An Exploratory Study of Senior Cycle Students' Perceptions of their Values in the Context of Future Career Decision-Making

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An Exploratory Study of Senior Cycle Students’ Perceptions of their Values in the Context of Future Career Decision-Making

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DECLARATION

The author hereby declares that this thesis is entirely her own work. No element of the work described in this dissertation has been previously submitted for any degree in University of Limerick, or in any other institution.

Signature _______________________

Cathleen Lysnkey
Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not come. We have only today. Let us begin.

Mother Teresa
Acknowledgments

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband Tom and our three sons, Simon, Timmy and Liam. I am thankful for your continued patience and support during the past three years. I want to also extend my appreciation to my family and friends who supported me and encouraged me not to give up!

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# Glossary of Terms

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCS</td>
<td>Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDM</td>
<td>Career Decision-Making</td>
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<td>CIP</td>
<td>Cognitive Information Processing</td>
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<td>CVI</td>
<td>Careers Values Inventory</td>
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<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Skills</td>
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<td>EFPA</td>
<td>European Federation of Psychologists Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
<td>Integrative Life Planning</td>
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<td>ITC</td>
<td>International Test Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGC</td>
<td>Institute of Guidance Counsellors</td>
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<tr>
<td>KCM</td>
<td>Kaleidoscope Career Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCA</td>
<td>National Council for Curriculum and Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCGE</td>
<td>National Centre for Guidance in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Personal Computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSI</td>
<td>Psychological Society of Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCCT</td>
<td>Social Cognitive and Career Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSA</td>
<td>Whole School Approach</td>
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Abstract

The overall aim of this research study was to explore the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values in the context of future career decision-making. The study discusses values in a broad context as a review of the literature exposes a gap in literature in relation to any possible link between values and career decision-making. The study also focuses on the traditional and contemporary perspectives of adolescent development. The lack of empirical evidence regarding the influence of values during adolescence (Döring and Hillbrink 2015) is also presented. Finally, career theories and interventions are outlined as well as implications for guidance practitioners discussed.

An interpretivist paradigm was employed in the study using a mixed methods approach with two phases of data gathering. In Phase 1, an established Career Value Inventory (CVI) was utilised with fifty 5th year students. Phase 2 engaged twelve students in two focus groups from the same cohort of 5th year students. The overarching themes that emerged were (1) Perceptions of Career Values Identified (2) Male V’s Female Perspectives of Career Related Values and (3) Interventions in the Career Decision-Making (CDM) Process. The overall findings revealed that adolescents can have rich and insightful perceptions of their career values and express well-articulated opinions regarding how values could assist their career decision-making process.

This exploratory study concludes by recommending a review of current psychometric assessment instruments used with Senior Cycle students to include a Career Value Inventory (CVI). It also suggests that a guidance practitioner could include the topic of values in the narrative approach to guidance interventions which could enhance the career decision-making experience for students.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction
This chapter will introduce the topic being explored in this research study. It provides an overview of the aims, objectives, research secondary questions and outlines the researcher’s justification for the study. In addition, the positionality of the researcher is described as well as the methodology used. Finally, the chapter concludes by setting out a plan of the thesis.

1.1 Outline of the Research Topic
This study aims to explore the perceptions Senior Cycle students in a post-primary school have of their values in the context of career decision-making. To illuminate the focus of the study, key terms in the context of this research are briefly outlined.

The term ‘exploration’ was chosen in the title as the researcher endeavours to gain insight into perceptions students have of their values in the context of career decision-making. Additionally, it has emerged in research literature that few papers have been written on the topic of values and career decision-making, thus this study hopes to evoke a sense of curiosity around the topic of values in the field of guidance counselling. An exploration is also selected due to the nature of the methodology used in this study (see Chapter 3).

Values is a multifarious topic and this study aims to explore values in the context of career decisions students may make. Bardi and Goodwin (2011, p.272) describe values as ‘what is important to people in their lives, they guide perception, goals, attitudes and behaviour’. Although values are widely viewed as central to the selection of, and subsequent satisfaction with life roles, no conceptual framework has been advanced to guide the work of practitioners and researchers, values are widely ignored by both groups (Brown and Crace, 1996). However, a guidance practitioner will understand that adolescence in itself can present as a challenging period in one’s development (Boyd and Bee 2009) where the young person is transitioning biologically, cognitively and socially (Steinberg 2008), possibly including value change (Bardi and Goodwin 2011). A detailed study conducted by Brown and Crace (1996) concludes that values should be accorded a central place in the career counselling process. This is supported by further investigations which state that values do have an impact on the counselling process (Cottone & Tarvydas 2007; Sperry 2008).
1.2 Context and Justification for the Study

Guidance counselling in post-primary schools in Ireland incorporates three areas; personal development, educational guidance and career guidance (DES 2005b). According to Heckinger (1992, p. 22), ‘all adolescents are at a crossroad, these crucial years offer an opportunity to transform a period of high risk into one of high hopes’. The role of the guidance counsellor as set out by the IGC (2014) is to facilitate personal choices made throughout the lifespan and in doing so ‘assist clients to develop self-awareness of their personal values, attitudes, beliefs and those of others’ and assist individuals in their career decision-making process (IGC 2014, p.11) also ‘the one-to-one personal interview is a necessary first step in attempting to establish an understanding of the client’s present circumstances, as well as an appreciation of his/her personality, values, attitudes, interests, ambitions, motivations and barriers perceived’(IGC 2014 p.12). Additionally, the guidance counsellor will demonstrate the ability to describe work/life balance in the context of lifespan career development by understanding that individuals, their values and the environment are interdependent. The guidance counsellor can also conduct a needs assessment by ‘assisting individuals to identify their work-related interests, skills, knowledge and values’ (IGC 2014, p.10).

The various assessment instruments used by guidance counsellors in post-primary schools in Ireland are set out in the DES Circular 0034/2015 sent to schools in 2015, it also states that the list ‘is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive’. Other assessment instruments which are not listed may also be used if deemed appropriate to identify students ‘needs’ (DES 2015, p.1). The current research illuminates this quasi-legal document that presents an anomaly between policy and practice. The researcher is thus presenting a position where values may be considered as a supporting assessment instrument in guidance counselling in post-primary schools in Ireland. Furthermore, there appears to be a deficit in empirical research regarding the perceptions of adolescents’ values in the context of their career decision-making.

1.3 Positionality of the Researcher

According to Thomas (2013) the ‘positionality’ of the researcher is a significant aspect to the study. Due to the exploratory nature of this study a mixed methods approach is employed and this section aims to contextualise the researcher’s position in the study. As a post-primary teacher with twenty years teaching experience, the researcher has gained invaluable insights into adolescent development. The researcher has a genuine interest in personal development which as previously stated is one of three areas in guidance counselling in post-primary schools.
in Ireland (DES 2005b). Additionally, this study allows the voice of the student to be captured and expressed which the researcher very much enjoyed and values. However, reflexivity was carefully considered to ensure validity in the study (Creswell 2009) (see Chapter 3).

1.4 Research Aim
The overall aim of this study is to explore the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values in the context of career decision-making.

1.5 Research Objectives
The overall research aim was accomplished by fulfilling the following research objectives:

1. Review the literature concerning personal value-systems and outlining the characteristics of personal value-systems.
2. Explore the intrinsic and extrinsic influences on career decision-making
3. Use qualitative and quantitative methods to capture the voice of adolescents in relation to their career values.
4. Discuss the implication of the finding in this research on the post primary guidance counselling service provided in Ireland.

1.6 Research Secondary Questions
1. What are the characteristics of values that adolescents identify with?
2. How do other people, for example, teachers, peers and parents’ impact on post-primary Senior Cycle students’ career decisions?
3. How can career development theories and interventions assist post primary students in the career decision-making process?
4. What are the implications for Guidance Counsellors in understanding the students’ perceptions of their value-systems?

1.7 Research Methodology
A mixed methods approach underpins this study as it seeks to explore perceptions of post-primary students’ values in the context of their career-decision-making. To gain a broad understanding of the students’ perceptions and the career decision-making process both quantitative and qualitative approaches are employed in this study. However, greater focus is placed on an interpretivist paradigm as it is a study about adolescent perceptions of values. The
data was gathered during two phases, Phase 1: A Career Value Inventory (CVI) was used with fifty 5th year male and female students. Phase 2: Two focus groups with six participants in each group.

1.8 Plan of Thesis
The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces the research topic and identifies the primary research aim and objectives. It outlines the context and justification for the study and describes the positionality of the researcher within the study. The methodology employed in the research is detailed and finally a plan of the thesis is presented.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature on the topic being explored. A critical evaluation of three main areas are discussed:
1. An overview of value-systems that may influence adolescence.
2. An overview of the literature on adolescent development.
3. An examination of the relationship between career theories and adolescent development.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology and methods that underpin the research design. The research paradigm, method of data collection and analysis, reflexivity, sampling of participants, validity/reliability and ethical considerations pertaining to the study are presented.

Chapter 4 discusses how the data was analysed and the main findings of Phase 1 & Phase 2 are presented.

