Consideration of presented opportunities:

Mary, a female lecturer in the Faculty of Law, detailed her career choices as a process of trial and error through consideration of options that she felt she would be good at and what she enjoyed. Having her career profile classified as a flat profile by psychometric evaluations in that she was regarded as being a ‘jack of all trades’ in school, her career choice process involved deliberations of a long line of alternate considerations. Her parents gave their opinions based on what they thought she should venture into based on her performance, but she decided to rather study something which she enjoyed. She then realised the need for a professional qualification in South Africa in order to
make a satisfactory income so she added law into her chosen subject of history and found herself enjoying the subject of legal theory. This propelled her to continue with Law as it became her natural instinct/inclination to view things from a legal perspective. She therefore chose not to listen to her family in terms of her discipline choices and chose what she enjoyed. Through various experiences, she then found herself at Rhodes University, doing exactly what her parents advised her not to do, which was teach.

Mary then went on to describe her turning point in her career in which she decided to leave the corporate industry and venture into academia, in realising that private practice and corporate law was not meant for her:

“"A woman came to see me who wanted to get divorced from her husband. Her child committed suicide over the weekend and she blamed her husband, who blamed her, and she had the children with her crying in my office. I remember being given strict instructions by the company partners to send her downstairs where she would need to pay a R3000 deposit before I could assist her...”

It was this moment that Mary explained as the turning point in which she decided to leave corporate or industry work as she felt the internal moral clash between her personal values and company focus on money. She described the private law industry as “fee chasers” and felt that it was not something she would be able to continue with.

Reflecting back on her difficulty in securing employment by legal firms after her studies, she explained that she now understands why she didn’t receive any offers. During the interviews, she would indicate her interest in pro-bono work and now realises that the Law companies didn’t offer her employment as they could see what she could not see:

“I would not have been right for the job...being expected to wake up every day and chase fees all day”.

Although the participant is qualified and is able to practice law today, she chose to rather go the route of academia, based on her personality, interests and her lifestyle preferences.

Sarah, a white female lecturer from the Accounting Department, described her career path as having taken place back to front. She explained how she grew up in a very small down in Kwazulu-Natal and due to the limited opportunities with regard to education; she started working straight away instead of studying. She did however focus on her strength, being accounting and numbers. She attempted to study through UNISA (University of South Africa) but with the limited support that one receives
being in a small town, this was made very difficult. She did not continue with her studies but later in life, her husband was transferred to the Grahamstown police department and encouraged her to study in saying:

“You have always wanted to study, and now you can do that at Rhodes. I’ll pay for you, so go study”.

She then approached Rhodes University and started her accounting degree. She later started her articles and met a professor from Rhodes University at a conference, who later phoned her with a job opportunity at Rhodes University. She describes her career choice to become an accountant as one that initially started off with following what she considered to be her niche and with each development, various opportunities arose and things fell into place and “just happened”. She did not have to follow or create opportunities but rather recognise them as being so and accept the road being opened up to her.

Initially the decision to study at her age, being a mom was, on its own not an easy one to make, but the road to graduation involved a lot of compromise. She indicated no direct choice to become an academic but rather followed opening opportunities supported by structures of context and is extremely happy in her academic role today. This narrative is one that directly illustrates indirect influences on one’s career choices that shape a person’s path into leading them to a specific situation. She basically focused on her natural skill/strength and opportunities came along in terms of her development. The participant did acknowledge that this is probably not as easy today due to the market demands on equity. This explanation of passive decision making is described by the participant as a process of:

“...opportunities choosing her. I’m very lucky and feel that I was in the right place at the right time”.

The process of interviewing a particular academic proved to generate some interesting data contrasting with the study’s support of an individual aligning one’s career with their passion or interests. Gary, a senior lecturer from the Department of Statistics explained how he decided to rather retain his passion as a hobby as opposed to aligning it to his career. In initially selecting subjects at university level according to his passion of fishing by opting to go the ichthyology route, the structured curriculum within the discipline rather resulting in decreased enjoyment, as described by Gary. He then continued with subjects that he was able to carry out, being mathematics, and took up a study path within statistics. As with all life’s bumps along the road, circumstances related to funding
then forced Gary to take up a role as a Teaching Assistant within the department as a means of securing funding to continue with his studies. This opportunity then led to a teaching post that had opened within the Department of Statistics and Gary has been lecturing ever since.

4.3.2 Personal competence and self-affiliation:

As described by Steve, the process of career interest and probing is influenced by an individual’s range of skills and strengths and is supported by their degree of self-affiliation or confidence within themselves in terms of their vision of their future success with regard to their association around that topic or choice, for example, computer skills. This is based on a person’s interest in information technology and logical programming, as well as their past experiences and dealing with this subject, their decision regarding this topic’s consideration as a career choice, is swayed by the experiences, dealings and views regarding the above.

The influence of one’s personal self-regard, self-awareness and self-affiliation is perfectly detailed through an explanation from Mbongi, an associate professor in the Department of Physics and Electronics, who shared his recollection of how overly confident he was as a school child. He explained his view on how he perceived himself to “not make mistakes” and how he approached his personal life and school life with high self-belief, good self-affiliation and fearlessness that enabled him to make courageous decisions. For example, it was his “bravado” personality that allowed him to fill in text book answers in pen as opposed to required pencil and respond to the teacher through a statement of “I don’t make mistakes”. Another shared example being how he would walk home through a forest at night instead of an existing road in an attempt to find a short cut. It was reflected and openly analysed between Mbongi and the researcher that this attitude as a child later enabled him to move into a discipline that some might shy away from due to its associated stereotypes of difficulty and highly regarded intellectual requirements.

It is evident from the participant’s explanations that their choices into their chosen disciplines were highly influenced by their confidence in the subject. For example, Steve’s natural skill in the field of computer science resulted in acknowledgement by teachers within school years already.

Bethany, a female Senior Lecturer explained how her decision to become an academic was further motivated by feedback received from students and academics when, during her post graduate year’s, she filled in for a lecturer who went on sabbatical (leave).
“I had to teach a Sports Science class which consisted of big guys. I was so nervous in the beginning and worried that I wouldn’t fully understand the work, but I loved it. I received good feedback and after 3 months, they asked me to return, and the lecturer was able to take a longer sabbatical as she had 12 months due to her”.

This lead to further development opportunities and with each opportunity, her confidence within the field of academia increased until she decided to fully embark down the academic route. She was headhunted by another university which allowed her to find her niche in determining her focus teaching areas and she was later headhunted by Rhodes University.

Mary, from the Law Faculty, describes how she is a natural public speaker and did debating and toast masters at school, and therefore never battled with the idea of lecturing. It is this confidence that made her transition from the corporate industry to academia, an easy one.

Sylvester, a lecturer from the Faculty of Pharmacy, explained how his abilities in school related to maths and science subjects allowed him to choose various options in terms of tertiary studies and subjects as he confidently believed he would be good at all of the options, but knew that he needed to choose a field which best spoke to his interests, otherwise his success would prove to be more tiring than energising. Such confidence is without a doubt linked to successes and self-acknowledgement and recognition of one’s abilities, as agreed by Sylvester.

4.3.3 Attraction to a discipline:

As described above, it can confidently be said that all participants expressed an inherent passion for their chosen disciplines. In most cases, it was revealed that most decisions were made with a sense of ease and reflexivity of what seemed natural to them, based on enjoyment, past successes and ability. This was expressed as true for both their choice of their chosen discipline as well as the choice into academia. It was commonly expressed that the choice into academia offered support in terms of their preferred lifestyle and allowed for opportunity to excel within chosen interests or fields of research.

In most cases, it can be understood that there was no existing angelic ‘light bulb’ moment whereby their forte or career path suddenly became clear to them and the decision was made to adopt a specific career. Rather, their choice to adopt their current career path was as a result of childhood experiences, self-awareness or affliction and events that eventually resulted in supporting choices.
Steve explained that he knew which discipline he was going to venture into when he was 15 years old. He explained that it was a natural skill to him, and summarised his choice by explaining that it was and is work that he enjoys doing, is good at and is a skill which comes naturally to him. He then jokingly went on to summarise the point of discussion by saying:

“And people pay me for it....it’s awesome!”

Bethany, a lecturer in Pharmacy, who was in fact headhunted to Rhodes University as previously mentioned, described how she came to be in the pharmaceutical industry and specifically a medical scientist within medical research. Her love for reading lead her to consider a couple of other career options during the phases of early childhood and high school, however this love for reading as well as a combined love for people and helping people through a form of guidance and consultation lead her to the consideration of medical research. As explained by Bethany, the medical career can split into two areas, being medical practice and medical research. The reason behind her choice into the area of medical research was the motivation of more income and a higher degree of flexibility regarding own research focus and ideas and around family or personal time, as opposed to doctors having to work during holidays and long hour shifts etc.

The interview conducted with Mary, a female lecturer in the Faculty of Law, proved to be very interesting. As mentioned in the first category, she was classified as a ‘jack of all trades’ and therefore battled to make a career choice in considering what might interest her versus what would yield the most benefit in terms of income or family influences. She then decided to go into the area where her interests lay but decided to follow a professional qualification due to the unstable and difficult market of South Africa where it is difficult to secure stable employment. She then made her choice based on where she found her interests migrating to and is still content with her choice today. Her choice process was guided by a process of interest, and was further influenced by external influences of money prospects and family views. Despite this however, her career moved into the direction that she had not intended, as propelled by her natural strengths. Although her discipline remains the same, she initially intended on corporate practice only and followed such a route but decided to pursue an academic career instead. Her summarised view around her career choice was that it was motivated by her tendency to enjoy problem solving that in essence makes a positive difference in people’s lives.
For Sylvester, the attraction to his discipline developed through his recognised strengths and skills. Through such acknowledgement, he was able to research supporting career choices, knowing that he would be able to apply his skills to the various options with success and was able to do something which many are not commonly able to do. This being the ability to choose more than one discipline and use a filtering system to decide upon which option to follow. He explained that his natural ability to excel in maths and science at school meant that he was able to choose between the following four disciplines: actuarial science, pharmacy, chemical engineering, and veterinary medicine. Each choice was then aligned with a different university in South Africa, based on their strengths or profound reputations regarding the discipline field. Sylvester clearly explained and reflected on the role of success as an influence on personal confidence displayed through brave career moves and the link of this to passion for a discipline due to the experiences of success experienced in relation to the discipline. Although his first choice was not to study pharmacy at Rhodes, with his initial decision being actuarial science at the University of Cape Town, he explained that his attendance did not last longer than three days due to a change in funding requirements from his sponsors. He then decided to come to Rhodes University for his studies due to a lasting impression of the University in that they were the first university to respond to his admission applications. The academic then embarked on a career in pharmacy fuelled by his interest of in the quality of products within hospitals and pharmacies and the link between quality products or the lack thereof as an important factor within society today.

Sally, a senior lecturer in the Department of Drama who is well known within her industry, explained how her career in the drama and production industry arose by accident and not through initial choice. She explained how she originally chose a career in politics and in attending Rhodes University, she was persuaded by a friend to take up drama as a makeup credit that was necessary as part of the academic requirements. This motivation was based on a friend’s opinion that the interviewee had a nice voice. She then started a subject in drama, which she describes as her ‘creative outlet’ and passion. It was her transformation through performance and rehearsals that allowed her to recognise and see her current students change and realise the power of performance because they are afforded a safe environment within which to do so.
Mark, a senior lecturer within the Department of Management, describes how he always wanted to take the veterinary route, having grown up on a farm just outside of Grahamstown, but decided to rather follow the money route. He described how he one day saw a book advert which said:

“do you want to earn R60 000 per annum...remember this was ages ago so it was a lot of money at the time...and referred to a career as a charted accountant”.

Mark then decided to embark on an accounting career, with the support of stable high school accounting and mathematics results, but with the influence of a career/student counsellor, decided to include tertiary subjects that were different and interesting. It was these subjects which he decided to continue with in following his career in management as he moved from a qualification in commerce to a social science focus, within which he actively lectures and provides consulting services to leading organisations within the field of organisational development today.

4.3.4 Attraction to academia:

The data generated from the online survey presented a common reference to personal research support and flexibility, the use of personal skills and the provision of a balance between personal life and work life. The data responses indicate strong appreciation of the academic lifestyle in that it allows for academics to make use of their personal skills in carrying out their own research interests and ideas, therefore increasing motivation to venture into the academic career. In being able to carry out personal research ideas, comes the satisfaction of economic and social influence or knowledge generation as opposed to a high demand for competition and positions of power and authority. A large motivation into academia, as reviewed by the survey respondents, was that of personal and work balance. Therefore a form of flexibility offered through time to work on personal interests in the form of research and take on work responsibilities and time to care for personal responsibilities such as family.

In addition to the survey data reported under the heading of ‘career aspirations’ above, it is clear which lifestyle and working style preferences led to the academic career choice. In support of these results, the interviews revealed that academia brings with it an attraction of research support and flexibility, as mentioned above. Not only is support and flexibility into research motivated by personal interests and strengths as opposed to dictated focus as with corporate industries, such as cell phone development, but also support in the form of supplied resources (funding/grants,
mentorship/guidance, administration support, provision of laboratories, student interest and assistance, as well as time off from work in support of research (academic leave/sabbatical).

"Academia allows for research flexibility...freedom of choice and an ability to study further, while industry focus is not aligned to your personal choice”.