Chapter 5 presents a critical interpretation and synthesis of the research findings with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6 concludes the research study by summarising the main findings within the context of the primary aim and objectives of the study. The strengths and weaknesses of the study are also outlined along with implications for practice and the researchers’ personal learning. Finally, recommendations in terms of practice, policy and future research are presented.
1.9 Conclusion
This aim of this chapter was to introduce the research topic. It provided a contextual overview of the topic and presented the researchers’ justification and interest in the research. The positionality of the researcher along with the primary aim, objectives, research secondary questions and plan of the thesis is outlined.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction
The literature review will span over three areas; 1. An overview of value systems that may influence adolescence 2. An overview of the literature on adolescent development 3. An examination of the relationship between career theories and adolescent development. This chapter presents a brief context of these three areas and following this the main theorists will be discussed in detail.

2.1 Value Systems
The first section of this review endeavours to provide an overview of value systems that may influence adolescence as they navigate this key stage of their development. According to Collin’s dictionary a value system ‘is the set of values according to which people, a society, or organization regulate their behaviour’ (Dictionary 1991). The term value has many interpretations and there seems to be no universally set definition. Depending upon the terrain in question the subject of values has been evaluated with multidisciplinary lenses. In the basic literature on life span development, adolescence is considered a time of considerable change, undergoing biological, cognitive, and social transitions, possibly including value change (Steinberg 2008). However, according to Döring and Hillbrink (2015, p.78) ‘despite adolescence being a time when behavior and attitudes are constantly being rethought and value priorities being established, there is hardly any research addressing how values are reshaped during this sensitive period’. Bardi and Schwartz (1996) have suggested that greater value change should be expected in young compared to older adults because the value system of older adults is already strongly crystallized, has many connections to other cognitions, and is therefore more difficult to change. In other words, the values of older adults are likely to be embedded in stronger and more centralised schemas.

2.1.1 Adolescent Development
The second section aims to provide a brief overview of the literature on adolescent development from a traditional and a contemporary perspective. Adolescence is considered in western culture as a bridge between childhood and adulthood (Naughton 2000) wherein the ultimate destination of adulthood is reached having completed a ‘metamorphosis of the person as a child into a new person as an adult’ (Gelard and Gelard, 2010, p.4). According to Lounsbury (2000) these are the years during which each individual forms his/her adult
personality, basic values, and attitudes - those things that determine one's behavior. It is therefore crucial that the guidance counsellor has both knowledge and understanding of the human development theories that underpin adolescent development and that influence their practice as guidance counsellors. Developmental psychologists have studied this period of dynamic change from a physical, emotional and psychological perspective. Their theories have contributed to a greater understanding of adolescent behavioural patterns, their role in the family, in the community and in the wider society. This section will form a foundation of knowledge for further illumination in the third section in relation to career decision-making.

2.1.2 Career Theories

This third section sets out to examine the relationship between career theories and adolescent development. It also aims to identify which career interventions can be used by the guidance counsellor in a post primary school. Various career theories will be outlined, including Super’s Lifespan Theory (1954), Holland’s Career Typology (1959), Ginzberg’s Career Development Theory (1951), Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (1996) and Career learning Theory (1996). These theoretical concepts were developed in the USA, therefore most of the reviews covering these frameworks are drawn from American literature (Leung 2008). According to Hearne et al. (2016, p.24) ‘the OECD has been a major player in guidance policy formation in the last two decades’ and their research in 2002 articulated that there is a need for stronger emphasis on career guidance in the Irish system (OECD 2004). Guidance provision is set out in the DES Circular (2005b) however, according to McCoy et al. (2006) there is a lack of an overall policy framework for guidance counselling provision in the post-primary sector. To facilitate students in the career decision-making (CDM) process, pertinent policies published by the Department of Education and Science (DES), the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Irish Guidance Counsellors (IGC), among others will be reviewed. The Department of Education and Science (2005) refers to guidance in schools as,

‘a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence, that assist students to develop self-management skills which will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses the three separate, but interlinked, areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance’.

(DES 2005, pg. 4)
According to Killeen (1996, p.23) ‘career theory is a source of guidance strategies and techniques, and can offer a rational for guidance to those who control its destiny’.

2.2 Value-Systems and Adolescent Development

The historical perspectives of values will firstly be explored, placing focus on those that are prevalent during adolescent development. According to the American Psychological Association, (2002) adolescent development can be seen as stages of physical, cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural development, factors such as gender and culture needs also to be considered. Schwartz (1996, p. 2) has described values ‘as guiding principles in people’s lives’ thus the significance of using values as an evaluative instrument by the guidance counsellor should be explored as it has implications for his work in a post primary school. Kidd and Watts (1996, p.1) states that ‘the main aim of career guidance is to help people with their career decision-making’. Duane Brown (1995) formulated a model of career development based on the importance of values in career decision-making. His values based model draws on the work of Rokeach (1973), Super (1953, 1990) and Beck (1987).

The topic of values has been researched across many disciplines. ‘Historically, values have been important to scholars exploring the nature of the self and the individual's relationship to society’ (Hitlin 2003, p.119). The classic conception of values in anthropology was introduced by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). In their view, values answer basic existential questions, helping to provide meaning in people’s lives. In sociology, values are believed to help ease the conflict between individual and collective interests (Parsons and Shils 1951). And Grube et al. (1994, p.155) argues that, ‘values play a particularly important role because they are cognitive representations of individual needs and desires, on the one hand, and of societal demands on the other’. Although many formal definitions of values have been advanced across various disciplines, theorists capture the characteristics of values as follows;

1. Values are beliefs. But they are not objective, cold ideas. Rather, when values are activated, they become infused with feeling.
2. Values refer to desirable goals (e.g., equality) and to the modes of conduct that promote these goals (e.g., fairness, helpfulness).
3. Values transcend specific actions and situations. Obedience, for example, is relevant at work or in school, in sports or in business, with family, friends or strangers.
4. Values serve as standards to guide the selection or evaluation of behavior, people, and events.
5. Values are ordered by importance relative to one another. The ordered set of values forms a system of value priorities. Cultures and individuals can be characterised by their systems of value priorities.


One of the founding figures and perhaps most influential in research literature on values is Milton Rokeach (1968). Rokeach developed an instrument to compare an individual’s commitment to a set of values, it has been widely used in the measurement of values (Mayton et al. 1994). The central claim of this instrument is that values are important because they guide people’s behavior (Rokeach 1973). That claim strongly corresponds with the role of a guidance counsellor in a post primary setting who serves as a co-explorer and guide towards helping students with their career decision-making process.

The Rokeach Value Survey (1973) has been used by numerous researchers to explore many facets of values, such as the relationship between values and behavior, the role of values in justifying attitudes, and the extent to which people remain committed to particular values over time. His theory is that a person’s beliefs, attitudes, and values must be in harmony with one another and are interconnected with one another (Eckardt 1970). When we consider these three main variables, beliefs, attitudes and values, which are psychological characteristics impacting on one’s behavior, it may be suggested that Rokeach’s theory contains a psychological perspective while considering the phenomena of career decision-making. Therefore, the theory clearly utilises a perspective that examines how an individual’s psychological characteristics affect and directly influence his or her behavior (Sereno and Bodaken, 1975). Accordingly, it is hoped that guidance counselling within the post-primary setting will empower young people to be autonomous when making cogent decisions and choices about their lives and facilitate their own development (ACCS et al. 2012). What is more, values permeate the counselling process and can influence counsellors’ decision-making and behaviors during the therapeutic relationship (Corey et al. 2007). However, it is important the counsellor understands s/he must honour and promote the fundamental rights, moral and cultural values, dignity and worth of clients (IGC 2012a).

Following on from the theory of Rokeach (1973), Schwartz (1992) proposed a theory on the content and structure of human values. He asserts that values can have a different meaning for all of us. ‘A particular value may be very important to one person but unimportant to another.’
It is worthwhile examining the characteristics of values as they are considered to influence most if not all motivated behavior (Connor and Becker 1979). This research is supported by Schwartz (2012, p.17) when he states that ‘values are critical motivators of behaviors and attitudes’. His theory, a widely used and validated theory of values, identifies ten basic, motivationally distinct values ‘that people in virtually all cultures implicitly recognise’. (Schwartz 2012, p.16). Values, he asserts are one important, especially central component of our self and personality, distinct from attitudes, beliefs, norms, and traits.

People’s age, education, gender, and other characteristics largely determine the life circumstances to which they are exposed. These include their socialisation and learning experiences, the social roles they play, the expectations and sanctions they encounter, and the abilities they develop. Thus, differences in background characteristics represent differences in the life circumstances that affect value priorities.

(Schwartz 2012, p.26)

Individuals differ in the importance they attribute to various values and accordingly values differ in the type of motivational goals they express (Sagiv 2002). Values are the major factor in motivation because they form the basis for attributing worth to situations and objects (Feather, 1992; Rokeach, 1973). It is important for the guidance counsellor to understand that concept because much of his/her work is done in a motivational capacity. Schools and vocational environments vary in the opportunities they provide for individuals to express their values and attain the goals they represent. Hence, value priorities are likely to influence career decisions and their effectiveness. Information regarding values (i.e., instruments measuring value priorities) may help clients and counsellors to understand the client’s character (Sagiv 2002). Thomas (2013) discuss the concept that values influence on decision-making has not gone unnoticed by scholars whose research has explored the role that values play. Furthermore, Ferrell and Gresham (1985) cited values and attitudes as individual factors that influence decision-making.

Although values have been acknowledged as central to the career choice process (Rounds 1990) no theoretical statements about values have been forthcoming to guide the work of guidance counsellors (Brown and Crace, 1996). There is almost no empirical research that demonstrates how and why values change in individuals, especially during adolescence (Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 1992; Hirschi 2010). According to Hofmann-Towfigh (2007) there
are no articles published known to him that have measured change in values in a school setting and the author suggests that such research would be of great relevance for educational research as it would enhance the understanding of adolescent development. Much of the research around the career decision-making process focuses on interests, particularly, occupational interests, (Holland 1959). Smith and Campbell (2009, p.53) suggests ‘when making career decisions, individuals may fail to consider less tangible, yet important aspects such as values’. Ravlin and Meglino (1987) carried out a study on the effects of values on perceptions and decision-making and their findings show that there is support for a theory of values in which they are found to influence perceptions and act as a guide to decision-making. Crace and Brown (2002) has advanced the literature on values by presenting a proposition outlining the function of values on the decision-making process and their impact on the outcomes of those choices. The model assumes three types of values - cultural, work, and life values. Cultural values can be subdivided into five categories of social relations, time, relationship to nature, activity, and self-control. Work values are those values that clients expect to fulfil as a result of choosing and entering an occupation. Life values are those values that clients expect to have satisfied because of the choices they make in their major life roles, such as work, leisure, citizen, and relationships to significant others. Understanding these three types of values provides career counsellors with the information needed for lifestyle planning (Brown et al. 2006). According to Hirschi,

    teachers and counsellors could engage students in discussions about what is personally important for one’s work and life. Critical reflections and discussions about how different aspects of work (e.g., pay, variety, helping others) would result in an increased quality of work and life could engage students in raising their awareness of and appreciation for the value of work.

    (Hirschi 2010, p.14)

The experience of work is multifaceted and researchers consider how factors such as value attainment, attitudes towards job satisfaction and work moods interact and have consequences for the work experience for the individual and the organisation (George and Jones 1996). This view is supported by Lewin (1951) who posits that the extent to which a job or organization helps or hinders individuals from attaining values is a significant aspect of their experience of work, as values are the guideposts that provide meaning to work experiences. Furthermore, Leuty and Hansen (2012) articulates that the relationships between work values and other
constructs also have implications for practice. Providing information on work values may enhance career counselling, as this information can provide a deeper understanding of different occupational choices beyond information on vocational interests and personality. As Super (1970) and Dawis and Lofquist (1984) suggest, inclusion of work values in career decision-making can help counsellors meet their goal of assisting clients with selecting occupations that are likely to be satisfying, as work value correspondence predicts job satisfaction (Rounds, 1990). Current research supports the notion that work values are distinct from other constructs, thus, career professionals are encouraged to include work values in their interventions. Different careers are underpinned by different values, (Singh et al. 2011) and these values are a major influence on the career paths students may pursue and on their long-term career satisfaction (Willis et al. 2009).

Finally, values may be defined uncomplicatedly as what is important to us. Lewin (1951) explains that values serve a very important purpose of providing some meaning, some direction, some self-evolved authority for guidance, without which community life would be chaos, and individual life would be rendered meaningless.

2.3 Adolescent Development - Traditional & Contemporary Perspectives

Stanley Hall (1844-1924), was the first psychologist to advance a psychology of adolescence. The traditional perspective of adolescence is depicted in Hall's (1904) view that adolescence is a period of heightened ‘storm and stress’ which had a tendency towards being universal and biologically based (Arnett 1999). According to Hall adolescence ‘corresponds to a time when the human race was in a turbulent transitional stage’ (Muuss 1988, p.33). However, contemporary perspectives suggest that traditional views on adolescence may have been unduly restrictive (McCroy et al. 2016). Adolescence is a time where puberty occurs, social, emotional, moral and cognitive changes take place, identity is formed and sexuality explored, where transitions into primary school can unearth many, if not all of these changes. Topics on this subject that dominate research include adolescent problem behavior, parent-adolescent relations, puberty, the development of the self and peer relations (Steinberg and Morris 2001). According to Reid & Westergaard (2011) through the guidance service, counselling can help young people to identify, own and investigate their emotions, consider the impact their feelings have on their thoughts and behaviour and to reassure them that the strength of their emotional responses is a normal part of adolescence.
Steinberg and Morris (2001) regard the late 1980’s and early 1990’s as a period where researchers drew attention towards aspects of the lifespan that were characterised by dramatic changes due to increased influence of ‘the ecological perspective of human development’ (Bronfenbrenner 1977). During this same period, the study of problem behaviour continued to dominate the literature on adolescent development despite frequent reminders that adolescence is not a period of ‘normative disturbance’, and accumulating evidence that most teenagers weather the challenges during adolescence without developing significant social, emotional, or behavioral difficulties (Steinberg 2005). Arnett (1999) says that there is support for Hall's (1904) view that a tendency toward some aspects of storm and stress exists in adolescence but not characterised only by storm and stress.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) believed that adolescence was a universal phenomenon and included behavioral, social and emotional changes as well as influences on the self-image (Muuss 1988). Freud discussed adolescence in terms of psychosexual changes and stated that the physiological changes are related to emotional changes, especially an increase in negative emotions, such as moodiness, anxiety, loathing, tension and other forms of adolescent behaviour (Muuss 1988). Freud, like Hall viewed storm and stress as universal and stated that ‘to be normal during the adolescent period is to be itself abnormal’ (Freud 1958, p.267). However, a more contemporary perspective is that a substantial amount of adolescent storm and stress arises from regulating the pace of adolescents' growing independence (Steinberg 1987). There is further criticism from contemporary scholars who disagree with the psychoanalytical theorists of the past, for example, Anna Freud (1895-1982) who claimed that storm and stress is universal and inevitable (Arnett 1999).

Erik Erikson (1902-1994), a leading developmental theorist. The core concept of Erikson's theory is the acquisition of an ego-identity, and the identity crisis is the most essential characteristic of adolescence. Adolescence is described by Erikson as the period during which the individual must establish a sense of personal identity and avoid the dangers of role diffusion and identity confusion (Erikson, 1950). He outlined eight stages of development and suggested that the period of adolescence was crucial (Engler 2007). The adolescent state of confusion recognized by Erikson is defined by Corey (1996) as a period when, ‘adolescents struggle to define who they are, where they are going, and how to get there. If they fail to achieve a sense of identity, role confusion is the result’ (Corey 1996, p.105).
Only through the achievement of these aspects of ego-identity can it be possible for the adolescent to move into ‘adult maturity’, achieve intimacy of sexual and affectional love, establish deep friendships, and achieve personal self-abandon without fear of loss of ego identity.

(Muuss 1988, p.66)

Establishing a sense of identity has traditionally been thought of as the central task of adolescence (Erikson 1950), although it is now commonly accepted that identity formation neither begins nor ends during adolescence. Adolescence is the first time, however, when individuals have the cognitive capacity to consciously sort through who they are and what makes them unique (APS 2002).

Contemporary theorists hold the perspective that development during adolescence is a continual process and interactions between different outcomes of development remains paramount. Durlak et al. (2011) posits that cognitive functioning does not occur in isolation from personal and social development. Several aspects of school achievement are influenced by a combination of factors, including not only cognitive influences but also motivation, attitudes, beliefs, school environment, peer influences and family factors. In support of this line of argument, there is strong evidence that social and emotional programmes can enhance students’ academic performance (Durlak et al. 2011). Piaget’s (1896-1980) ideas on cognitive development had a major impact on the theory and practice of education, particularly his notion that adolescence is the stage of formal operations that allow for the development of inductive and deductive reasoning (McCoy et al. 2016). However, major criticisms of Piaget’s theory include his neglect of the importance of culture and social guidance. For that reason, Vygotsky’s (1896-1934) views became more influential, since a central premise of his work is that development and educational achievement are strongly associated with input from the social environment. He argued that learning takes place when children and adolescents are working within the zone of proximal development. For that reason, the most influential concepts in cognitive development and educational outcomes centre on Vygotsky’s concepts, including scaffolding, cognitive apprenticeship and cooperative learning (Rogoff 2003).

A later theorist, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) expanded human development from looking at the individual to exploring the ecological systems in their own environment. Salkind (2004) suggests that Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of development shows how all the factors are
related to each other and impact on the development cycle. Accordingly, Bronfenbrenner’s theory considers the adolescents’ environment which plays a pivotal role in their developmental process. It is important that a guidance counsellor understands the students’ environment as it may provide a basis for understanding their development. Although Christensen (2010) suggests that Bronfenbrenner’s theory has proven to be beneficial in providing an insight into all the factors that play a role in the growth and development of individuals, he is critical that ‘resilience is not a dimension that is included in Bronfenbrenner’s model’ (Christensen 2010, p.105). According to Engler (2007) resilience is a perception that certain people have an innate ability to overcome any obstacles, shown through positive thinking, goal orientation, educational aspirations, motivation, persistence and optimism. It has been argued that it should be integrated into Bronfenbrenner’s model as it gives a better understanding of an individual’s ability for overcoming negative influences and situations (Engler 2007). Furthermore, Kohlberg stages of Moral Development argues that morality can be developed either positively or negatively, depending how an individual executes various tasks during different stages of moral development across the lifespan (Durkin 1995). Kohlberg’s (1973) Theory of Moral Reasoning outlined three levels with two distinct stages in each level, pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. During the second stage, an adolescents’ development is tied to personal and societal influences while the third stage, an individual’s sense of morality may be related to external principles and values (Kohlberg 1981). According to O’Flaherty & Gleeson (2014) and O’Flaherty and Doyle (2014) regardless of the career path that students embark upon once they graduate, they will be faced with having to resolve moral dilemmas in both their personal and working lives.