Steve explained that his decision to develop within the academic world of computer science was and is motivated by opportunities to spend more time with his kids, whom are home-schooled, as well as freedom to innovate his own ideas in this field and being able to pursue his own interests and research topics. However, he went on to elaborate that although academia allows for such freedom and flexibility, it requires academics to be self-driven and requires them to push the boundaries. They also have to constantly keep up with new trends and training in their fields, as well as new ideas adopted by the corporate industry.

As cited by the participants, academia is not only regarded as a profession that allows for increased flexibility and focus on personal research interests, but also allows for a working approach that involves consulting and guidance for those that feel that they want to offer a service of support within their field of education. Bethany explained how her upbringing of support and guidance from her parents instilled in her the confidence to offer the same support to students who required such a service. In taking on additional roles such as a Rhodes University Residence Warden, academic counsellor to pharmacy students, mentor to various students and course co-ordinator, she is able to guide students on academic success, and personal and work balance. Academia allows one the opportunity to take on such mentoring and compassionate roles as it allows a person to carry out research and teachings in efforts of passing on knowledge and accessing young learners who are hungry to learn. This ability of offering a service or improvement to individuals of society is regarded as a motivator, as supported by both the survey and interview gathered data.

Mary explained that besides her love for teaching and academia, which has moved up the rank to first place whilst placing her chosen discipline at second place, she regards the benefits of academia to be something that she really enjoys:

“I am very happy within academia. This would be my first career choice, even if I had to teach Classics”.
Steve described some of his experiences in the corporate industry as being demotivating by explaining that in the corporate environment some people just didn’t enjoy programming, despite carrying out the activity for a living. He described this as:

“…exceptionally strange” and went on to further explain such demotivation as a process of:

“meeting people who treated me as a machine to turn ideas into programs as also demotivating; they had no appreciation for the art of computer science whatsoever…it was simply a tool to them. It was like observing people, who upon encouraging a great work of literature or a beautiful piece of art, placed no value upon it other than the cost of the materials and time taken to create it”.

As discussed, for most of the interviewees, the academic route was seen as a means to increase control over research choice and personal interests. In addition to these reasons, is the ability to add something meaningful to society as a means of bettering contexts, problems or standards of living. As explained by a Sylvester, a lecturer from the Faculty of Pharmacy:

“being able to acquire knowledge and pass it on” is a huge motivational factor.

Corporate companies do not allow for personal research or research focused on one’s personal interests, while as academia allows for such space while also allowing a person to play a role in addressing or also focusing on national and global needs through their research, if they so wish to. Sylvester then continues to explain that this is possible as:

“the working structure is ideal. I don’t think I would be able to work at a place where I am told that at 08:00am, I need to be in the office. This working structure suits my lifestyle. I work until very late, being a warden for a boys residence. My office is not far from the residence and my boys know exactly where to find me”.

He then went on to explain his choice of academia over the corporate industry as a choice that he is 100% happy with and would still make the same decision if asked to today. Sylvester went on to explain that there is a difference between academic and private work:

“I have friends in industry and when you look at academia, it’s clear that within industry, progression is faster…the pace at which you move up the ladder and progress with modern ideas and methods is faster. Within academia, the nature of the work leads me to confidently say that I would still have taken up this choice. There are big gaps when looking at the two choices (industry and academia), but in industry, if you are a scientist, it’s about what they (employers) want and its money driven…they put scientists in labs and other run the company which they don’t understand and you, the scientist or individual is making them money. Universities are on the other hand led by academics and their interests”.
For a couple of academics, the decision to venture into academia was not initially a decision that was pinpointed as a direct choice from the onset, but rather emerged as opportunities that best suited their lives at a specific point in time. As described by Sarah, although she did not make a predetermined decision to become an accounting lecturer, the opportunity arose and she took it. The associated attractions and benefits however were confirmed to be the level of flexibility, especially for parents. She explains that the flexibility at her age is a huge motivator to stay within the academic arena, whereas taking on an accounting career within the corporate industry means that flexibility is not really built into the structured working hours, client consultations and commitments.

What was particularly interesting was an interview discussion which took place with Sally, a Professor within the University’s Drama Department. Sally explained how she had never intended to become an academic at all, but was basically required to in efforts to make additional money and survive. She explains that, 

“In performance studies, people don’t set out to become academics, because they prefer to act, but take it on as a money builder...a way to survive as an artist was to teach, yet it was actually through teaching that I came to love the academic structure and research opportunities”.

While performing, Sally taught students at the University as a means of obtaining additional income, while research in the discipline which was introduced through her academic teachings, became the key driving force and passion.

“Research within a university environment provided a rich space for the theatre company with which she was associated for her performance and choreography work to be developed and to research dance performance and physical theatre”.

She explained how the research within her discipline allows her to ask questions about performance and that today there is an increased interest and level of research within what she regarded as a young discipline as people are basically saying:

“I want money for research because performance is a methodology of knowing”.

Sally continued to explain her career as a triangle structure with the three points of research, performance and teaching as having rich prongs which join each aspect of her career together to form a career which she describes as a “labour of love”. This participant’s career narrative was a true example of choosing a career choice due to one’s passion and not due to monetary gain, as she
explains her discipline as one that offers little monetary benefit if you are not an established professional actor. The term ‘labour of love’, which she attributed to her career, is one that is easily understandable through her explanation of how she taught while performing for ten years without a permanent contract entitling her to benefits such as retirement funding company contributions or medical aid and job security. This led her to frustration in realising that she desperately required a change when her daughter was born. She then threatened to leave the University, and as a result, she was offered a permanent post the following day. She explains that such a working structure resulted from the shortage of posts within her discipline, which has now however changed as the discipline and system within it matures and becomes more established within a university context.

Mark, a male senior lecturer within the Department of Management, explained how he eventually became an academic due to external circumstances. At the time of the decision, he had developed a highly regarded role as an organisational development consultant in working for the South African military, which emerged through his required national service after completion of his honours degree in firstly economics and secondly organisational psychology. He had also been offering consulting services to leading organisations within South Africa and explains that:

“It was a joke at the time because when we (himself and his manager) were asked about our worst experience within our service, we would say ‘the hotel food’”.

However, with the death of his father, a former farmer, Mark decided to return to the Eastern Cape and continue with the running of the farm, being a debt free additional income. He then applied for an advertised post at Rhodes University and was offered a lecturing post. Within the next few days however, networking led to him being offered a job within the Coca-Cola Franchise as a training manager and in stating his resignation to the Department’s Head, his response was matched with a counter offer enticing him to stay at the University.

For Sashay, a female associate professor from the Faculty of Pharmacy, the decision to become an academic did not arise from the desire to do research, nor was it due to family influence or a natural ability to teach. This decision arose due to the internal desire to follow her internally structured value system and do something with her life that would mean that she has impacted as many people as possible and made a difference in the world, regardless of the level on which this impact has been made. After graduating as a Pharmacist in India, she worked for the World Health Organisation for 5 years as a professional Technical Co-ordinator for her province, while also taking on advocacy of an
Essential Medicines Programme. This she took upon herself as she describes how she believed that it was morally unethical to think about herself and her personal growth while one third of the world’s population is dying due to limited access to basic medicine. She then decided to go speak about these issues with all future and present health care professionals in her area, such as the medical schools in India, students and pharmacy schools and she focused on addressing the councils (Indian medical associations and doctors) regarding medical needs. However this became draining and at the end of 5 years she decided that she should rather continue these efforts in Africa, which hosts 50% of the 2 billion people in the world who don’t have access to basic medicine:

“I thought to myself ‘this is wrong, I can’t be sitting with this information...anyone who becomes a ‘who’s who’ on this planet just thinks of their own growth and that’s morally wrong for me’...I needed to go to Africa and teach the next generation of Pharmacists”.

Her career choice to become an academic was therefore linked to her cultural values whereby she explains that, coming from the East, she was not ashamed to admit that on her death bed, she would want to look back and say that she did everything she could to make a difference. This was what she referred to as being a

“conscious decision, to come to Africa and teach at an internationally recognised Pharmacy School”.

In her words, she explains:

“You don’t raise an army in the field. In a corporate world, it would take a lifetime where you live a way where you can try to move forward but move ten steps back, so I had to do it differently for my own conscience, and I am extremely happy now”.

### 4.4 Influences on Career Choice:

#### 4.4.1 The role of personality traits

The role of personality is one that came up in discussion around individual traits that served to support the career choices of the interview participants. Overall, it was clear that each person’s career discipline was supported by their identified personality traits and the traits attributed to academic teaching, as were outlined by the participants in terms of what they regard as their supportive traits. Bethany, a lecturer in the Faculty of Pharmacy, explained her role of mentoring, residential wardening, and academic co-ordination over and above her research alongside her ability to engage well with students through a sense of mutual respect and compassion, which in her opinion is fostered by her extravert personality and ability to enforce work and personal balance within her
Her explanation of her choice to enter into academic as opposed to medical practice was illustrated as follows:

“I recognise that I am a people’s person and not meant to be stuck somewhere”

This was further illustrated through her explanation that this extends beyond the lecture room to within the broader context of Grahamstown, whereby her orthodontist and dermatologist have both approached her with requests for her to mentor their children, who have chosen similar career fields.

It was clear to me that although each participant detailed different personality traits, the traits were either summarised under two headings, being confidence in their skills/area and the enjoyment of interacting with the students about a topic of interest. It is these personality traits that support the role of academia and the type of personality that is required in teaching students and driving individual research.

As each interview took place, it became clear to me how each participant approaches their teachings and how each academic style is different. One participant in particular portrayed a great sense of duty and morale in her teachings through her explanations of mutual respect and service to the students guided by her love for the subject driving a high standard of work being prepared and offered to the students.

“I am very student orientated and I can relate to the students. It’s not about power, but about compromise and questioning the level to which the teachings have a good impact on them”.

She explained how her passion for the subject drives her to learn her own material well enough to not have to make use of notes and provide students with a meaningful interaction through her understanding of what they deserve in terms of the quality of the teachings.

The research aspect of academia was promoted through the identification of personality traits such as:

“Always investigating and reading. Looking up ways of finding a cure to a problem and a desire to help make things better”.

What also presented itself through the interviews was the sense of self-motivation driven by internal passion for the work. In support of the requirement for self-motivation, one of the participants described herself as being very well planned and structured in her work. Overall, it is clear that
passion for the subject in each individual case drives self-motivation and development in that each participant was engaged in working towards their next qualification, for example, a PhD.

Mbongi, a male associate professor within the Physics Department chose three personality traits in describing the link between his personality and his career choice of physics and electronics. These included:

“Tenacity, perseverance and commitment”.

Steve regarded his patience, curiosity, persistence, and specifically his willingness to re-examine ideas as being aligned to his career choice as a programmer. He also identified his appreciation of abstract beauty and patterns.

What was interesting from the researcher’s interview with Mary (Lecturer within the Faculty of Law) was her description of her personality traits in that she described herself as a people’s person, yet argumentative in that she enjoyed debating. She decided to venture into law but did not like conflict. She then found out that the values associated with this profession within the professional industry clashed with her on a moral level and she found herself leaning more towards people and research. She then went on to explain that although Black Economic Empowerment is a requirement in South Africa, personality traits are regarded by some professions to be highly influential as she explained of cases where young top marked South African law graduates are being turned away from law firms as they don’t demonstrate the correct “pit-bull competitive personality” fit for the legal industry.

As described by Sylvester, a lecturer in the Faculty of Pharmacy:

“I am an analytic and I question things every day. I love to analyse ingredients and quality of products. Like this water bottle (points to a water bottle on his desk)...I was looking at it the other day and I realised that the name is spelt incorrectly...’pH level’. I am a good listener and work well with people. I take people seriously and I am very approachable and I like to see growth in others...it’s like a farmer who plants a seed...when you see them grow...it’s so worthwhile and fulfilling”.

In contrast to the idea that most academics hold an innate ability to teach and stand up in front of others and speak, Sashay described how she was extremely shy and introverted and in deciding to become an academic, she decided that it was a good way to change, whereby she would stand and speak about a topic that she is confident in, rather than speaking about herself. This gave her the confidence to teach and today, she considers herself an openly confident lecturer.
4.4.2 The role of early experiences:

A recollection offered by one of the interviewed participants describes the influence of an event on one’s path in support of their chosen career choice. During the interview with Mbongi, he explained a high school experience where he received an uncommonly low result for mathematics. This was due to an external influence, being an exchange teacher from Japan, which resulted in a low term mark for the subject due to Mbongi’s experienced difficulty in understanding the teachings by the exchange teacher. As a result of this shock, Mbongi approached the school Librarian and requested that their mathematics text book be taken home for the holiday to allow for additional self-study. In doing so, he expressed his surprise into how easy and accessible the mathematics was, as well as his interest in the subject. Following this, he went on to receive 99% for his next test and developed a keen interest in the subject due to his increased understandings. This served to support his career choice later down the path as mathematics is used as a medium of support and expression for his current career in physics and electronics.

The survey data supports the interview data in the explanations that school teachers and tertiary lecturers played a major role in influencing the participants’ interest in their disciplines. Through specific explanations of the teacher’s passion for their subjects, it is clear that such passion directly influenced the participants’ interest in specific subjects, which inevitably supported their career selection. For example, Steve would be told by his teacher that he can go play on the computer whilst classroom computer related theory lessons were taking place. Steve admitted that this was due to him often correcting the teacher during such lessons.