In the period referred to as the ‘second phase’ of the scientific study of adolescence, Lerner et al (2009) point to changing perspectives occurring in the 1960’s. Greater emphasis was placed on social changes, development was regarded as more diverse in contrast to earlier developmental theories which were often polarised and focused on a singular aspect of development. According to Cairns and Cairns (1998), by the mid-1960s, developmental psychology favoured dynamic developmental models, referencing to concepts such as social interaction, family relations and social learning theory concept such as Bandura’s ‘modelling’ were introduced (Bandura 2001). Montemayor (1983) and Santrock’s (2003) studies found that as adolescents struggle to find greater autonomy, they spend less time with their parents and during this time greater parent-adolescent conflict is normal. Friendships are important
relationships that are formed during adolescence. However, Smyth et al. (2004) point out that the transition from primary to post-primary school is a time not only of social adjustment but also of an encounter with a range of different learning experiences and therefore the school and the student need to be supported accordingly. Bishop & Inderbitzen (1995) states that peer groups serve several important functions throughout adolescence, providing a temporary reference point for a developing sense of identity. Through identification with peers, adolescents begin to develop moral judgment and values. According to Durkin (1995, p.501) ‘both Paiget and Kohlberg (1927-1987) see morality as a social achievement, although one that is constrained by the development level of the individual’.

Daniel Offer (1929-2013) coined the term the ‘universal adolescent’ to describe somebody who is happy most of the time and enjoys life (Offer et al. 1996). Durkin (1995) points out that it is not surprising, due to various factors at play, that there is no unifying theory of adolescent development but this is a phase of life that is given much research attention. A guidance counsellor should incorporate elements from development theorists, traditional and contemporary perspectives, to underpin their practice which will help aid in the development of the emotional, social and vocational identity of the adolescent.

2.4 Career Decision-Making and Implications for the Guidance Counsellor

It is important for the guidance counsellor to have a broad knowledge and understanding of career theories and career decision-making interventions that underpins their work with post-primary Senior Cycle students. According to Herr and Cramer (1996) there have been many theories to explain career development. It had been defined as,

the lifelong psychological and behavioural processes as well as contextual influences shaping one’s career over the life span. As such, career development involves the person’s creation of a career pattern, decision-making style, integration of life roles, values expression, and life-role self-concept.

(Herr and Cramer 1996)

However Bright and Pryor (2007, p.292) note that ‘career theorists are increasingly interested in approaches that characterise the individual and the environment in more complex and dynamic terms than the traditional person-environment approaches’. Furthermore, Gati and Tal (2008) recognise that although it is natural to refer to career choices as acts of decision-making,
this approach has not been adopted as the dominant framework for career guidance and
counselling but instead the literature analyses career development theories. This section begins
by outlining a number of career development theories. The implications for the use of career
decision approaches in the work of guidance practitioner will also be considered.

2.4.1 Career as a Matching Process

In 1909 Parson developed the first conceptual framework for career decision-making, then
career development theory truly took shape (Brown 2002). Parsons’s theory (1909) described
three key factors in making career choices: (1) clear self-understanding, (2) knowledge of
occupations, and (3) the ability to draw relationships between them. He reasoned that if
individuals possess these attributes, not only would they make appropriate choices for
themselves but the production function of society would be served by promoting greater
efficiency in matching persons to occupations (Peterson et al. 2002). Parsons framework is still
used today and led to the Trait and Factor Theory of career development. According to Inkson
and Elkin (2008) Parson was writing in an ostensibly stable environment. Environmental
factors have changed dramatically since then and Savickas et al. (2009, p.2) postulates ‘the
core concepts of 20th century career theories and vocational guidance techniques must be
reformulated to fit the post-modern economy. Current approaches are insufficient’. This
research suggests that current career development theories and techniques face a crisis in that
their fundamental assumption of predictability based on stability and stages is debatable and,
more importantly, may no longer be functional.

Parson’s theory was expanded by Holland (1959) in his Person-Environment Fit Theory. The
theory’s core idea is that most people resemble a combination of six personality types:
Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (RIASEC), (Nauta
2010). It also suggests that ‘career choice and career adjustment represents an extension of a
person’s personality’ (Sharf 2011, p.129). According to Reardon & Lenz, (1999) this
intervention can be implemented when working on career decision-making frameworks with
young people. There are other instruments, for example, Career Interest Inventory instruments
that compliment Holland’s theory which together can seek occupations for people that are
congruent with their interests. By evaluating and matching personality types to specific careers
using Holland’s theory, we can narrow the exploration process and allow students more
exposure to careers that match their interests. While recognising the value of this intervention,
Kidd (2006) considers Hollands’ use of ‘fit’ as oversimplified and suggests that guidance counsellors must remember that it does not guarantee a ‘fit’. The guidance counsellor must also remember that the young people they work with will change and mature and that their environments may possibly also change. Sharf (2013, p.433) regards trait and factor theory as the ‘simplest and least sophisticated career development theory that provides few guidelines for counsellors’. Despite this criticism, the trait and factor approach has remained a dominant force in the field with Zunker (2011, p. 27) concluding that it has an ‘important role in future career development theory and career counselling’. Similarly, Brown (2002) states that Hollands comprehensive trait-factor theory is the most influential model of vocational choice making that is currently in existence.

2.4.2 Career as a Developmental Process

The concept of career development was first advanced by Ginzberg et al. (1951) who proposed that occupational choice is a developmental process that occurs over a number of years (Patton and McMahon 2014). Ginzberg later revised the theory to recognise occupational choice as a lifelong process of decision-making (Ginzberg 1972, 1984). This theory was the first to include stages of childhood as important in career choice. His theory suggested that occupational choice is an ongoing process that involves the individual passing through three stages, the fantasy stage, the tentative stage and the realistic stage. Through these stages of exploration, adolescents are influenced by many factors, including but not exclusively, parents, teachers and peers (Ginzberg 1988). Ginzberg suggested that parents should be more involved in the career planning process with their children, ‘no adolescent ever makes an occupational choice alone’ (Ginzberg 1988, p.362).

Amongst the most acclaimed life-span developmental theories is Super’s Theory of Vocational Choice which suggests that individuals pass through six stages of vocational development. A key component of this theory is the idea of ‘self-concept’. Super recognised that an individuals’ self-concept alters and develops during their lives, mainly due to experience. The self-concept expands over time and attitudes towards the world of work changes (Super 1957). Sharf (1997) suggests that Super’s developmental theory (1957) depends on the integration of self-concept and information about the world of work. This was expanded further by Savickas (2004, p.155) who postulated that ‘the process of career construction is essentially that of developing and implementing vocational self-concepts in work roles’. Another central concept of Super’s theory is vocational maturity, this is important for the guidance counsellor to understand as it
refers to the readiness of individuals to make good choices in relation to their occupations. Super considered both self-concept and vocational maturity to be vital components of occupational choices (Super 1957). Critics point out that Super’s theory does not consider the role changes that have taken place in the last decades, especially for women (Sharf 2010).

2.4.3 Career as a Social Learning Behaviour

Lent et al. (2000) advanced the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) which represents a relatively new effort to understand the processes through which people form interests, make choices, and achieve varying levels of success in educational and occupational pursuits (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) as cited in Lent et al. (2000). SCCT is closely linked to Bandura’s (1986) self-efficacy theory and focuses on a person’s belief that they can successfully accomplish something (Lent et al. 1986). According to Sharf (2010) self-efficacy, combined with the influence of prior learning experiences, affect an individual’s belief in themselves and ultimately their career decision-making. SCCT focuses on several cognitive variables (e.g., self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals), and on how these variables interact with other aspects of the person and his or her environment (e.g., gender, ethnicity, social supports, and barriers) to help shape the course of career development (Lent et al. 2000). The theory analyses the link between people and the environment. Betz and Luzzo (1996) stated that a recent focus of assessment, intervention, and research in the general area of career beliefs and attitudes has been on self-efficacy expectations with respect to career decision-making. Similarly, Krumboltz et al. (1976) viewed the career development process from a behavioral perspective and argued that career decisions stem from learning experiences. This theory explained how an individual assimilates information, learns from experience and develops the skills of career choice and implementation (Baines 2009).

2.4.4 Career Learning Theory

Bill Law (1996) fused together various approaches to career development and adopted context of career learning in his theory. Because we live in an ever-changing dynamic world so too should the approaches to career learning change, the new DOTS by Bill Law (2000) reflects the changes. Law states that contemporary career management must take account of global economic and technological change (Law 2000).