Steve went on to describe his fond memories of the times spent programming and playing on an Apple Computer which his dad bought. He recalls playing games on the computer with his brother and teaching himself basic programming.

“\textit{It was interesting to me that some things could be done simply by requesting the computer to do them. This still amazes me actually. I don’t think the feeling ever really left me. It’s been a consistent positive experience throughout my life}”.

4.4.3 Family:

Early life experiences play an unconscious influence on an individual’s choices in all aspects of life. As reflected upon by many of the interview participants, their career choices were influenced by their
abilities to access support from family. An appreciation for family support was widely expressed amongst the survey and interview participants. Most of the participants described how their parents displayed support in their career choices and empowered them with the provision of schooling and freedom of choice.

For Steve, although the decision to enter into computer science and thereafter academia was one that was made independently, he described that his parents are both academics in the discipline of life sciences. He mentioned a non-verbal expectation from his parents that one day, he and his brother would continue within the disciplines of their parents and provided an illustrative explanation of his parents bookshelf full of textbooks and research that his parents one day hoped to pass down to their children. With Steve rather deciding to enter into computer science and his brother into commerce, he explained that his parents did however support his and his brother’s decision to enter into their chosen areas. However, without any reference made by Steve, one can still draw on the influence of his parent’s work and personal lifestyle within academia. Steve’s career choice to continue within the arena of academia is possibly hugely influenced by his exposure to the work and personal lifestyle of his parent’s career choices.

The adjustment in Steve’s transition from the IT corporate industry environment to the academic computer science arena was not one that he battled with, as he explained that he understood that not all disciplines allow for people to move from study to research to lecturing, and that:

“If you know what a change entails, it’s not terribly surprising”.

This comment draws on Steve’s explanation that his parents are both academics and that he grew up in Grahamstown and studied at Rhodes University, therefore confirming his explanation quoted above, whereby he explains that change does not pose a great threat if you know what kind of livelihood and environment you are moving or changing towards.

Through discussion with Bethany, the researcher was impressed at the degree of support her family provided her with and the level to which such support has impacted her career choices and career success thus far. She grew up in Durban, where her mom was a teacher and her dad worked at a local university at the time of her career decision making. Her parents not only supported each other in choices but provided her with a fundamental support base which in her opinion humbled her and motivated her to succeed. She was expected to learn for exams, while at the same time allowed for
a life balance whereby she was to enjoy her social life as well. When she decided on her career choice, her parents sat her down and discussed the stereotypical views regarding the choice of medical science and the huge requirements in terms of time and focus and determination that such a choice demanded. They supported her choice and provided her with the necessary resources, for example driving her to classes every day as opposed to expecting her to use public transport until she received her driver licence. They regarded this as their support and contribution towards her education. Bethany also details how her dad grounded her when she failed her first and only test. Contrary to shouting at her or showing disappointment in the situation, he explained that it was a good thing as now she would be able to understand how others felt when they failed a test, and she thus finally had the right to say ‘I know how you feel’. She explains that the support that she received in her upbringing has instilled in her the confidence and desire to provide students with such guidance and mentoring around their careers as well, which she is actively carrying out.

“I had a home where my parents supported my career and studies, so why can’t I do that for others”.

Parental careers played a driving influence in the careers of participants. Of the ten interview participants, three of them had parents who were teachers or lecturers within primary, higher or tertiary education institutions. Through discussion with the participants, they explained that their decision to become an academic was not due to expectations passed on to them from their parents but rather through understanding their parents lifestyle and sticking to what was regarded as a known lifestyle to them through their parents’ careers.

It was also learnt that even those who have parents within the education system, not necessarily being academics but even support staff, supported their children’s enrolment into the tertiary institutions and their pursuit of an academic lifestyle. Another participant, with a parent who was a staff member at Rhodes, described how such support influenced her decision to study further:

“I finished matric and did not want to study further, but my father is a lecturer at Rhodes University and due to the reduced fees, I was encouraged to study”

A good laugh was shared between the researcher and a participant in her narrative detailing how her parents (both being academics, her dad at Rhodes University and her mother a school teacher) advised her not to become an academic due to the lower income or earnings associated with the profession in comparison to careers within private industry. She then explored various other options and eventually found herself in an academic position at Rhodes University. She explains that her
progress to this position would then have been achieved a lot earlier should she not have listened to them, but they are supportive of her career choice today, regardless, with her dad now showing signs of happiness in that she seemed to “follow in his footsteps”. On the other hand however, she expressed that she is grateful for their advice as she is content in her position as an academic in that she knows that she tried the alternate route and can confidently say that it is not meant for her. Her exposure as a child to the working lifestyle of an academic, however, she regarded as being influential:

“My parents would ask for my opinion with regard to tests, like would this test separate those who know their work from those who don’t”

It is this exposure that she describes as making her transition from private industry to academia, a natural one.

What has become highly apparent throughout the research is the above mentioned influence from family members or close individuals on one’s career decisions. The participants displayed a tendency to follow similar or related lifestyles to the lifestyles in which they grew up or to which they were exposed. For example, Sarah, an accounting lecturer, explained her mom’s natural ability to work with numbers and her parent’s focus on budgeting and managing finances. They ran a family business and through this association, Sarah explains how she naturally works with budgeting and auditing and has found the she values such characteristics and has passed this on to her children as well.

Her choice to further herself within her career was also supported by her husband who urged her to study upon moving to Grahamstown. He assisted her by adopting a hands-on approach with the children at home and cooked dinner every night as a means of allowing her time to invest in her studies in the accounting discipline.

“My husband would cook supper every night and read stories to the children before bed, and my middle child, my daughter, would take on a mother’s role in some areas. That’s obviously part of the compromises that were made and it was the only choice at the time”.

This support and compromise allowed her to finish her degree through Rhodes University and later, was offered an accounting lecturing post at the University.

4.4.4 Significant others:

A few of the participants explained the great degree of influence they received from their schooling by being motivated by the amount of passion displayed by their teachers. In doing so, they were
motivated to invest more effort into their subjects as the passion displayed by the teachers created an invested interest in the subjects that formed the foundation behind their career choice. One of the participants also described this to be the case, despite his initial reservations around the lack of fun and creativity promoted by the subjects in question, and such increased interest and related input therefore served to open up opportunities for him.

Mbongi, from the Faculty of Pharmacy, described his belief that individuals require people around them who will reinforce confidence and awareness. For example, his school teachers recognised his strength in his maths and science subjects, and through their appraisal and mentoring, he felt valued and was further motivated to excel in the subjects.

Surprisingly, career counselling was expressed to have generated little influence in most of the participant’s career decisions. They explained such processes to either confirm their already made choices or suggest options which spiked little interest for the participants. Although Steve received career counselling in High School, he had already mapped out his career path by that stage and directly described the feedback as irrelevant in that it was similar to confirming something like:

“Well...and the water is wet”.

Bethany explained how an external lecturer influenced her introduction into academia by outlining the influence that he had on her consideration of the academic role through feedback given on her performance. She described that she was a tutor and demonstrator during her post graduate years and the advice that the external lecturer offered the university (referring to the participant) increased her confidence and motivated her to continue with the teaching activities:

“She is what you would call a well-oiled machine. Why would you use rusty machines when you have something that is well-oiled...you need to start your own factory”.

Of the ten participants interviewed, the tenth academic explained his experience as it relates to career counselling as posing a highly influential effect on his career choice. While attending one of the local high schools within Grahamstown, a Rhodes University career’s/induction day open to matric learners allowed the students to walk around on campus while being introduced to the different areas by the University’s career/student counsellor who discussed various subject choices
or discipline options. It was during this tour that Mark informally discussed his choices with the counsellor. Today, Mark still remembers the counsellor’s name and regards her advice as having a positive impact on his choices.

4.4.5 The role of environmental/contextual factors:

Environmental factors serve to play an influential role in either supporting or challenging one’s career considerations. Such environmental factors include indirect influences based on one’s gender, race, education opportunities, and political influences, for example. With regard to the influence of environmental factors on attraction to faculty specifically, Lindholm (2004) explains that her research conducted with a range of academics revealed that regardless of the consistent attraction to academia (despite the choice of discipline), socio-cultural factors did pose an influence in directly controlling the way in which the academic field was chosen. This explanation was mirrored in the current study. As one can logically reason, choice is shaped by its surrounding opportunities and existences, as the choice of a particular option is influenced by the person’s exposure to the option. For example, Mbongi explained how his interest lay within the discipline of English linguistics, but due to the lack of teaching offered on the subject within the context he found himself, he aligned his existing skills to that offered, being Physics.

Contextual factors such as collective associations also serve as motivational influences on career choice. For example, Steve discussed his membership of an informal grouping during his university years where people with similar ideas about computers and technology formed a social group, within which he describes the intellectual experience as being more important than the social experience:

“I learnt a lot from them, many of them joined me in Honours and Masters”.

What was interesting was that Steve even referred to the culture and nature of the information technology/computer science discipline itself, as being a positive factor. He explained that the nature of his discipline is associated with a sharing and open interactive nature with appreciation of beauty, and discovery serves to motivate his work within the field. His view of the discipline in being flexible and not taking itself too seriously is one that is expressed as a major motivator through his excited tone of voice, evident from the interview.

Race and gender did not emerge as an influential factor for the participants as it concerned their career choices. For Steve, the race requirements linked to the post for which he applied did pose as
an influence on career choice to join Rhodes University in that it served to open up an opportunity for him to return to Grahamstown and join the Rhodes academic staff. This presented itself in the form of a post advertised for equity candidates only. Being a Mellon post, focus is laid on the development of equity academics through a strategy of developing the University’s staff diversity and aiming to develop the academic careers of individuals from designated groups. Steve summarised its support of his appointment by simply stating:

“I was the correct skin colour”.

He went on to explain the market influence by giving an explanation of the stereotypes that exist in his classes. He explained that the discipline of computer science is regarded by some as a discipline predominantly occupied by males. Females are stereotypically not regarded as being as efficient in the field as it’s viewed as a “hard-science”. He then went on to state that, being a male, gender posed no influence on his choice, but explained that if he:

“…wasn’t a male, things would be more difficult”.

Bethany explained how the economic market played a role in her decision to venture into academia as opposed to corporate practice. In deciding on which route to take, she indicated that the research path of her chosen discipline offered a higher income and stability as opposed to private or corporate practice. In an unstable economic context, such decisions do in-fact bear weight.

Sylvester, being a male foreign national, explained how he battled to secure permanent employment within South African universities and although he received various employment offers, he decided to pull on the strings of the offer that in the end, allowed for permanent employment, at Rhodes University.

For one of the participants, age worked in her favour as she explained that being a new and young academic, she was able to integrate well with the students, who look up to her for guidance. Although the consideration of age did not impact her decision to enter into academia, she explains how she felt the impact of her age and gender within the University.

“I am the youngest staff member in the department and because I am a course co-ordinator, some older staff members need to take instructions from me. I found this to be difficult and realised how people start respecting you when you get married. I was not married then and now that people call me Mrs, it’s astounding how the respect has increased…I think some of them didn’t know that I was even dating…maybe they felt sorry for me...(laughs)"
One of the lecturers explained how her religion played a role her career choice.

“I come from a background which believes that if you don’t help people in this lifetime, and you are cruel to people, your children will reap the hatred and cruelty”.

This was an example of how her upbringing served to influence her career choice as she ventured into the field of medical science in terms of a need to help people.

The role of the market in South Africa serves as an influential motivator for academics to pursue processional qualifications or study in as far as possible in efforts to become marketable and competitive, due to job shortages and BEE requirements.

The role of the market serves as an indirect career motivator or de-motivator. For example, one of the participants explains that the state of the market de-motivated her in her career pursuit as she was told that she lacked experience for a role in research, despite being a new graduate and looking to gain experience. The harsh requirements tagged to jobs serve to support or de-motivate one’s perception associated with identified career options.

It was explained by Sally, an academic, researcher and choreographer within the Department of Drama, that her experiences in growing up in the apartheid era, where women were repressed and not afforded equal rights and choices, resulted in her being angry and questioning many things in life. She based her initial career choice of politics on her self-awareness that she was caught up in questioning things because she grew up with awareness that certain ways of life were wrong and being angry with how women were second guessed and oppressed. She mistakenly understood her questioning and interest within politics as a career passion. She then later realised through various actions leading her to her passion in drama and performance that such a reaction was merely her creative outlet in reaction to the environment and context within which she grew up. She explained that she then found this outlet in performance. She then went on to win the Vice Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award in and in her speech she described how her tendency to question the world and contexts resulted in her discovery of creative problem solving in the form of performance.

4.5 The attraction of Rhodes University:

As mentioned above, Mbongi explained his attraction to Rhodes University as a choice that best suited his needs at the time. He was looking to secure permanent employment at the time in efforts to care for the needs of his family (wife and young children). Rhodes University was the only potential
employer, of those who had put forward offers, to offer him permanent employment. He had not heard much of the University at the time, being a foreign national, but his decision was supported through responses from friends and fellow colleagues that the University had a good reputation in the field of Higher Education. Mbongi explained that Rhodes University displayed strong support of his current on-going research which allowed him to continue with his current research within an environment that supported and also provided resources in support of his ideas.