Planned Happenstance Theory may be considered as an amendment to the learning theory of career counselling (Krumboltz 1996), which Krumboltz (2009) outlined as an advancement of
the social learning theory of career decision-making. It examines a range of learning experiences through a person’s life and not just one career decision. Kim et al. (2014, p.240) interpret Planned Happenstance as ‘enriching the Career Guidance process to include the transformation and creation of unplanned events that become opportunities for learning’. Hansen (2001) describes this paradoxical approach to decision-making, which involves creating and transforming unplanned or chance events into career opportunities. This theory incorporates many factors, each of which has a different impact on the person in his or her career decision-making. At the core of this theory is the fact that unpredictable social factors, chance events and environmental factors are important influences on clients’ lives (Mitchell et al. 1999). As such, the counsellor’s role is to help clients approach chance conditions and events positively. In particular, counsellors should foster in their clients; curiosity to explore learning opportunities, persistence to deal with obstacles, flexibility to address a variety of circumstances and events and optimism to maximise benefits from unplanned events (Krumboltz 1996).

Another relatively recent career theory is the Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM).

KCM describes how individuals change the patterns of their careers by rotating the varied aspects of their lives in order to arrange their relationships and roles in new ways. Individuals evaluate the choices and options available through the lens of the kaleidoscope to determine the best fit among work demands, constraints, and opportunities as well as relationships and personal values and interests. As one decision is made, it affects the outcome of the kaleidoscope career pattern. (Sullivan et al. 2009)

According to this theory people are motivated by three central parameters:

- Authenticity — a need to be genuine and to act in ways congruent with their values
- Balance — the need for a more balanced family life
- Challenge — the need for exciting, stimulating work

(Mainiero and Sullivan 2006)

These parameters act as a signpost throughout a person’s career. Each one serves as a decision-making parameter that can cause a pivot in thinking about the importance of a career at that particular point in time (Mainiero and Sullivan 2006). Tajili (2014) acknowledges using this theory as helpful when differentiating between career decision-making for men and women. He suggests that their challenges are different and because of ‘work-family conflict’ (Bimbose et al. 2013), there is a need to tailor career guidance to fit women to allow for other priorities.
that take place across the lifespan. Implications for a guidance practitioner using this theory is that he or she should understand that career counselling is a lifelong process and not a once-off event (Mitchell et al., 1999; Krumboltz & Levin, 2004). However, limitations of this theory have been identified by Brown (1990) who argues that the biggest weakness of the theory is its failure to account for job change. He notes that although Krumboltz’s theory is currently not a major influence on either research or the practice of career counselling, this seems likely to change since it is attractive in different respects to both researchers and practitioners (Brown 1990, p.357).

2.5 Summary of the Literature

The first section of this literature review highlighted that although values have been acknowledged as central to the career choice process (Rounds 1990) no theoretical statements about values have been forthcoming to guide the work of guidance counsellors (Brown and Crace, 1996). Rokeach (1973), Schwartz (1996), Super (1953, 1990) and Brown (1995) among other authors state that values can be used as guiding principles in peoples’ lives, furthermore, (Connor and Becker (1979) set out how values can influence almost all motivational behaviour, which is a key part of adolescent development. However, all pertinent policy in relation to career guidance practice makes no reference to using values as a career decision-making instrument or a psychometric assessment (DES 2015), (PSI 2006). The researcher is left to ponder why not?

The second section set out to outline theoretical perspectives of adolescent development. The guidance service in Irish post-primary schools involves personal, educational and vocational guidance and counselling (Coyle and Dunne 2008), therefore it is essential the practitioner has a broad knowledge of human development theorists that underpins their practice. The traditional view of adolescent development was contrasted with more contemporary views. Several developmental theorists including Freud, Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, and Bronfenbrenner were discussed. An understanding of adolescent development is essential because it allows the guidance practitioner to fully appreciate the cognitive, emotional, physical, social and educational growth that adolescents go through from birth and into early adulthood. Contemporary perspectives on adolescent development include a deeper focus on social issues and peer influences. In addition, Junger (2008) found that parents have a strong influence over the career choices that their children make. Choosing a career could be a turning point in an adolescents’ life. While often perceived to be an individual choice, research suggests that a
variety of influences such as family, school, community, social and economic factors are likely to manipulate one's ultimate career decision (Ferry, 2006).

The final section examined theories of career development and career decision-making. Historically, stage theorists viewed career decision-making as a developmental process with little mention of external factors such as economic or societal, (Super 1953, 1990: Gottfredson 1996). There are critiques in the literature in relation to the traditional ‘fit’ models. Krumboltz and Mitchell (1996, p.263) conclude that 'trying to place an evolving person into the changing work environment is like trying to hit a butterfly with a boomerang'. Furthermore, they argue that matching individuals to particular environments assumes that individuals do not change, whereas in reality, individuals constantly change and develop. In fact, Kidd (2006) challenged traditional theorists to re-evaluate the role of guidance to help people develop skills for lifelong career management in a changing society.

There is ample advice for practicing career counsellors in the literature. According to Hirschi & Lage (2007) by noticing the needs and goals of students in career counselling, counsellors can not only determine which kind of intervention would be best suited for a specific client but they can also make implications concerning the career-choice readiness of the students and thus about the intensity of the required intervention.

The researcher understands that no single theory is comprehensive and the guidance counsellor needs to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each theory. The best use of career theories may be integrating them in to the field of practice in accordance with the unique needs of each student.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature in relation to three thematic areas; value-systems, adolescent development and career decision-making. The following chapter sets out the methodology of the study.
Chapter 3  Methodology

3.0  Introduction

This chapter outlines the philosophical paradigm and mixed methods approach that underpinned the research study. Careful consideration is given to various research methods and methodologies. Literature in this area makes a clear distinction, whereby Alastalo, (2008, p.26) describes methods as ‘the techniques of gathering and analysing data’ and Thomas (2013) suggests that methodology refers to the ‘study of methods’ where there are several different perspectives in the field of research. The study design of this research includes identification of primary and secondary research questions, discussion on methods of data collection and analysis, access and sampling of participants and analysis. Further discussion includes validity, reliability and reflexivity. Ethical considerations are also addressed.

3.1  Primary Research Question

The primary research question asks, ‘what perceptions of values do Senior Cycle students have?’ The objective in asking this question is to ascertain the extent to which values are related to the career decision-making process. In order to answer this question further secondary questions were addressed. According to McBurney and White (2009), research questions are a set of questions which lie at the core of the research with the purpose to address the issue and guide the researcher.

3.1.1  Secondary Research Questions

5.  What are the characteristics of values that adolescents identify with?
6.  How do other people, for example, teachers, peers and parents’ impact on post-primary Senior students’ career decisions?
7.  How can career development theories and interventions assist post-primary students in the career decision-making process?
8.  What are the implications for Guidance Counsellors in understanding the students’ perceptions of their value-systems?
The research questions aims to expand the title of this study, drawing particular focus on the relevance to practice of contemporary guidance counselling and the implications for the practitioners within the field. The overall aim of this study is to explore what perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values in the context of career decision-making and was accomplished by fulfilling the following research objectives.

3.1.2 Research Objectives

5. Review the literature concerning personal value-systems and outlining the characteristics of personal value-systems.
6. Explore the intrinsic and extrinsic influences on career decision-making
7. Use qualitative and quantitative methods to capture the voice of adolescents.
8. Discuss the implication of the findings in this research on the post-primary guidance counselling service provided in Ireland.

Blaikie (2000) advises that in choosing a research design, careful consideration should be given to the appropriate paradigm that will address the research questions. The following section explains why mixed methods research was chosen as the research design which underpinned this study.

3.2 Research Methodology

This section sets out to detail the research methodology applied to this study. Having considered the aims and objectives of this research a mixed methods approach was employed. This can be defined as research that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques, approaches and concepts (Hayes and Morgan 2011). Justification for the choice of approach arises from the exploratory nature of this study.

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), methodology refers to how the researcher goes about practically finding out whatever he or she believes can be known. Myers (2009) describes the research method as a strategy of enquiry, which moves from the underlying assumptions to research design, and data collection. Additionally, Guba (1981, p.76) suggests that ‘it is proper to select that paradigm whose assumptions are best met by phenomenon being investigated’ when selecting a research methodology.
Seed (1990) posits there has been a polarisation in the debates of research in education between methodologies of quantitative and qualitative research and analysis, or between positivist and naturalistic approaches that illuminate the fact that how one speaks of things in the world reflects how one thinks about the world. Galvin (2012) asserts that there are predominately two main types of research approaches in education and guidance counselling, positivist (quantitative) and interpretivist (qualitative). Although these paradigms have encountered many acrimonious debates over the past 20 years,

It is fair to say that within education, the contrasting approaches have led to two differing research cultures, one emphasising rich, insightful data in contrast to the hard generalisable data of quantitative research. (Hayes and Morgan 2011, p.117)

3.3 Research Paradigm

In terms of research studies the term paradigm describes the researcher’s belief system and the way in which the researcher comprehends and conducts their research (Thomas 2013). Kuhn (1962) describes a paradigm as a way of observing or researching phenomenon through an accepted ‘model’, ‘pattern’ or as a ‘world view’ through a shared belief system or set of principles.