One participant explained how he had only been to Grahamstown once before travelling down for his interview at the University and then the next time was with his family upon starting his employment at Rhodes. He explained that the location did not impact his decision as his wife would be able to teach at one of the local schools and his children could attend one the local schools. He made his decision to move to the small town, with no historical knowledge serving as a comfort and he was therefore open to change in terms of his comforts in efforts to satisfy his greater needs at the time. He explained his open minded approach on the decision in explaining that:

“One can’t just say: this is how it’s done and how we do things because it works”

Opportunity is evidently being presented as one of the main reasons for the participant’s decisions to work at Rhodes University. Another example in support of this is Steve’s already mentioned explanation that his decision to return to Rhodes as a Lecturer, after having studied at Rhodes, was the offering of a Mellon Lecturer post, whereby the University aims to attract young equity academics in hopes of developing them and retaining their skills.

Another surprising description offered by Mary as to why Rhodes University was regarded as the preferred employer for the participants is that within the context of professional law practice, which requires fee generation before profit generation, one is paid a higher salary as an academic in the Law Faculty than what they would be paid practicing law within the Grahamstown context. This is linked to the requirement for legal personnel to ensure that they generate enough fees to earn a profit. Such a working style would then result in increased pressure, working hours and stress. It must be noted however, that this is not referring to private partnerships within Grahamstown.

The lifestyle and working conditions offered by Rhodes University in terms of its career support and development in the form of academic leave and surrounding supervision, the flexibility to publish
which in itself generates additional income, and the ability to take on private work outside working hours all contributes to what labelled Rhodes University as a good employer.

For some, the location of Rhodes University was regarded as a motivator. It was explained by a young female academic that her desire to move from the big city to a different environment allowed her to appreciate Grahamstown and the environment offered by Rhodes University. Such a university culture and environment uniquely offers academics smaller student numbers, which in turn offers increased individual interaction with the students. Other associated benefits include opportunities for a specialised programme development and focused teachings/initiatives such as field trips and case study involvement. The time required to travel from one destination to another within the city of Grahamstown was regarded as a benefit, whereby little time is spent in traffic and one is able to walk from one city hub to another with relative ease. However, it must be noted that the location of the University was mentioned as a barrier in terms of networking with academics or researchers from other institutions.

As described previously, a lecturer in the Faculty of Pharmacy explained how his natural abilities in maths and science allowed him various career options due to his skills. He made his choice of where to study based on various university reputations and areas of recognition and strength. He explained that in his decision to come to Rhodes University, two distinct factors played an influential role. The first being the University's reputation and recognition for pharmaceutical practice and research. The second being the impression that the University made on him in being the first university to reply to his application for admission.

“That part of universities is taken for granted, because when you are still coming from school and a University responds to you, it is one of the most memorable events in your life...you will always remember that letter that comes from the Registrar. It creates a lasting impression about the University and says something about their order, organisation, and that they take you seriously. Some of the universities only responded once I had already started my studies at Rhodes”.

With this lasting impression, the lecturer explained how he finished his studies at Rhodes University, returned to his homeland in Swaziland and started work in a hospital pharmacy. After a year of working, he then returned to studying with more zest and felt he had more to offer to the discipline. He then returned to Rhodes University for his post graduate studies, and explained that he felt valued and taken seriously. He then stayed on at the University as a lecturer.
4.6 Satisfaction of career choice and current employer of choice:

This category specifically refers to the level of satisfaction surrounding the interview participant’s career choice to enter into academia and their current employer, Rhodes University. The material revealed that there is a general trend of satisfaction surrounding the decision to enter into academia as experienced by the interview sample.

When I asked Steve if he was happy with his career choice and his decision to return to Grahamstown and Rhodes University, he went on to explain that he will remain happy:

“...for as long as he is useful”.

Sashay, a female associate professor, explained how Rhodes University has allowed her to develop as an academic and if she walks away tomorrow, she leaves as a more confident person.

However, Bethany explained that in her coming from a big city, she found the size and exclusivity of Grahamstown to be a barrier to her continued stay at the university.

“I am from a big city and my city experiences are very different. It’s a wonderful place but I just feel that it’s not for me. I was young when I left home, 25 years old, turning 26. I wanted to leave home and make a difference and my parents supported this. I always knew that I wasn’t going to stay for ages”...Location has proven to be a problem in terms of my research as I had to often travel to Cape Town to visit my PhD Supervisor and then catch a flight home to visit my family before returning to work in Grahamstown”.

She went on to explain however, that her feelings are also related to her being away from her family and fiancé, as she stays alone in Grahamstown. The participant explained that a huge benefit offered by Rhodes University is the flexibility that it affords to its academics and the level of control that she is granted in terms of her teaching content. She described these two aspects as something that she will definitely miss should she leave the university and return home. She outlines that if she had to leave, it would be due to the location of Rhodes University and the context being unsupportive of family employment which falls outside of the University.

A mentioned benefit of the University and its location is the provision of flexibility regarding research ventures. The city’s small size is however able to offer a diverse population with open access to schools and samples for research purposes where it is possible to develop relationships with the people. For example, Bethany described that she funds the schooling expenses of 5 students in the
township area as her research allowed for bonds to be developed with the learners as her sample participants, and her research benefited in the form of rich data.

A lecturer from the University’s Faculty of Pharmacy, being a previous student of the University and now an academic and residential warden, explained how he has...

“...never been happier. I fit into the culture at Rhodes and I have passion for my job. My job is like a hobby to me and the academic structure and flexibility is great”.

Sally, an associate professor within the University’s Drama Department explained the size of Grahamstown as convenient in that it is supportive of a busy lifestyle. She went on to explain how she would not have been able to take on such a demanding career of performance and academia if she was in a big city and explained that the city’s exclusivity allows female academics the opportunity to grow as developed networks provide a form of support in the form of lifts or responsibility sharing for example.

The same professor then went on to describe how academia has changed over time within her discipline of Drama and within the university structure/culture as a whole. She explained that when she was studying, there were few academics within her discipline with PhD’s in South Africa, as most students would go overseas to study. Today, however, most of her fellow peers either possess a PhD or are currently working towards one. She explained how in the past, personal promotion processes within Rhodes University were academic qualification based, whereas today this has changed in that there is consideration of one’s achievement within their discipline or field and other discipline related variables are taken into consideration in fields such as Drama. She went on to explain that as universities become corporatized, the demand for increased administrative responsibilities from the academics makes it difficult to focus on their research, teachings and the discipline requires responsibilities, in her case, performance and choreography.

4.7 Future Academics:

The data revealed a pattern in the discussion of future academics and the lack of interest in the career. This category was therefore added as a point of discussion in the analysis. This was not purposely done by the researcher within the interviews but rather emerged as a result of the participants introducing the topic to the interview discussions. A number of the interview participants discussed the need for increased attraction of students to academia. Two of the participants introduced the view that academia needs to be discussed amongst post graduates to a larger degree
that what is being done and more so within specific disciplines such as those which fall within the Sciences. As described by a lecturer from the Faculty of Pharmacy:

“My friends and family back home often ask me why I went the academic route. For example, my brother is a manager of a bank and makes a lot of money and often asks me why I didn’t follow a path like him...I explain my decision to them by saying that I am completely happy with my choice and I don’t think I would have been able to work in an industry according to such rules, but at the end of the day, an academic career doesn’t look lucrative. It embarrasses the University and the staff”.

He went on to explain his statement by describing how students are sensitive to peer pressure and cultural demands and follow the paths that allow for more monetary earnings. The lecturer explained how many students on campus drive better vehicles than staff members:

“It’s wrong how when you look around campus at the student’s cars and then at the academic’s cars...it embarrasses the academics...you know what it does...no-one has written a paper on this...it creates a negative attitude about an academic career”.

An associate professor within the University explained that the problem with academia arises from the older layer of academics, who are moving on and retiring, while the younger layer is not developing fast enough because many follow professional careers and are money driven as opposed to being knowledge and research focused. She explains that although efforts are made at Rhodes University in introducing the career choice to post graduates, it becomes difficult in that students want to leave and start working and start earning money within environments where they are able to develop fast and practice their learnt skills. This in itself then poses increased pressure on the University in trying to retain young academics and results in ‘burn out’ of current academics or post-retirement contractors due to the demand on those who are available.
CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION:

5.1 Introduction:

The previous chapter outlines the various themes and associated data that emerged from the interviews conducted with the Rhodes University academics. With the exploratory online survey having provided contextual areas of focus for the interviews within the broader topic of vocational decision making, this chapter aims to analyse the findings generated from the interviews as a means of satisfying the aim of the study.

5.2 Survey Results Discussion:

As already explained, the use of the online survey was to narrow the area of research within the topic of vocational decision making into categories of interest within the topic. Basic questions and focus was supported by Lindholm’s (2004) survey questions that were developed in efforts to gather information around why career choices were made in light of different support and challenging factors which have a direct or indirect impact on one’s career choice. The survey structured for the current research therefore allowed for focus areas to be identified for the interview questions. It is therefore important to discuss the categories which the survey results presented and in doing so, continue on to understand the data revealed from the interviews.

5.2.1 Career aspirations:

The survey data within the first category of career aspirations highlighted a general regard for job safety and security and the desire for a challenging environment supportive of problem solving and intellectual stimulation. The desire for job safety and job security not only draws on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Huitt, 2007) but can also be attributed to the debate around the competitive nature of corporate industry or the private sector (Lindholm, 2004). The higher regard for a challenging environment that supports problem solving flexibility indicates that there is a desire to carry out research which in essence either adds to the generation of new knowledge, or addresses a problem or focus area. This envisioned environment is one that academia supports through its promotion of research generation, paid leave provided for research, and funding surrounding the promotion of research, which in essence allows for the research and teachings to make a difference
within the lives of their customers (being the students) and in society. Lastly, the data supports the idea of a generated balance between life and work. Through the acknowledgement of this aspect within the survey data, it is clear that the career aspirations of the survey participants followed a career that allowed for such a benefit through various working conditions. Their indication of their satisfaction within their chosen career further serves to support this aspect.

5.2.2 Internal personal influences:

With the query around career choice and freedom thereof, it was clear that the majority of the survey participants were allowed to make their own career choices. Although they may have been exposed to a range of options with the influence of various external factors such as parental careers, opportunities and/or exposure to non-stereotypical career paths, they believed that they made the choice to venture down the career path in which they currently find themselves. Reference to the significant influence of parents/family was confirmed by 14% of the survey participants.

5.2.3 External institutional or relational influences:

What is not surprising is that 74% of the voluntary online survey participants’ career choices were influenced by market trends at the time of their decision making. I believe that this can be directly traced to the leading market regulations and guiding principles such as BEE in South Africa. BEE is a powerful influence on career choices in that it controls one’s acceptance into a job and their career development within specific careers in the form of equity regulations, skills development requirements and statistical equity reporting on South African companies (Government Gazette, 2004). Market trends in terms of financial gain for specific careers also proved to be an influential factor in that specific routes within certain careers are often chosen due to the belief of a higher income possibility. High demand jobs also relate to a level of market influence on career choice in that a shortage of skills or the offering of specific skills means that those who qualify in obtaining the skills generally don’t battle to find employment due to the demand for skills.

5.2.4 External structural Influences:

However, in contrast to the above mentioned market related influence, the survey participants indicated that there was no direct influence of race and gender on their career choices. This directly
opposes the idea of BEE requirements leading the participants down specific career paths. What was attributed to the influence of race and gender however was the factor of raising children. The participants explained that being female meant there was a focus on children and as preferred by some, the idea of being a stay-at-home mom and raising children while only later focusing on one’s career. The supportive environment therefore offered by academia such as increased flexibility in terms of responsibilities versus structured office hours as one example, allows for such needs to be supported.

5.2.5 Location/contextual Influences:

In drawing on the fact that 50% of the survey participants were Rhodes University graduates, indicates the notion of association and the influence of being comfortable with a working environment as well as the influence of increased knowledge aiding decision making. The influence of increased confidence can also be associated with decision making. The survey data indicates that the majority of those who completed the survey did not in fact grow up in Grahamstown. This draws on the idea that the attraction of Grahamstown does not prove to be much of an influence on one’s decision to work at the University as opposed to the attraction of the University itself.

A study carried out by Oztilgin et al. (2004), describes that the career choice influences as described by 259 survey responses from MBA students within various universities across Britain, Israel and Turkey. The study describes that the most influential factors impacting on career choice were those which fell into the category of “meso level influences: institutional and relational contexts” (Ozbilgin et al., 2004, p. 12). This represents factors such as the ability to carry out career choices independently, access to career options, quality of life associated with a career choice, such as flexibility and autonomy, development opportunities and superior financial rewards. In consideration of the current study’s sample, it can be argued that despite the current study focusing on a sample of academics and the above mentioned study focusing on MBA students across a range of disciplines, the main difference in terms of the two studies is in the high influence of financial reward as it relates to academia. As the participants of the current study openly acknowledged the perception that academia pays less in comparison to jobs within the corporate sector, it makes sense as to why financial reward was presented as a less significant factor in the choice of a career in academia. The study results from Ozbilgin et al.’s (2004) study reveals a high regard for individual agency, as
expressed by the sample. Individual agency refers to human capital, one’s personality and values and life views approaches (Ozbilgin, et al., 2004). These meso level influences directly represent an individualist culture of autonomy and self-driven motivation in terms of career development, self-driven research and increased environmental control. This outcome is directly supported by the current study in that the current study reveals the academic’s high regard for societal development and research, self-development and the opportunity to focus on personal research ideas and interests.

It is with the above results and analyses, that the interview questions and structure was developed. The above stated survey data aided in understanding the main focus areas for the University Academics and served to narrow the focus areas down to those which were perceived to yield much discussion and information around the topic of career choice influences.

5.3 Interview Results Discussion:

In analysing the research findings, the data was linked to existing theory within career development and vocational decision making. But the career choices of Rhodes University Academics and the influential factors on their decision making was rather not specifically aligned to one or another theory within this theory rich field of study, but rather a combination of two main theories. These two theories were Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory in combination with Lent et al.’s (1994, 2000, 2002) Social Cognitive Career Theory and secondly, Astin’s (1984) Need-based Socio-psychological Model of Career Choice.

Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory was adopted to understand the research data concerning the processes of career decision making as explained by this study’s sample of academics. Astin’s (1984) need-based socio-psychological model of career choice was applied to the participant’s explanations of their choice to move into academia, either after venturing into the private industry or in complete opposition to moving into the ‘corporate jungle’.

By applying this analysis to the collected data, the details started to fall into place. The narratives given by the participants were viewed in two aspects. One being the focus of their career choice or discipline choice process and influences, and the other being their decision to become an academic and the associated influences related to this decision.
5.3.1 Choice of Discipline:

Super’s (1957) Self Concept Theory explains that people choose careers through the influence of their perception of which career best matches their interests and skills as perceived through their self-concept (Lindholm, 2004). This draws on Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory and Lent et al.’s (1994, 2000, 2002) Social Cognitive Career Theory. As explained by existing literature, Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory explains that one’s decision making process is directly influenced by an individual’s self-referent thinking process. This process involves self-reflection of abilities, interests, goals and opportunities which direct individual motivation and actions. According to Bandura (1986), decision making is influenced by self-analysis thinking, genetic make-up and one’s level of education.

However, the contribution made by Bandura (1986) that best supports this study is his reference to self-observation, self-judgement and self-reaction. In applying Bandura’ (1986) literature to the research findings, it is clear that the data clearly supports this interpretivist view that people take an active role as decision moulders. All of the participants referred to their independent role as the decision maker in terms of their career choices. For example, all of the participants explained that their career decision making processes began with an understanding of their strengths and skills. They adapted this understanding with their personal interests and developed career goals aligned with their personal values. Their awareness of their skills were all explained as being indicated through their academic excellence or natural ability within specific disciplines, displayed in childhood and within their schooling performance. Although literature explains the usefulness of career counselling, all except one of the participants who were offered such services in high school explained that the counselling process basically added little meaning to their decision making process as they were already aware of their strengths and dominant skills and abilities. The counselling process was described as basically confirming what the participants already knew to be true in terms of suitable careers. For the one participant who describes this counselling service as helpful, this positive reference was linked to advice to adopt university subjects which allowed for introduction to something ‘new and different’ to what the participant explained as less exciting, in terms of career choice.

With an understanding of Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory of Decision Making, the notion of the three aspects of influence (person, context and behaviour) can be used to understand the process
in which the participants came to their choice of discipline. The research findings related to discipline choice can be easily understood as unique individual explanations of the influential relationship between personal factors, environmental factors and resultant behaviour.

The personal factors which form part of Bandura’s (1986) three aspects of influence form an important role in understanding a person’s career choice. What was most useful in the data analysis was the application of Lent et al.’s (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory’s reference to the importance of self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals. The literature explains that the focus here is rather on internal personal influences and processes. In applying Social Cognitive Career Theory’s literature on self-efficacy beliefs, what was clearly evident was the narrative descriptions from the participants on what each of their realised strengths and leading skills were. In each of the cases, each participant was aware of which skill dominated, and displayed a level of personal confidence within their disciplines. The narrative descriptions outlined associated activities such as debating in the case of the law lecturer, high academic marks in the case of the physics professor, and offerings of personal accounting services to friends in the case of the accounting lecturer, to mention a few examples. These were all activities carried out prior to the beginning of their working career.

Outcome expectations and personal goals can be explained through examples of degree choices, considerations of financial viability, consideration around the ability to carry out research and finally the expectation of academic working conditions such as autonomy and flexible working hours, in the case of one of the participants who had young children, or sideline responsibilities.

The influence of personal goals playing a major influence in one’s career choice is a factor. This was the case when one particular academic explained how she had based her career choice entirely on her life values and goal to make a difference within society and knowledge around the lack of medicine available to one-third of the world’s population and attempting to influence others to make choices with their hearts and not their minds, in terms of making an influential difference in another person’s life. The academic previously worked in highly recognised posts within India for five years after her studies and travelled the world in support of her work. She then ended up giving up status and monetary reward to move to Africa and teach within a country where her teachings were actually related to those around her and where she felt she would be able to make a difference on both a
micro and macro level in terms of increased knowledge and awareness, which she illustratively explained as “building an army”.

The next two aspects, context and behaviour, as supported by Social Cognitive Theory, continue the cycle of decision making in that opportunity and supporting structures, continuing on from the influence of the person aspect of the process described above, results in associated behaviour such as choice of employer or choice of development, for example. The research findings detail a process of discipline choice in support of the Social Cognitive Theory. For example, one of the interviewees explained how she initially entered into the field of private practice, only to discover that the environment created a daily internal conflict in terms of her values and career goals. This resulted in her decision to leave the private industry and later venture into academia instead. The same participant went on to explain how she then moved to England through the support of scholarship funding, where her focus area within her discipline developed. She then returned to South Africa, specifically to Grahamstown, and began her career in academia and research.

The findings of the study suggest a variety of highlighted reasons as to why the participants chose their current career paths and explain which factors play an influential role in either motivating or leading them away from their current career paths. The main reasons that best represents the career choices of the sample don’t directly differ from the main reasons identified by Lindholm (2004), but rather serve to position themselves on a different ranking in terms of the most influential factors versus simply viewed significant factors.

In contrast to Lindholm’s (2004) data however, is that none of the current study’s data indicated that the participants decided to actively take on alternate career paths to their current academic fields. Although some initially started out at the tertiary study level with the intention to take on a differing career to their current career, all of the participants indicated that in relation to their active working experience, they had already reached the point of having identified their strengths and interests, chosen their field and followed it either along the line of research and later into academia, or from the professional line of work within the chosen field to later branching off into the academic approach on the same chosen field of interest. This pattern supports Super’s (1954) idea of a conventional career path whereby a person sticks to one career from the offset of their career path.

It can be summarised that those who were interviewed based their career choices on their perceived view of what they regarded as their skills/strengths fuelled by their interests or presented
opportunities that built on their skills. For some of the participants, this may have differed from their initial intended careers, but all now regard the explanation to be true today. For example, an interest in accounting and auditing supported by a strong ability to understand and deal with numbers and finances, which was described to further being coated in a support of personality factors, allowed for easy intake into such a career path.

An interesting factor displayed by the study’s findings is that some of the influencing factors behind the choice of career did seem to differ between the participants. For example, the younger participants initiated discussion around the influence of financial reward associated with their career. In each case, their initial decisions were in favour of the most rewarding option, being private industry or research or academia. Such discussions were not initiated by the older participants and in the researcher’s intentional reference to the topic of financial reward, the older participants denied this factor as playing an influence in their decision making, and rather explained interest and skills/passion to be the driving influence. What is also interesting is that the younger interviewees were the only participants to discuss job security and market influences. This probably occurred because their job search processes took place within a more hostile and unstable market and economic period, in which income is an influential factor with increasing living costs and market and legislative requirements driving employment decisions. With this being said, it therefore makes sense that financial potential and equity legislation emerge as influential factors within career discussions.

In all cases, the role of personality was evidently influential in the discipline choices of the academics. Each participant explained how they believed their personality supports their career choice. For example, an accounting lecturer explained her personality as being characterised by two dominant styles of analysis and precision. She explained how her personality supports her career choice as her job requires her to analyse financial aspects within auditing and be precise in her decision making and rationale. A law lecturer explained how she believed that her problem solving skills and natural skills in debating, alongside an interest in politics directly supports her career choice. Personality is a trait that serves to support one’s career even before they are sure about what choice they have made. It is evident through the data that career choice is made in support of a person’s personality, preferences and natural ability.

In discussing with the interviewees which personality traits they regarded as being supportive of their career choice, most for the participants drifted off to their desire for social change and sense of social
responsibility. They therefore associated their personality types with internal goals and a desire to play a positive role in society in terms of educating individuals and enforcing social change through knowledge empowerment.

As anticipated, the research finding displayed strong involvement of family influence on career decisions. The academics all discussed the supportive role that their parents played in their discipline choice, with some being described as more active than others. Although it can be said that career choices were independently made, each academic referred to some level of influence from another person, being parents, a teacher/lecturer, or spouse/partner. The support of a significant other therefore proves to be highly influential in decision making as it allows for support structures in the form of responsibility compromises within the household, offerings of advice and motivation, financial support, and or the required push to venture on and not lose track of one’s goals.

Each career path, although different for each individual, displayed an influence of childhood upbringing as opposed to culture. For example, an accounting lecturer explained her parents’ natural ability with numbers and their view of budgeting as an important responsibility and quality in life. The lecturer explained how she perceived her natural ability to comprehend numbers and budgeting to have stemmed from her parents actions. She then went on to describe how she has tried to instil this quality in her children as well. In addition to this example, a pharmacy lecturer provided a simple example how her mother and father took a highly supportive role in her educational performance. Her parents would drive her to classes every day as opposed to her having to make use of public transport and acknowledged this as their support of her education.

A female associate professor from the Faculty of Pharmacy explained how she grew up in India listening to stories from her uncle, who held a highly recognised role in the defence establishment. These stories would focus on the United Nations Groups and she explained how she would dream of receiving a letter addressed to her inviting her to work for them for a period of time on a project. This became a personal goal for her throughout her career, and in the year of 2008, while working at Rhodes University, she received such a letter from the United Nations Group in Geneva asking her to work for them on a project for three months. At this stage of her career, she confidently explained that she has accomplished everything that she was wanted in life and is a contented woman.

What was significant from the discussions with the academics were their explanations of events, whether small or large, which served to motivate them in terms of the values which they regard as
important as it concerns their career and teaching styles today. One of the lecturers explained that his interest in physics began with what he regards as passionate teachers. Through this, his interest in the topic increased and he began to excel in his work and continued with the subject, only to find himself as a professor in physics today. This same Professor humorously recalls how overly confident and proud he was in school, in that he would attempt his classroom exercises in pen as opposed to the suggested pencil. When questioned by his teacher, his response was “I don’t make mistakes”. During the interview, he explained how he often reflects on this memory and is reminded of how dangerous that was and in listening to him, it was almost as though his high level of humility and regard for others became increasingly obvious.

In support of the impact of previous experiences playing an influence on current teachings and focus, a pharmacy lecturer explained how disappointed she was with some teachings she received while studying. In hopes of chatting to a lecturer during preparation for exam time, she was told that the lecturer was not available to meet with her. With this simple experience, she explained that she promised her family that she would not become a teacher/lecturer who doesn’t have time for the students. Today, she has taken on the role of a student counsellor within the department, has been asked to counsel the children of both her dermatologist and dentist and even works as a University Warden on campus whereby she lives in a student residence as a Warden and is regarded as their ‘parent’ away from home.

Although not referred to on a large scale within existing literature, the research findings of this study suggest that childhood and academic experiences of individuals impact the manner in which they carry out their professions, and in some cases go as far as to influence their career choices.

Support from a significant other, goes a long way in terms of career support. What seems to be common emerging data from this research is that men take on household responsibilities in support of their wives’ career goals. As described by an Indian female academic in the Faculty of Pharmacy, her husband gave up his professional career within a multi-national corporation to support her in coming to South Africa to develop and achieve her career goals. She described how he gave up his PhD scholarship in India to start over again in studying at Rhodes University and help out with the children, while she began her teaching. He then returned to India to continue with his professional work at a highly recognised level within a company and gave it up 3 weeks ago (from the date of the interview) to return to Grahamstown to assist in looking after their new born son.
With regard to a particular interview which took place with a male pharmacy academic, who explained his schooling successes in maths and science, it became clear how the relationship between success, confidence and passion were linked. In discussing his career path, the academic agreed that in general, success drives a person, which motivates career choices as it fuels further interest in a specific related career choice. This example draws on the structure introduced by Social Cognitive Career Theory (1994), which details the direct influence related to an individual’s activities, associated positive experiences or successful outcomes and the resultant confidence on the individual’s decision making process and career development. This explanation was undoubtedly supported by all of the academics when reflected upon during the interviews, in which they commonly explained the description as:

“an accurate way of summarising it” or “I think that you have summarised that very well”.

5.3.2 Academic versus Corporate:

Lindholm (2004) explains that the identified reasons, as detailed by her sample of academic participants, supporting their attraction to academic work included an outlined preference or underlying need for independence within their working field and autonomy within their working environment. Other factors identified by Lindholm (2004) included a great passion for their field in that they felt and still feel an inherent motivation towards understanding processes, ideas and concepts within their fields, as well as a strongly experienced ‘fit’ to the academic lifestyle.

In analysing the data gathered for this study and comparing it against Lindholm’s data, it is clear that the data gathered for the purposes of the current study serves to support Lindholm’s findings in many areas. In an analysis of her findings, it is clear that Lindholm’s (2004) study supports Super’s (1957) Self-concept Theory through the data’s explanation that people chose to follow specific careers that in turn allow for their perceived strengths and abilities to be maximised. However, what is interesting is that the data offered by the participants not only supports Super’s (1957) Self-concept Theory which Lindholm (2004) did not make reference to but also Astin’s (1984) theory of career choice motivation.