At one level, qualitative and quantitative refer to distinctions about the nature of knowledge: how one understands the world and the ultimate purpose of the research. On another level of discourse, the terms refer to research methods, that is, the way in which data are collected and analysed, and the type of generalisations and representations derived from the data. (Glesne 2015, p. 301)

Although a distinction is commonly drawn between these two types of research, McLeod (2011, p.73) points out that ‘many features of qualitative research can be found in certain quantitative studies’. In differentiating between the two, one can describe quantitative research as being an objective process based upon statistical evidence and contains numbers and statistics which are gathered by mathematical or computational procedures. Qualitative research differs in that it uses words rather than numbers and is divided into the gathering and the analysing of data (McLeod 2011).
Following a review of the literature, the researcher decided on using a mixed method approach that draws on both qualitative and quantitative research but focuses mainly on an interpretivist paradigm. Although according to Savickas (2011) guidance counselling research has been traditionally influenced by the psychology and psychiatry disciplines which generally adopt a positivist stance. Cohen et al. (2011, p.15) finds difficulty with this approach because it regards human behaviour as passive and in ‘essence controlled’. However, authors including Kidd (2006) and Bimrose and Hearne (2012) suggest that recent constructivist approaches in both career guidance and therapeutic counselling research use interpretivist approaches as they share similar values to most counselling practitioners.

3.3.1 A Positivist Paradigm: A Quantitative Approach

Positivism is a research paradigm associated with scientific theories. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008, p.36) ‘quantitative researchers try to operate under the assumption of objectivity’, in essence, the researcher attempts to study the phenomena that is of interest to them ‘from a distance’. It is the researchers aim to elicit responses which can be manipulated by statistical methods (Zhang, 2006). This is supported by Creswell (2009) who states that quantitative researchers believe that the reality is that constructed by the quantitative research results. The positivist paradigm asserts that real events can be observed empirically and explained with logical analysis and therefore bias is removed from the results. Accordingly, positivist researchers also attempt to remain detached from the participants of the research, by creating distance between themselves and the participants (Carson et al. 2001). The researcher recognises that an over-reliance by researchers on quantities measurement can misrepresent the connections between research and real life (Bryman 2007), that may be a limitation of this research.

3.3.2 An Interpretivist Paradigm: A Qualitative Approach

An interpretivist vision ‘assumes that the researcher is interested in people and how their worlds are constructed’ (Thomas 2013, p.108). This study explores the perceptions of Senior Cycle students and according to Geary and McNamara (2007, p19) ‘where research is focused on exploring attitudes and perceptions of participants, a method which facilitates depth of data collection, a qualitative approach that would incorporate a focus group would be considered most appropriate’. In agreement, Bell (2005) notes that researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand individuals’ perceptions of the world. Furthermore, Taylor et al. (2015) states that qualitative researchers are concerned with the
meaning people attach to things in their lives. The researcher empathises and identifies with the people they study in order to understand how these people see things, therefore, all perspectives are worthy of study. An advantage the researcher has identified is described by Mack et al. (2005) who argues that use of open-ended questions and probing gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses, as quantitative methods do. What is more,

Qualitative researchers claim that the experiences of people are essentially context-bound, that is, they cannot be free from time and location or the mind of the human actor. Researchers must understand the socially constructed nature of the world and realise that values and interests become part of the research process. (Richardson 1996)

However, according to Smith (1983) complete neutrality and objectivity are impossible to achieve; the values of researchers and participants can become an integral part of the research. Additionally, Merriam (2009, p.15) refers to another limitation associated with this paradigm when he describes the researcher in qualitative research as the ‘primary instrument’ but suggests that the shortcomings of the human instrument may be biased and therefore possibly impact the objectivity of the study.

3.4 Research Design
This study seeks to explore the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values and the extent to which they may influence their career decision-making. The researcher aims to get as broad an understanding as possible of the career decision-making process and ascertain if there is any connection between values and career decision-making. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used in this study. In the first phase of this study an established Career Value Inventory (CVI) was utilised with fifty 5th year students. The second phase engaged twelve students in two focus groups from the same cohort of 5th year students.

3.5 Triangulation
‘For the development of converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation and corroboration’ (Yin, 2009, p.115) was employed using quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher chose these methods to achieve triangulation and verify results. ‘One way to increase the validity, strength, and interpretative potential of a study, decrease investigator biases, and provide multiple perspectives is to use methods involving triangulation’ (Thurmond
2001, p.253). Therefore, triangulation is used in this study to explore the findings from the CVI together with emerging themes from the focus groups and discern any parallels or divergence that may be drawn between them in the study. This type of methodological triangulation is called *between methods triangulation* and involves the use of more than one method on the same object of the study (Cohen *et al.* 2011). This study triangulated quantitative and qualitative data from the CVI with data from the focus groups. The main strength of selecting this approach has been described by Cohen *et al.* (2011 p.115) ‘triangular techniques are also suitable when a more holistic view of education outcomes is sought’.

However, Blaikie (2000) has identified the incompatibility of research paradigms as a limitation of triangulation. In addition, Fielding and Fielding (1986) note that it may not necessarily reduce bias.

### 3.6 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

This section outlines the field work undertaken including access and recruitment of participants, the Career Value Inventory and use of focus groups. Validity, reliability, data analysis and ethical considerations will also be considered.

A letter containing a summary of the research and consent to participate was given to the students participating in the Career Value Inventory, (see Appendices C & D), parental information and consent was sent to parents, where applicable, (see Appendices G & H). Students participating in the focus groups were also given a summary of the research and consent forms, (see Appendices E & F), parental information and consent was sent to parents, where applicable, (see Appendices I & J). The school principal received an information sheet and a consent form, (see Appendices A & B).

#### 3.6.1 Access

The gate keeper in this research was the school Principal. Upon receiving Ethical Approval from the University of Limerick on the 8th March 2017, the gate keeper was given an information sheet and consent form (see Appendices A & B). According to McFadyen and Rankin (2016, p.87) ‘researchers need to involve the gatekeepers in advance planning for the study’. This early engagement clarifies the purpose of the research and helps alleviate any concerns.
The research for this study was carried out in a post-primary school in the West of Ireland which focused on 5th year students, pre-Leaving Certificate graduates. The study was undertaken during March to May 2017. Data collected for the study involved two phases.

Phase 1: The administration of a 20 minute Careers Values Inventory (from www.careerportal.ie). It was undertaken by 50 Senior Cycle students and took place in a computer room in the school during a timetabled Careers class.

Phase 2: Two 45-minute focus groups with six participants in each, they took place in a classroom. A topic guide was utilised to guide the discussion (see Appendix M). Focus Group data was collected by means of audio-taping. The content of the tapes was then transcribed.

3.6.2 Sampling
Sampling is described by McLeod (2011) as the process of how people are chosen to participate in a study from the total research population. A convenience sampling strategy was employed in the study. Phase 1 of the research was carried out in two selected Careers classes and took place on Thursday 16th March 2017. This was a ‘convenience sample’ as it was ‘a source of participants that is easily accessible to the researcher’ (Marczyk et al., 2005, p.83). Additionally, Bryman (2007) notes the benefit of this type of sample is the availability of respondents means that a good response rate will be assured.

Following on from this, eighteen students (from the CVI sample of 50 students) were invited to participate in focus groups. Sampling for the focus group was also by convenience as ‘the sample for a focus group has individuals with characteristics of the overall population and can contribute to helping the researcher gain a greater understanding of the topic’ (Nagle and Williams 2013).

Because more that twelve students volunteered random selection took place. Cohen et al. (2011, p.100) describes random sampling as selecting participants at random from a list of the population, and when used ‘each member of the population under study has an equal chance of being selected’.

3.6.3 Career Value Inventory (CVI) and Data Analysis
The CVI used is an established instrument and available for use on www.careersportal.ie. Consent to use the CVI was sought from CareersPortal.ie (see Appendix L). This is a self-assessment tool that allows participants to pinpoint what work values are important to them. Fifty 5th year male and female students, aged approximately 16-18 years old, took part in the inventory.

Brown and Crace (1996) point out that, ideally, values should be a central focus of the counselling process, and that clients should be encouraged to take a holistic view of their lives and values. Therefore, values associated with work are integral to making informed career/life decisions (Bobek and Gore, 2004). Additionally,

> Increased knowledge of one’s values and increased understanding of how those values relate to occupational options more accurately informs career decisions. Thus, it is prudent to maintain a high-quality values assessment and engage in ongoing research to further enhance the usefulness and effectiveness of this instrument.

(Bobek and Gore 2004, p.28)

The CVI was administered and each inventory generated an individual profile. Using qualitative content analysis, the profiles generated from each inventory was used to identify the dominant four values that emerged. Content analysis is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages (Cole 1988). Content analysis allows the researcher to test theoretical issues to enhance understanding of the data. Through content analysis, it is possible to distil words into fewer content related categories. It is assumed that when classified into the same categories, words, phrases and the like share the same meaning (Cavanagh 1997). Elo and Kyngäs (2008) noted that when using content analysis, the aim was to build a model to describe the phenomenon in a conceptual form.

The dominant values that emerged from the CVI were then collated and a technique described by Thomas (2013) as eyeballing was used to analyse the statistical information. Eyeballing is having a look at the range of data to see what they are telling you (Thomas 2013). The data was then inputted into Microsoft Excel software to generate a series of charts and graphs. The emergent themes were also used in the topic guide (Phase 2 of the data gathering process) for the focus groups to generate further, more in-depth data.
3.6.4 Focus Groups and Data Analysis

Triangulation was the approach utilised in this study. Creswell (2009, p. 118) emphasised that qualitative data collection is not a discreet and separate task, but rather, ‘a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions’. Two focus groups were conducted to gather information that might answer the research questions. The focus groups discussions were based on the outcomes of the CVI and therefore served as method of greater exploration into the perceptions of the students.

Lunt and Livingstone (1996) trace the history of focus group research in the social sciences, noting a resurgence of interest relating to the use of qualitative approaches. Krueger and Casey (2000, p.5) define a focus group as ‘a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment’. Richardson & Rabiee (2001) suggest that participants in this type of research are selected on the criteria that they would have something to say on the topic, are within the age-range, have similar socio-characteristics and would be comfortable talking to the interviewer and each other. Research literature sets out many reasons for choosing to use focus groups as a study design. Focus groups are less threatening to many research participants, and this environment is helpful for participants to discuss perceptions, ideas, opinions, and thoughts (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Similarly, Calderon et al. (2000) note that focus groups are useful for gathering perceptions, beliefs, and values. Furthermore, according to Bell (2005) the purpose of focus groups is to focus discussion on a particular issue.

Krueger & Casey (2000) suggest having between six and eight participants in a focus group. This study enlisted six participants in each focus group. Ground rules were discussed at the beginning of the focus groups with the researcher ensuring confidentiality and anonymity as outlined in the consent form (see Appendix F) were understood. The researcher clarified that students understood that their disclosures were shared with each other and not just the researcher and that they were audio-recorded.

Yin (2009) points out that data analysis consists of a number of stages, i.e. examining, categorising and tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence, in order to address the initial goal of a study. Krueger & Casey (2000) build on this concept and suggest that the purpose should drive the analysis; they believe that ‘analysis begins by going back to the intention of the study and survival requires a clear fix on the purpose of the study’. Following
this concept, although difficult at times, the researcher found it helpful for managing the data, extracting themes and omitting irrelevant information. This is described by Silverman (2016) as using qualitative content analysis.

Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009, p.4) stated that ‘transcript-based analysis represents the most rigorous and time-intensive mode of analyzing data’. The transcriptions from the audio-tapes of this study were analysed according to various themes and categories. Participants were assigned a code on the data entry sheet to protect their identity. Berkowitz (1997) suggests considering six questions when coding and analyzing qualitative data: common themes that emerge, deviations from patterns, participants’ environments/past experiences, interesting stories that emerge, do any central questions need revisiting and are emerging patterns similar to findings of other studies. Bogdan and Biklin (1998) provide common types of coding categories, but emphasise that the research questions should shape the coding scheme.

3.7 Validity and Reliability
Merriam (2009, p.199) cautions researchers that the constructs of reliability and validity are quantitative and positivist, and not necessarily that applicable to qualitative research. However, Brinkman and Kvale (2015, p.179) state that ‘validity is a requirement for effective research and is a requirement for both qualitative and quantitative research’. Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that when a paradigm and methodology is chosen, sufficient consideration must be given to the approach used and tools that best suit the research, while also preserving reliability and validity within the research. Marczyk et al. (2005, p.106) ask if ‘the instrument or measurement approach measure what it is supposed to measure?’, thus a question of validity is posed. Sapsford and Jupp (1996, as cited in Bell 2005) state that validity is the design of research to provide reliable conclusions, the researcher endeavoured through triangulation to follow the principal of validity. Triangulation arose from an ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes (Yin, 2009). An approach of reflexivity (Schon 1987), discussed in a later section, was also employed in this study to minimise invalidity.

Bell (2005, p.111) states that reliability is ‘the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions’. Therefore, reliability refers to the consistency of the research method and examines whether the data can be repeated. The data
extracted from Phase One of this study was used in the second phase, thus the issue of reliability was raised. Reliability of data was enhanced by comparing data from both focus groups.

Quantitative research assumes that research can be repeated using the same instruments and will generate the same results (Cohen et al. 2011). However, interpretive research is by nature unique and cannot be replicated, instead can encourage reliability through credibility, neutrality, confirmability and dependability. Wolcott (2005, p.159) argues ‘for traditional reliability in a technical sense a researcher has to manipulate conditions so that replicability can be assessed’. It is possible that if another researcher facilitated the focus groups used in this study that different results would emerge. Furthermore, human nature is unpredictable and changes depending on various variables, therefore reliability is impossible to guarantee.

3.7.1 Reflexivity
The sequence of action, reflection, critical reflection and cultural action as a cycle of being and becoming in the research process is perhaps best described as reflexivity (Pring 2004). The NCGE (2011, p.3) set out Competency Guidelines for guidance practitioners but stress that ‘underlying these guidelines is the notion of reflective practice in the counselling process and the need for individuals to be reflective practitioners’. It also suggests that reflexivity is essential for guidance counsellors to reach a level of personal and professional maturity that allows them to take different perspectives, make independent judgments and take responsibility for their actions. While mindful of these Guidelines, the researcher employed reflexivity at an emotional level, by being sensitive to her own responses, values, beliefs and prejudices and how they might affect the research (Morley 1996). Furthermore, as the study employed an interpretivist position, self-reflection allowed the researcher to recognise the potential to influence the research findings (Blaxter et al. 2001). Similarly, Etherington (2004) postulates that reflexivity can be used as a model to inform the position of the researcher by self-questioning throughout their involvement in the research. Finally, the researcher demonstrated reflexivity during this study by journaling. A diary was kept to journal findings from the stage of data collection process through to the interpretation of findings. Finally, qualitative researchers deal with the fact that their own values cannot be kept out of the experience by admitting the value-laden nature of the experience and discussing their own biases and the implications or findings (Creswell 2009).

3.8 Ethical Considerations
Ethical concerns were considered at all stages of this study as they are pivotal in the work of the guidance counsellor (IGC 2012; NCGE 2008; PSI 2011). McLeod (2011, p.167) states that ‘research in counselling is bound by a general set of ethical guidelines applicable to all types of investigation of human subjects, but also generates unique dilemmas and problems distinctive to the nature of the counselling process’. Additionally, Hearne (2013) posits that guidance research needs to be clear about the context, motivation, methodology and ethical considerations to ensure that findings can be viewed as credible, trustworthy and scholarly.

According to Cohen et al. (2011) ethical regulation occurs on three levels: legislative, professional and personal. Therefore, the preliminary focus of this study was obtaining ethical approval from the University of Limerick which was received on the 8th March 2017. Following this, the researcher identified a framework of ethical principles which needed to be adhered to throughout the entire process of this study. That framework was guided by two principles; informed consent and confidentiality. Informed consent was not simply viewed as requesting participants to sign a consent form, but instead provided information sheets (see Appendix C & E) which clearly outlined the voluntary nature of the study, the precise title and the management of data collected. Confidentiality of the school and participants was upheld and handling, storing and disposal of data was in accordance with the procedures set out by the University of Limerick’s Ethics Committee.

This study used a Career Value Inventory which may be viewed as an assessment instrument therefore the Institute of Guidance Counsellors Code of Ethics were strictly adhered to, which states:

Respect the rights of clients to receive a full explanation of the nature, purpose and result of tests and assessments in language that they can understand.

(IGC 2012)

Ethical consideration of participants in the focus groups were stated in the information and consent sheets (see Appendix E & F). Safeguarding their anonymity and confidentiality, their right to withdraw from the research as well as the commitment of the researcher to do no harm was outlined. The participants were also informed that the Guidance Counsellor would be available to them following any issues that may arise for them during the focus groups. The aim of the researcher at all times was to adhere to the highest ethical standards as outlined above.
3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methods and methodology utilised in this study. The aim and objectives of the research were centered around the framework set out in this chapter, to explore the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of values in the context of their career decision-making. A mixed method approach was employed to collect relevant data with a greater focus on an interpretivist paradigm. Strict ethical guidelines were laid out in the framework of this study.

Chapter 4 will present the data collected from the CVI and analyse the findings from the focus groups.
Chapter 4  Data Analysis and Findings

4.0  Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and the findings from both Phase One and Phase Two of the research. In line with the mixed methods methodology, previously outlined, the structure of this chapter is divided into two sections: Phase One outlines the results from The Career Value Inventory (CVI) which was utilised with fifty 5th year students and Phase Two outlines the findings which engaged twelve students in two focus groups from the same cohort of 5th year students. A quantitative approach is used to analyse the data in Phase One and both quantitative and qualitative approaches are utilised in Phase Two. The findings are presented under theme headings.

The analysis involved relating the data from Phase One to the discussions that took place in Phase Two of the research. The following three themes emerged from the data: (1) The Career Values chosen by participants (2) Male Perspectives and (3) Female Perspectives. These dominant themes are discussed and the sub-themes illuminated to explore the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values in the context of career decision-making.

4.1  Phase One: The Career Value Inventory

Data was gathered in this phase by disseminating and administering 50 Careers Values Inventory (CVI) (see appendix N) which were utilised with permission from www.careersportal.ie (see appendix L). The aim of using this data collection instrument was to identify the dominant four career values students perceive relevant to their career decision-making. This was carried out in two selected Careers classes and took place on Thursday 16th March 2017. This self-assessment instrument allowed the students to identify the values that are important to them, 100% response rate was achieved. The section presents the quantitative findings from the CVI instrument and analysis using Microsoft Excel.