The current study revealed that a number of the participants ranked the benefits offered by the academic lifestyle, such as family responsibility flexibility and flexibility of working hours as a sideline benefit to their career choice. Of the benefits that academia has to offer, the most appreciated was
rather the ability to focus on their chosen field of interest in terms of personal research ideas, as opposed to a company dictated focus. The second most influential factor offered from the academic lifestyle was the flexible environment. A high regard was also owed to teaching and a supporting environment whereby lecturers are able to engage with students and teach with an aim to increase knowledge within a specific field and contribute to development within society.

The benefits offered by the academic work structure, not only support flexibility in terms of supporting one’s lifestyle and external commitments, but also speaks to individuals’ personality traits. As discussed, for many of the participants, the link between their personality and what they perceived to be required personality traits associated with their chosen discipline or academia was outlined. However, what emerged from a conversation with Mark, a senior lecturer within the Department of Management, was rather an illustration whereby the characteristics of academia are supportive of his personality traits. He explained himself as someone who requires stimulation and is easily bored and directly linked the academic ‘context personality’ as meeting his needs as it allows him to create his job into anything he wants it to be:

“I can be a manager, a supervisor, teach, write books, do research, do external consulting and still farm and be involved in my kids sport”.

It then became clear that the role of individual personality traits and the lifestyle characteristics associated with an academic career is to not be viewed independently but rather as mutually inclusive in that the link can be viewed from either end. Gary, a senior lecturer within the Department of Statistics, illustrated this point by often pointing out the fact that as a statistician, he has been and is often offered job opportunities that yield more income than the University’s Vice-Chancellor and despite this, he continually decides to remain in his current job. Gary owes this decision to the lifestyle which Rhodes University offers. He explained that he is comfortable with his lifestyle as he is both a house and hall warden, and he is grateful for the flexibility associated with his job, whereby he is able to work for a specific number of hours during the day, while also being able to go fishing during the day, for example. It is clear that for most of the participants, the lifestyle generated by an academic life is directly and highly influential in its placing as a chosen career for the participants.

Lindholm (2004) explains that across various disciplines, there existed a small group of participants who initially decided to explore non-academic career paths and then later decided to venture into academia. In support of this, the current study displays how events served to motivate some of the
participants into a path of academia. For example, Mary, a law lecturer, explains that she found herself in faculty after her initial decision to become a professional lawyer conflicted with her innate morals and beliefs, finally leaving her unhappy in her career choice. She then opened herself up to the idea of academia through the decision to study further and then move against advice not to teach, despite her natural ability within the profession and her parents being in academia themselves. She now describes the decision to become an academic as her first love, with her chosen topic being her second love.

Astin’s (1984) Socio-psychological Model of Career Choice and Work Behaviour interpret three main basic drives behind work motivation, being pleasure, survival and contribution. Through analysis of these three aspects, it became quite clear that these three basic needs are interpreted differently by each individual and are fulfilled through work. As individuals live with an understanding that work generates income, which in response generates a sustainable living and livelihood, one needs to select an occupation in which to engage in efforts to satisfy their basic needs. Although these three needs form part of Astin’s (1984) model for career choice in general, this model was applied more simply in the current study in that it was used to understand the participants’ explanations and narratives of their choice to enter into academia.

The notion of pleasure in being able to carry out research in their chosen field and in being able to enjoy teaching and passing on knowledge draws on Astin’s (1984) identified aspect of pleasure. As similarly supported by Lindholm’s (2004) research findings, this served as a driving force for some, and also as a benefit for others, as explained by the explanation above of the Law Lecturer’s passion for teaching. Through the discussion of research topics, all of the participants displayed a highly noticeable passion for their individually chosen research topics/focus.

All of the participants spoke passionately about their jobs in either a research aspect or a teaching aspect or a combination of the two driving their passion for their jobs in that they are able to pursue their own research interests and knowledge while being able to teach students and pass on knowledge in a manner that is understood as beneficial to society. Student interaction formed another addition to the use of the word ‘passion’ when conversing around the satisfaction of their career decisions. Through such interpretations, it would therefore make sense to state that teaching and faculty work is regarded by some of the academics as a hobby as opposed to work. When one academic compared a stereotypical scenario of corporate industry such as the information
technology focused companies, a scenario “played out in his head” of a software developer who was required by this employer to develop/code a system or website purely driven and dictated by the need of his client, as interpreted and instructed to him by his employer. His level of design flexibility and application of his own interests, ideas and creative ability is inflexible within a bounded territory of rules and regulations. This scenario, analysed within the context of academia/faculty is however not applicable. Lecturers are able to focus on research and design as motivated by their driving interests, notwithstanding the teaching of students according to self-controlled teaching portfolios, albeit the requirement that the teaching is structured within defined topics, for example, teachings of coding in java, C++ or php for example.

In addition to the idea of academia housing what is deemed by most of the participants as passion, is the understanding that the academic career also supports individual research and ideas through structured working conditions. For example, Rhodes University, alongside most higher education institutions, allow for ‘academic leave’. This refers to paid academic leave in which the staff member is expected to focus on their research.

Survival, being Astin’s (1984) second basic need for career choice and motivation was discussed with one of the participants. In reference to discussions around the financial viability of private practice versus academia, the participant explained the faculty as providing an adequate financial reward for the satisfaction of her needs. She explained that although it doesn’t bring in tremendous amounts of profit, academics are able to offer their skills to private companies on a personal basis outside of working hours in efforts to spread the application of their services or skills and earn additional money. For example, as explained by one of the participants, lecturers are able to offer private services to businesses outside of the University in the form of consulting services. This allows them to generate more income, with the understanding that private consultation does not affect their university commitments and responsibilities. This agreement allows for a compensatory agreement in which additional money through private service is optional through the existing acknowledgement that faculty salaries are lower than salaries earned in private industry. As described by Mark, the ability to take on external consulting compensates for the income received as an academic. This is a form of topping up one’s earnings while being able to carry out research, lecturing and personal interests. And the academic working structure allows enough flexibility for this to take place. This ability was also described as a favourable means of retaining academics who could easily move over to the private industries, as the flexibility to consult externally not only increases income generation but
also increases exposure to networking which one would normally be exposed to within the private industry, and also keep up with current discipline related trends and developments.

What was interesting however, was the explanation from a pharmacy lecturer that the field of her chosen profession within academia provides a higher income than her counterpart within private practice. The only difference in their careers was the explanation of the participant’s choice to venture into medical research as opposed to medical practice. With personal reference to the stereotypical view that doctors or pharmacists earn more in private practice, learning that a Rhodes University lecturer within their procession, served as a contrasting surprise.

Survival can also be further analysed through the participants’ discussions around specific working conditions offered in the academic working environment to staff members, such as flexible working hours, maternity benefits for mothers and paternity benefits for fathers, academic leave, etc.

An additional aspect that was discussed was the supportive environment of academia in which the competitive nature of private profit driven companies is eliminated from the working environment as each academic is supported in terms of their own progress and research and teachings through a process of personal promotion. This process, which fosters self-driven motivation to develop within their field and within their role as an academic, in turn fosters a sense of job security and academic survival in contrast to a lawyer who is required to take on as many cases as possible in expectation that he/she generates profit through consulting fees or a software developer who is required to follow the routes of their chosen employer, which may result in liquidation or retrenchment etc. With the high demand for academics within South Africa due to rising student numbers and the trend of graduate employment within private practise versus faculty, the academic career path is characterised by more job security and secure survival.

Thirdly, Astin (1984) discusses the third basic need for work motivation, contribution. This motivating factor was directly referred to by all of the participants. The opportunity and ability to contribute to existing knowledge, or lack thereof, through methods of problem solving, research and teachings was an influential factor in the decision to become an academic. The idea of academia fulfilling the satisfaction of this basic need was also supported by the findings presented by Lindholm (2004).

In contrast to the current research findings, Lindholm (2004) explained that the satisfaction generated through the contribution to the students’ development specifically was not clearly
articulated by her research participants. This is not the fact within the current research, as most of the participants discussed the satisfaction that teaching students and aiding their development brought to their working lives. For example, an accounting lecturer went on during the interview to discuss her teaching style and how she often asks questions during class by identifying individual students by name, and addresses them for the answers to classroom exercises. She went on to explain that she carries this out in such a way that the student is not put on the spot and expected to answer a question that he/she is unable to as the lecturer poses the question, identifies a learner and in working with them, the lecturer states the answer herself. She then explained one specific occasion where a student came to her and thanked her because her confidence had increased dramatically through such interactions from a shy learner to an outspoken and witty student. It was through this narrative that the lecturer detailed the passion of teaching partially due to the impact that it generates on the lives of the learners.

Astin’s factor of contribution can also be linked to the participant’s explanation that they are able to retain their personal self-expression during their teachings and research. Although the profession is structured by institutional and departmental regulations, individual academics are recognised for their individual teaching abilities and methods. Contribution through individual self-expression and ideas is also supported by the level of independence and autonomy granted to individual research. All the interviews that were conducted included a participant initiated discussion around their research topics and how they chose their topic based on a related interest and explained why they found their topic interesting.

An interesting discussion that emerged amongst a few of the discussions was that of the attractive impression of an academic environment. What emerged from the discussions was that some of the participants felt that capable students are lost due to the unattractive impression of academia and research. This is linked directly to the monetary reflection of the career choice. The influence of peer pressure and media depicting a specific standard of living serve to motivate choices related to monetary gain, as discussed by the interview participants. Various participants highlighted the need for interested students to want to follow careers in academia, but with influence of money, media and peer pressure results in more careers within industry. An example of this was provided by one of the lecturers, where he explained that a student will go home during the holidays and meet up with a friend who graduated perhaps two years ago. The friend might have nice cars, laptops, cell phones, a nice flat or house for example and this is translated by the students as progress and career
success within today’s society. This serves to provide students with benchmarks for their career progress and in itself, draws pictures of where they see themselves in a few years time. This difficulty, together with the locality of Rhodes University, results in the need for Rhodes University to attract staff through using other means of attraction and with more rigour and competitiveness.

5.3.3 Rhodes University, Grahamstown:

The last element of the study touched on the decision to accept employment at Rhodes University. All of the participant’s explanations were expectedly diverse. One of the participants explained that he grew up in Grahamstown, studied at the University, and later decided to leave the small town and move to Johannesburg in support of corporate employment and in an effort to gain practical experience within his field to support his plan to return to Grahamstown and start his academic career. In this case, the confidence and comfort that familiarisation and affiliation offers can be attributed to his decision to teach at Rhodes University. Another narrative in support of this is explanation from a lecturer that her parents both teach within Grahamstown, with her dad being a lecturer at the University.

The location of Rhodes University does pose a dual influence on the decision to accept faculty offers at the University. A young lecturer explained that she moved to Grahamstown from Durban and finds it difficult in such a small town. She explained that in moving down as a single young female, she was open to the idea of independence and new opportunities; however she now misses the city life of the bigger South African cities. Now engaged, she finds location to be a barrier to her long term plans to remain at the University as her fiancé’s career is not supported by Grahamstown job opportunities. This is an acknowledged factor by Rhodes University. In efforts to assist with this barrier, Rhodes University makes a conscious effort to support the employment of the spouses of staff members where possible (Partner Employment Placement Programme, 2013).

Another interviewee explained that his decision to become a Rhodes University lecturer was motivated by what he considered to be the best decision for him and his family at the time of the job offer. Of the three job offers he received simultaneously, Rhodes University was the only employer who offered permanent employment. He then moved down to Grahamstown with his family, where his wife has found employment as a teacher at one of the local schools and his children attend school. He explained that the small town life offered by the town was something that he was open to due to his upbringing. Having worked and carried out research overseas, he explained that he found the
culture in the small size of the University enjoyable. Some of the participants went on to explain that the size of the University served as a benefit with smaller class sizes than those of bigger institutions which allows for individualised interaction with students. This is evident through the tutorial system and mentoring system within some of the departments as explained by two lecturers, whereby individual students are able to meet with lectures independently through a system of one on one development sessions and interactional mentoring/supervision of student research.

As one of the academics described, it is the value of the University that attracts and retains staff members to the University. This serves to outplay the influence that location has on the decision to a point.

A notable narrative was one shared by a female academic within the Faculty of Pharmacy, whereby she explained how she ended up in her current teaching role at Rhodes University. A few years back, while still in her professional role of a Clinical Pharmacist in India, she visited Wisconsin in the United States of America as she was undergoing training in Boston on how the Unites States has managed to move 50 years ahead within the field of pharmacy. In consideration of this, she was required to moderate focus groups on this topic back home in India. She then explained that during a lunch time one day, she went onto the internet with an aim to research interesting topics for nurses, doctors and pharmacists in India and in doing so, she typed in the words ‘Continuing Education’, knowing that this is of interest to most within the field of pharmacy. This search then led her to the phrase ‘life-long learning’ and when typing this phrase into the search engine, she moved on to the 9th document of the 9th page of the Google search results (being her lucky number) and came across an article regarding Rhodes University hosting a conference on ‘life-long learning”. She then decided to email the associated professor asking if she would be able to attend the conference, and he replied almost instantly indicating that she was most welcome to attend and asked for her CV out of interest. She then replied with her CV and a few seconds later, the Rhodes University academic replied by asking her to consider working at the University as a related post has been vacant for 9 years.

The interviewee then explained:

“When people ask me about how I ended up at Rhodes, I ask them if they want the long or short story. If short story, I reply by saying ‘destiny’”.
5.4 **Data Outcome Consideration:**

The aim of the study was to discuss the topic concerning the career decision making process of a sample of Rhodes University academics, bringing to the discussion their choice of discipline, choice to move into academia and the associated internal and external influences on this decision making process. In doing so, two existing bodies of theory were linked to the collected data and were used to discuss points of reference in relation to the sample’s narratives and experiences, while also considering the results presented by Lindholm (2004), whom carried out a similar investigation with 36 faculty members from a large public research university in the United states of America.

The study reveals evident similarities in the motivating factors behind the participants’ decisions to take on their discipline of choice as well as their decision to become an academic, regardless of discipline focus, individual age, race or gender. Each participant’s experiences detail individual narratives as to why and how their career paths took the routes they did. This allows for a deeper understanding of who became an academic and why, as it relates to the ten individual academics within a context which proves to be unique in location, culture and community, therefore attracting academics or staff members seeking a particular type of personal and working lifestyle.

Drawing on the fundamentals introduced by Bandura’s (1986) Social Cognitive Theory in combination with Lent et al.’s (1994, 2000, 2002) Social Cognitive Career Theory and secondly, Astin’s (1984) Need-based Socio-psychological Model of Career Choice, the data proved to display clear support of key principles in the broad theoretical bodies. The notion of the career choice process linked to an interrelated dynamics of self-efficacy, outcomes expectation and goal setting is clearly visible within each decision making experience shared within interviews. These narratives illustrate the role of self-referent thinking in acknowledging one’s own strengths and skills, successful experiences and positive outcomes, and resultant confidence. Each individual choice process was also clearly linked to Astin’s (1984) Need based Socio-psychological model of career choice in that decision criteria models were articulated in such a manner as to be directly related to the three aspects of pleasure, survival and contribution.

Each narrative also clearly displays the internal influences linked to the person, their behaviour and the external influences associated with the surrounding context and environment.

In summarising the study’s data, the outcomes from the research, can be illustrated as follows:
Decision making processes:

Choice criteria:

Influential factors:

The study reveals that in following process structures broadly outlined by each of the theories above, experiences tend to represent a pattern of discipline interest and coinciding confidence resulting from positive experiences, such as schooling achievements, recognised strengths, or external influence from significant others. Each individual described personal influences on their career choices from both an internal and external level, such as personality traits, desire for a specific personal and working lifestyle/environment, personal goals or values, or presentation of opportunities in support of their current careers.

As a side thought based on the research findings, most of the interview participants articulated career choices based on their interests or passions. These exact interests were developed from their skills and strengths. One could in essence argue that their choice of career was aligned to what they perceived themselves to be good at as opposed to attempting a career purely based on interest. Gary started out with attempting to study/prepare for a career based on his passion for fishing, but decided to change his focus to what he was able to carry out and perform well at. This stems from the influence of societal expectations whereby choice is expectedly determined by what a person is able to perform well in, in efforts to ensure increased marketability and competitiveness within a society that is highly characterised by competitive labour markets. Today’s labour markets require success and confidence. There is little tolerance for someone embarking on a career purely based on the fact of enjoyment with no record of high levels of success or potential.
CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSION:

6.1 Introduction:

Chapter six formulates the significance of the research in terms of its outcome and reflects on the process as a whole as it relates to the strengths and limitations of the study, while also discussing the implications and suggested future research based on the research findings.

6.2 Conclusion and Reflection:

With the overarching research focus on choice of discipline, academic versus corporate industry and choice around current employer, the academic participants were able to elaborate on their unique experiences and introduce to the research further topics of discussion.

These 3 areas of focus were then further broken down into qualitative questions below:

a. Which factors attracted the interviewees to their chosen discipline;
b. Which people and experiences proved to be most influential in their decisions;
c. When and why they decided to pursue an academic career;
d. Which factors specifically attracted the academics to Rhodes University.

Answers and detailed descriptions to the above posed questions allowed for the generation of knowledge around what the experiences and career decision influences were and are for 10 Rhodes University academics across different disciplines and faculties. Such information may be used as a starting point for employee attraction and retention discussions and initiatives. These questions allowed for the introduction of discussion around participant’s perceived level of competence and self-affiliation, personality traits, early life experiences and the role of influential family members, mentors or significant others.

It is clear that some individuals grow up with a preconceived idea of what the ‘perfect job’ would be for them. This is either developed by internal desires and drives or by external influences of social media, contextual and environmental support structures or opportunities or through guidance from other individuals. This idea dwells in one’s head and moulds their life choices. However, the decision making process is not merely a matching process of individual and occupation. Instead, it involves a
process of much consideration, self-reflection and expectation, and is therefore a choice made within a context of conflicting internal and external influences.

Upbringing forms a major influence on one’s career choice, and one’s moral standing and goals indirectly drive what is considered as a person’s ‘perfect job’. However, it became clearly evident through the current research that the career decision making process was not without a personal understanding of one’s own abilities, goals and interests. It was only through consideration of oneself that it was possible to be open to influences from external sources surrounding the individuals. Therefore, there was an initial awareness of oneself and secondly an awareness of the work surrounding them.

In general, the findings of the present study suggest that the career choice process of the interviewed academics followed a general path supported by various theories at different intersections of the process. In efforts to retain a method of self-reflection within the research process, a re-occurring image, as reflected upon by the researcher, is described below:

The process and narratives of the career choices of Rhodes University Academics and the influential factors that play a role in supporting their career decisions is presented as a car travelling down a road. The first hurdle in the road is a four-way, whereby the car is required to make a choice in terms of which direction it is headed. The car represents the individual, while the road represents the individual’s path to their current career. The car comprises of supporting elements, where the tyres represent financial support, market and economic support and academic performance; the fuel represents the motivation and personal drive of the individual; the radio represents the influence from significant others in the form of parents, partners, teachers etc; the car structure and shape represents the opportunities offered to the individual in the form of schooling and job opportunities; the colour of the car represents the individual’s personality, values and interests and finally the power-steering represents the self-efficacy and confidence of the individual.

The road is made up of stones which require the car to be self-aware and swerve where necessary, while the sun and rain act as external elements influencing the environment in which the car finds itself, demanding a resultant action or behaviour.
The first stop is the four-way where by the car is provided with multiple options. These represent the career choices and discipline choices which the car is required to decide upon based on the personal needs and goals of its envisioned destination as well as the car’s abilities and supporting strengths.

Once the car makes a decision as to which direction to take, it continues driving and finds itself at a t-junction. One turn results in the destination of private industry with the other turn being the choice to move into an academic profession.

This illustration refers to a process of inter-related and embedded influences which serve to pave the way for an individual. The image basically reminds one that of the narratives shared, it is evident that the participants share common patterns of rationale when driving their career choices. Each participant, through self-referent thinking, understood from a relatively early stage what their career choice was as driven by their natural skills and interests. In each case, the interviewees described some form of influence on their decision making process as posed from another individual, being a spouse, parent, teacher, or friend for example. The participants’ details of their career decision making processes illustrate a steady career pattern, whereby the discipline, regardless of initially working in private industry or moving straight into academia, remained constant. In support of Brousseau’s (1990) research on career paths, this state represents minimal movement within the discipline but the individual is more often than not considered to be an expert within their field. This supports the characteristic of an academic, who is in most cases, considered to be an expert within their field through research and knowledge generation.

Lent et al.’s (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory explains that personal agency and responsibility play a pivotal role within the process of career decision making and explains the process in which internal and external factors play an influential role in supporting or creating a barrier for the individual’s decision making (Bester, 2011). Basically, Social Cognitive Career Theory applies Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory’s principles of self-efficacy and outcome expectation to career choice and development and explains that these two principles inter-relate to form career interests, goals and associated behavior and action. In summary, this theory outlines the active role of the individual in guiding their career path and their motivation to take control of their career outcome and destination. It is because of this understanding, that it is possible to say that the research findings of this study support Lent et al.’s (1994, 2000, 2002) Social Cognitive Career Theory in terms of their discipline choice. The findings further confirm that the choice to become an academic is theoretically
supported by Astin’s (1984) Need-based Socio-psychological model of career choice, whereby the elements of pleasure, survival and contribution are individually taken into consideration when making the choice to venture into such a career.

Although the data indicates that each individual’s career choices are multi-layered in their application of past events and performance, present opportunities and environmental influences and future goals and objectives/expectations, it remains clear that choices are not made independently of internal and external influences. In consideration of the above outlined summary as it relates to the research findings, it is evident that the research, consisting of an analysis of shared experiences of Rhodes University academics, represents a common interaction of individual interests versus skills, versus career goals, versus life goals, versus personal values.

The research process as a whole represented a qualitative interpretive model of data collection and analysis as guided thematic analysis. This approach was considered appropriate due to the character of the research and in adopting the approach of an active author as opposed to an objective researcher. The interpretive research paradigm allowed for this approach in supporting interactive engagements with the research participants with the aim of gathering rich qualitative data as a means of understanding the experiences and perspectives of the participants through in-depth narrative interactions.

The use of the above mentioned interpretive approach mirrors the benefits outlined by Polous (2010) in that it provided flexibility in the ability to focus on core categories of enquiry, produce or reproduce theory as it relates to a specific context, and simultaneously ensure that the researcher’s perceptions and interpretations were embedded in the data provided by the individuals. This method allowed for direct investigation into emerging subareas or topics as it enabled an interactive and openly subjective approach as active author of the research as opposed to a passive objective researcher approach. The chosen case study context proved to provide valuable data within a convenient nature, with the researcher being employed by the university and being granted access to approach the academics. Notwithstanding the setbacks as it relates to the self-experienced difficulty of carrying the out research during personal time and after working hours due to the nature of the research as a part-time focus, the researcher was able to balance the demanding commitments from both her occupation and research focus. There were no major setbacks experienced within the research process as the researcher was surprised at the level of enthusiasm and accommodation which she
received from the participants. Upon analysis however, it seems logical that the academic participants openly supported the research initiatives through their personal experience and appreciation as it concerns research generation.

Upon reflection of the research results, the significance of the study lies in its intent to seek to provide a blueprint for understanding the push and pull factors associated with a career within academia as well as the influences on the career decision making process. The research has enabled expressions around attractions associated with Rhodes University as an employer, despite its location and size. This may prove to be helpful in the University’s process analysis and be used to support strategic recruitment and selection discussions. The research has also brought to light some factors for discussion around some of the limitations associated with the University as a result of its size and location. Although these two factors are difficult to change, expressed difficulties such as limited networking opportunities or access to research supervisors within specific disciplines are issues which may allow for further interesting analysis and brainstorming amongst top management personnel of the University. It has also gone on to provide a narrative of career choice experiences and enable a guide for those in a position of making such a choice, for example, postgraduates or those in industry looking for both a personal and working lifestyle which a career in academia offers. Increased knowledge around factors which may influence career choices will allow for opportunities for increased efforts at attracting staff, retaining staff and developing staff as it relates to their careers within specific disciplines and similar contexts to that of this case study.

6.3 Strengths and limitations of the study:

Although small sample size may have been argued by some to be a limitation of the study, the researcher believed that the strength of the research lay in its use of Rhodes University as a case study, whereby it is able to induce rich data as the context is supportive of qualitative research methods and inquiry. Such in-depth analysis may provide various South African universities with a platform for further inquiry into academic staff attraction, retention and career development methods.

What the researcher considers to be a positive factor related to the study is the responses received from the academics in terms of the requests for their involvement in both the voluntary online survey and the interactive interviews.
In adopting the use of a single case study analysis, the research was limited in its ability and freedom to generalise findings to the broader academic community. Due to the limitations associated with case studies in the information not being subject to testing, it is evident that vast generalisations from single case studies are not able to be made (Lindegger, 2006). However, according to Yin (2003), generalisation of the results of a case study is either limited to that specific case or similar types of cases. This depends on the extent to which the case study involves a typical phenomenon (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). It is then considered best practice to adopt these generalisations in theory rather than to generalise the findings towards populations. The experiences as shared by the participants are not able to be generalised, however, similar individual experiences or contexts are still able to relate to the findings in theory and identify their own personal interpretations in relation to the current findings.

The size of the University served to impose a slight limitation in terms of ensuring the anonymity of the interview participants, in that it directly increased the ability for one to determine the identity of the participants due to the familiarity of staff employed within the Institution or University community. With this in mind, specific information regarding their position or personal information needed to be considered with caution, so as to prevent detailing information from allowing for such identification.

6.4 Future Research Considerations:

According to Portnoi (2009), the South African Higher Education sector is currently characterised by reformation in the post-apartheid period. With the 1998 Employment Equity Act as a motivation for employers with 50 employees or more, education institutions, all companies/businesses or institutions are required to diversify in their employment statistics in the favour of employing a workforce that represents the South African population. Reflecting on recent transformation, statistics will display the changing trend in hiring practices as it related to faculty. With this in mind, future research is required to focus on the effect of this on career choices. As explained by Portnoi, consideration should be placed on post graduate levels and the effect that such employment policies have on their career choices. In motivation for his research on the educational experiences and influences on the career choices of South African graduate students, he explained that little research has specifically focused on the factors which influence the career choices of post-graduate students within South Africa. With the demand for teachers and academics within the country, it is suggested
that future research focuses on the effect of market and economic factors of related career choices. Such research within the South African academic context will allow for knowledge regarding what students regard as choice influences and will enable a body of knowledge which can be accessed in efforts to recruit academics and promote faculty careers nationwide.

6.5 Recommendations:

In agreement with Parton’s (2009) suggestions from his study focusing on graduates’ perceptions of academic work and the influences on their career choices, Universities should increasingly promote faculty work to their post-graduate students in efforts to recruit faculty members and ‘grow their own seeds’ as a form of knowledge retention. Although some universities already adopt this approach, such efforts should be more clearly presented to graduates. This will serve to provide those with increased knowledge on the specific career path, which in turn will allow for informed decisions going forward, especially for students, who while studying, come to realise that they no longer wish to continue on the previously chosen career path as presented by private industry. For example, law students who come to realise that they do not see themselves chasing consultation fees, while still enjoying the legal understandings and approaches/research aspects of the career. After all, graduates are the next in line to become the future academics of the country, and attempts should be made to promote such careers in support of this.

Secondly, career counselling should be another area of research. Although much research exists on methods of career prediction and career decision making processes and stereotypes, future research should perhaps focus on the effectiveness of career counselling and evaluations should be carried out on the significance of such guidance within South Africa in which skills and interests are not the only significant influences on career choice, with reference to the country’s employment and economic policies. Therefore, research should investigate the effectiveness of career counselling and guidance based on the explanations from the participants within the current study that the career guidance received in high school, failed to provide any significant information on the best suited options and should align accordingly, with additional reference to the South African context.

A further recommendation may be that surveys be designed around the models and research findings which emerged from the current study, specifically those represented in appendices F – I. These models may be used as focus points for further investigations within a larger sample group or across various South African universities to determine the differences in motivational factors on
career decisions across the country, while bringing into discussion the different contexts and cultures, which some universities may offer and experience differently to others in South Africa. This will bring about discussions around the different attraction and retention strategies utilized by various universities across the country and may prove to be useful for other universities to consider within their own contexts.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RHODES UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
AGREEMENT
BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I (participant’s name) ______________________________ agree to participate in the masters project of Tamsyn Rippon on the career choices of Rhodes University Academics: Internal and external influences on the decision making process.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master’s degree in Organisational Psychology at Rhodes University.
2. The researcher is interested in the effects and management of wildlife poaching on game reserves.
3. My participation will involve taking part in a short interview of about 20-30 minutes.
4. I will be asked to answer questions on the effects of poaching, poaching incidents and occurrences, management and control efforts and suspected views and reasons behind poaching increases.
5. I am free to refrain from answering certain questions if I chose not to.
6. I will not be asked to answer any personal and inappropriate questions.
7. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study.
8. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
9. The report will ensure that my personal participation will remain anonymous and confidential.

Participant’s signature:

Signed on (Date):
APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Biographical Details:

1. What is your race classification?
   - African
   - Coloured
   - Indian/Asian
   - White

2. Age Group?
   - Below 35
   - 35-39
   - 40-44
   - 45-49
   - 50-54
   - 55-60
   - Over 60

3. Married or Single?
   - Married
   - Single
   - Partner / Relationship

4. Do / did you have children enrolled in school or university?
   - Yes
   - No

Job Position:

5. What is your academic job level:
   - Junior Lecturer
   - Lecturer
   - Senior Lecturer
   - HoD
   - Dean
   - Professor
   - Associate Professor
6. Which Faculty/Area:
- [ ] Commerce
- [ ] Humanities
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Law
- [ ] Pharmacy/Sciences
- [ ] Institute
- [ ] Other (Please Specify)

Career Aspirations:

7. Security and stability are more important to me than freedom and autonomy
8. I would like a career in which I can solve problems or win out in situations that are extremely challenging.
9. Using my skills to make the world a better place to live and work in is more important to me than achieving a high-level managerial position
10. I feel successful in life only if I have been able to balance my personal, family and career requirements.
11. I would rather leave my university than accept a rotational assignment that would take me out of my area of expertise.
12. I would like a career that makes a real contribution to humanity and society.
13. I seek out work opportunities that strongly challenge my problem solving and/or competitive skills.
14. Balancing the demands of personal and professional life is more important to me than achieving a high-level managerial position.

Internal Personal Influences
15. Did / do you have freedom of choice in making your own career decisions?  

Yes  No

16. Did anyone play a significant role in influencing your decision making around education and training?  

Yes  No

... If so, of what relation is this person to you?

17. Did / does the state of the labour market play a significant role in your career decision making?  

Yes  No

18. To what extent were your career decisions influenced by your background/upbringing?

External institutional or relational influences:

19. Did the possible quality of life offered by your chosen career path play a significant role in your decision making?  

Yes  No

20. Did the role of flexibility within your chosen career path play a significant role in your decision making?  

Yes  No

21. Did the possible level of career development within your chosen career path play a significant role in your decision making?  

Yes  No

External structural influences:

22. To what extent were your career decisions influenced by your race?  

23. To what extent were your career decisions influenced by your gender?  

Location/Contextual:

24. Did you study at Rhodes University?  

Yes  No

25. Did you grow up in Grahamstown?  

Yes  No

26. How many years have you worked at Rhodes University?  

27. Was the locality of Rhodes University a positive influence?  

Yes  No
on your decision to work at this university?

28. How satisfied are you with your decision to join this University?

29. In your opinion, what serves as the main attractions to young academics with regard to a career in academia?

30. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being extremely unhappy and 10 being extremely happy), how satisfied are you with your career choice that has lead you to your current job position? Feel free to elaborate

Thank you for your participation
APPENDIX C: SURVEY RESPONSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Aspirations:</th>
<th>Never true</th>
<th>Occasionally true</th>
<th>Often true</th>
<th>Always true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security and stability are more important to me than freedom and autonomy</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like a career in which I can solve problems or win out in situations that are extremely challenging.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using my skills to make the world a better place to live and work is more important to me than achieving a high-level managerial position</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel successful in life only if I have been able to balance my personal, family and career requirements.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would rather leave my university than accept a rotational assignment that would take me out of my area of expertise.</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like a career that makes a real contribution to humanity and society.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I seek out work opportunities that strongly challenge my problem solving and/or competitive skills.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing the demands of personal and professional life is more important to me than achieving a high-level managerial position.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Personal Influences:</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did / do you have freedom of choice in making your own career decisions?</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did anyone play a significant role in influencing your decision making around education and training?</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... If so, of what relation is this person to you?</td>
<td>71% Family</td>
<td>14% Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did / does the state of the labour market play a significant role in your career decision making?</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent were your career decisions influenced by your background/upbringing?</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External institutional or relational influences:</th>
<th>no</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the possible quality of life offered by your chosen career path play a significant role in your decision making?</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the role of flexibility within your chosen career path play a significant role in your decision making?</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the possible level of career development within your chosen career path play a significant role in your decision making</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### External structural influences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent were your career decisions influenced by your race?</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent were your career decisions influenced by your gender?</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Location/Contextual:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you study at Rhodes University?</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you grow up in Grahamstown?</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How many years have you worked at Rhodes University?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>1-10 yrs.</th>
<th>10-20 yrs.</th>
<th>Plus 25 yrs.</th>
<th>n/a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Was the locality of Rhodes University a positive influence on your decision to work at this university?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How satisfied are you with your decision to join this University?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Unsure at this stage</th>
<th>Not very Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you explain your career story from initial career interests & decisions to your current post?
2. Did you excel in your discipline at school?
3. How did the interest arise?
4. Associated and supportive skills?
5. Activities/associations/actions that supported your career?
6. Why did you choose academic over professional career path?
7. Attraction of academia?
8. Why Rhodes?
9. Which parts of your job do you feel provides you with the most satisfaction?
10. Job supportive of your personal life?
11. Role of children?
12. Benefits/disadvantages of location?
13. Pleasure from job?
14. Role of success and confidence in chosen discipline?
15. Role of self: Personality, goals, interests, skills?
16. Role of others: parents, significant others, teachers, media?
17. Family career choices?
18. Career Counselling?
19. Role of environment? Market, money, education, exposure, gender?
20. Current level of satisfaction?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic career awareness</th>
<th>Influence from friend</th>
<th>Positive view of Grahamstown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic career reputation</td>
<td>Influence from partner or spouse</td>
<td>Post retirement contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic freedom</td>
<td>influence from teacher/academic</td>
<td>Preferred Lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic/professional networking</td>
<td>Influence of association</td>
<td>Private industry experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional income means</td>
<td>Influence of Personality</td>
<td>Professional qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available opportunities</td>
<td>Influence of upbringing</td>
<td>Psychometric evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEE requirements</td>
<td>Interest in academia-young academics</td>
<td>Recognition of opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEE influence(race/gender)</td>
<td>Internal values</td>
<td>Requirement to keep up with new training or trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career choice judgment</td>
<td>Jack of all trades</td>
<td>Research interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career counselling</td>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>Research support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child raising responsibility</td>
<td>Job Security</td>
<td>Rhodes University size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence from success</td>
<td>Knowledge army</td>
<td>Rhodes University culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in topic or field of interest</td>
<td>Knowledge generation</td>
<td>Rhodes University wardening benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of focus or direction</td>
<td>Labour market requirements</td>
<td>Sacrifices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate competition</td>
<td>Labour of love</td>
<td>School success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate industry money focus</td>
<td>Life goals</td>
<td>Self-affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate positions of power and authority</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Service to society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current level of satisfaction</td>
<td>Managerialism</td>
<td>Shortage of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development opportunities</td>
<td>Mothering influence on later career</td>
<td>Significant other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in retaining young academics</td>
<td>Natural skill or strength</td>
<td>Slower career progression in academia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>Negative perception of Grahamstown</td>
<td>Smaller classes individual focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External consulting services</td>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Social influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Support</td>
<td>Outcome expectations</td>
<td>Stable employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility of office hours</td>
<td>Parental Influence</td>
<td>Stay at home mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of choice</td>
<td>Parental Qualifications</td>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of innovation</td>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>Student mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>Passion drives energy</td>
<td>Subject choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grahamstown employment opportunities</td>
<td>Peer pressure</td>
<td>Subject choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grahamstown schooling</td>
<td>Peers in private industry</td>
<td>Survival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td>Performance Success</td>
<td>True love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human capital</td>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>Universities lead by academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income generation</td>
<td>Political influence(South African History)</td>
<td>University reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual agency</td>
<td>Positive contextual experiences/Grahamstown</td>
<td>Unstable economic context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence from family member</td>
<td>Positive outcomes</td>
<td>Work and personal lifestyle balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F: CODING A

DISCIPLINE CHOICE

1. Discipline Choice

Choice Criteria
- Contribution to Society
- Knowledge Generation
- Individual Self-Expression
- Social Awareness
- Mentoring

Pleasure
- Hobby
- Passion
- Research
- Personal choice
- Lifestyle

Self-Efficiency
- Self-Awareness
- Natural Skills
- Strengths
- Passion
- Positive Experiences
- Success

Decision Making Process
- Company Choice
- Career Plan
- Vision
- Personal & Career Goals
- Lifestyle Choice

Goal Setting
- Positive Outcomes/Response
- Career Development
- Success
- Association

Outcome Expectations
- Money/Income
- Satisfaction of Needs
- Working Environment
- Lifestyle Preference
- Flexibility

Contribution

Survival
APPENDIX G: CODING B

ACADEMIC VS. CORPORATE INDUSTRY

2. Academia Vs. Corporate Industry

**Academia**
- Research Support
- Ability to Consult Externally
- Compensation Factor
- Knowledge Generation
- Stability
- Social Influence
- Personal & Work Balance

**Corporate**
- Competitive
- Faster Career Growth/Development
- Access to new Technology & Trends
- Networking
- Higher Level of Income
- Directed/Instructed Focus
- Less Control Over Product/Output/Focus
- Private Fees (Profit Driven)

**Shortage of Skills**
- Peer Influence
- Money Driven
- Society/Pressur
- Problem in Attracting Young Academics
- Appeal of Academic Career

- Personal Interest
- Lifestyle Choice
- Academia
- Personal Values
- Individual Personality Traits
- Security
- Stability
- Autonomy
- Freedom
- Managerialism
APPENDIX H: CODING C

INFLUENCES

Personality
- Love For Discipline
- Love For Research
- Students
- Mentoring
- Sociable
- Personal Values

Career
- Confirmation
- Alternatives
- Development
- Opportunities
- Freedom
- Earnings

Early Experiences
- Childhood Experiences
- Exposure
- Personal Experiences
- Parental Expectations
- Opportunities
- Schooling Experiences
- Contextual Influence (politics, society)

Significant Others
- Friends
- Family
- Partners
- Career Counsellors

Family
- Support
- Expectations
- Freedom Of Choice
- Finances

Environmental/Contextual Factors
- Market Requirements
- Market Economic/State
- Employment Opportunities
- Race
- Age
- Gender
- Mothering Responsibilities
- Political Context
- Employer Environment
- Stereotypes
APPENDIX I: CODING D

RHODES UNIVERSITY

### Pull Factors
- Cultural Lifestyle
- Wardening System
- Focus On Students
- Tutorials
- Size
- Location
- Environment
- Lifestyle

### Push Factors
- Location
- Small Town Syndrome
- Employment Outside University
- Spousal Employment
- Family Separation
- Decreased Networking
- Access to Research Supervisors (Topic Specialisation)

4. Rhodes University

- Cultural Lifestyle
- Wardening System
- Focus On Students
- Tutorials
- Size
- Location
- Environment
- Lifestyle