4.1.1  Demographic Information

The CVI was completed by 50 mixed gender students, 23 females (46%) and 27 males (54%) (see Figure 1.1). The students are all of Irish nationality, from a rural background and are local to the participating post-primary school in the West of Ireland. They are aged between 16-18 years old and are in 5th year. The researcher counted the number of male and female participants when disseminating the inventories and clarified with the students that they are all aged between 16-18 years.
4.1.2 Results from the CVI

All participants were requested to identify what they perceived to be their dominant 4 values in relation to career decision-making. The researcher explained that placing a value as number 1 meant that it represented the most important value to them in relation to their career decisions, number 2 & 3 would represent their middle values and number 4 would signal the least important of the top 4 values. There was a total of 30 Values on the CVI (see appendix N). The dominant 4 values that emerged from the group were: 1. Security, 2. Money, 3. Family & 4. Leisure Time. These results are presented in Figure 2.1.
These results show that 22% of the participating students perceive Security as their number 1 value in relation to their career decisions. The middle values were represented by 16% valuing Money and 12% valuing Family. The least important value from the dominant 4 chosen was Leisure Time, valued by 10% of participants. 40% of participants chose various other Values from the list of 26. This finding is significant and points to the breath of the list of values on the CVI. Figure 3.1 represents the 26 Other Values on the CVI.

4.1.3 Breakdown of Other Values

Interestingly, while the following values appeared on the CVI they were not chosen by any participant; Working Indoors, Information, Community Impact, Things, Creativity or Working Outside.

The top 4 ‘Other’ Values, which comprised of 40% in the CVI (see Figure 3.1) are presented in Figure 4.1. There is a corroboration between these values and those that emerged in both focus groups and participants views were strong regarding all top 4 ‘other’ values which are discussed later.
The values, People, Helping Others and Travel presented here are also presented in Fig 6.1 & Fig 8.1 as they emerged as ‘Others’ in the focus groups.

4.1.4 Analysis of the CVI Instrument

The CVI can be used as an online instrument through www.careersportal.ie. The online version asks students to identify values that are; (1) Very Important (2) Somewhat Important & (3) Not Important. There is a list of 30 Values. They are then asked to type out 9 values that are most important to them.

The researcher determined this to be too confusing and simplified the inventory by requesting students to identify their dominant 4 values; (1) Most Important (2) & (3) Middle Values and (4) Least Important of the dominant 4 chosen.

The researcher deems a limitation of the online inventory to be its inability to generate any form of analysis, for example, a Values Profile for the participant. However, students can save the results in a Careers Notepad on www.careersportal.ie or alternatively save the results into their individual Careers Notes Folder on their PC.

The findings of Phase One illuminate the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values in the context of career decision-making. The next section presents the findings from Phase
Two, this engaged 12 students in two focus groups (6 in each) who were from the same cohort as Phase One.

4.2 Phase Two: Focus Groups

This section presents the findings from two focus groups conducted in the case post-primary school on Thursday 4th and Friday 5th May 2017. Each focus group was comprised of six participants. The duration of the focus groups was between 50 to 60 minutes. At the start of each group, ground rules were discussed, the purpose of the research was explained and confidentiality/ethical considerations outlined. During the focus groups the researcher followed a topic guide (see Appendix M). In concluding the focus groups participants were thanked for contributing to this research.

4.2.1 Demographic Information

The 12 participants in the focus groups had all previously completed the CVI in Phase One. focus group I included two males and four females and focus group 2 consisted of four males and two females.

4.2.2 Data Analysis

The aim of this section is to provide a deeper understanding of what is being explored, the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values in the context of career decision-making by analysing the narratives of the data gathered.

A transcript of each focus group was written up to determine key themes that emerged during the course of both focus groups. Participants’ responses were categorised according to themes that the researcher identified as part of the analysis. Pseudonyms are given to participants to protect their identities. Some quotations are used to illuminate the individual views of participants and others were chosen to illustrate the similarities or differences in opinions within the group. The researcher decided not to quantify how many times a particular opinion was expressed as the purpose of the focus groups was to elicit participants’ perceptions in an exploratory context.

The findings will be presented using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to analyse the dominant four values gleaned from the data in both focus groups. During the discussions Colour Coding was applied (see Table 1.1) to identify the four dominant values participants
perceived to be connected to their career decision-making. Thematic analysis from the Focus Group data generated the following three themes: (1) Career Values Identified by Participants (2) Male Perspectives and (3) Female Perspectives, these will be discussed in the following section.

Sub-themes excerpted from the discussions are also presented: (1) the strengths and weaknesses of the instrument (2) if participants felt the CVI could be used as a contributory instrument by guidance counsellors and (3) would participants change the choices made if repeating the CVI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No 1: Dominant Career Value</th>
<th>No 2: Middle Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No 3: Middle Value</td>
<td>No 4: Least Value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.1: Presentation of Perceived Values**

### 4.2.3 Main Themes:

### 4.2.4 Career Values Identified by Participants

The data gathered here was analysed by theme mapping and colour used to distinguish the different values that emerged. Participants were asked to complete a new CVI and write what they had chosen as their number one (No 1) most important career value on red paper, their middle values (No 2 & 3) on blue and orange paper and the least important of the four on green paper (No 4) (see Appendix P). Table 2.1 details the results of the CVI completed during Focus Group 1 and Table 3.1 details the results of the CVI completed during Focus Group 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values:</th>
<th>No 1</th>
<th>No 2</th>
<th>No 3</th>
<th>No 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Helping Others</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Leisure Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>Travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niamh</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>Excitement</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Prestige</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.1: Results of CVI in Focus Group 1**
There was a three-way split in the findings regarding the most dominant career value, (No 1), two participants chose Travel, two chose Family and two chose Relationships. Interestingly, the middle values also shared commonality when Family and Money were also chosen twice by participants, Security was chosen by three participants. Other participants perceive Skills, People, Helping Others, Variety and Excitement as middle career values. Finally, the least important career value from the dominant four chosen also reflect a common pattern as two participants chose Family while the others selected Leisure Time, Travel, Structure and Prestige. Table 3.1 presents the overall results of Focus Group 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values:</th>
<th>No 1</th>
<th>No 2</th>
<th>No 3</th>
<th>No 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Helping Others</td>
<td>Leisure Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Leisure Time</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Prestige</td>
<td>Leisure Time</td>
<td>Travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Leisure Time</td>
<td>Variety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Informality</td>
<td>Leisure Time</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Results of CVI in Focus Group 2

Family and Money emerged as the most dominant values from Focus Group 2 while one participant chose Security as his number one value. The middle values shared among participants were Leisure Time and Relationships while other middle values included Education, Security, Helping Others, Prestige and Family. Finally, the least important career value varied for all participants, as can be seen in Table 3.1.

4.2.5 Male Perspectives

In Focus Group 1, both males, Liam and Tom had different perspectives on the value that is most important to them. Liam said that Travel is the most important value to him because he ‘didn’t want to be stuck in one place with work’ and Tom spoke about his previous experience in the workplace and said that getting on with people makes work more pleasant and therefore Relationships are the most important value to him. In Focus Group 2, Kevin and Sean shared the perspective of Money being the most important value while John and Noel chose Family and Security. Kevin and Sean strongly disagreed with John that Family is an important value,
indeed Kevin was sure that he wouldn’t rank Family as a value at all and said that ‘there are other things that have to come first ‘. Agreeing with Kevin, Sean stated that,

You can't be just choosing your job around your family, you do it for you, not for them...

Kevin and Sean shared similar perspectives on Money as a value;

Money is the thing that lets you do whatever you want …. (Kevin)
I kind of feel the same, the more money you have the more stuff you can do…
You can go places like... just do whatever you want ...... (Sean)

In summary, only 2 out of the 6 males concurred on a dominant career value, Money, while the remaining males chose Travel, Relationships, Family and Security.

In relation to middle values, it appears in Focus Group 1 that the male perspective centred around Family, People and Relationships as these were agreed by both to be important. However, Liam disagreed with Tom when he picked Helping Others as a middle value and said that he felt it wasn’t something he’d consider when choosing a career. Tom clearly stated that helping others would be a stronger motivating factor for him than money, ‘to be able to go in and make an impact’ was how he described his perspective of Helping Others.

It became clear that the central middle value in Focus Group 2 was Leisure Time, as it was chosen four times and it was generally agreed within the group that Leisure Time is important. Some participants raised the issue of having ‘time-out’ from the job while others felt that it is important not to be ‘working all the time’ and Leisure Time can lead to ‘de-stressing’. However, concern was expressed from females when Kevin spoke about Prestige as a middle value stating;

It's always nice when someone says, you did that well and they’re praising you for what you're doing in your work... Or remembered for something you did…

Lisa disagreed and expressed concern that it is a ‘materialistic value’ and stated;

Self-praise is no praise…. Too much praise can get to your head…
Jane echoed similar opinion, ‘but I wouldn’t be saying I'd love to be praised all the time’. The group was also divided on opinion when John spoke about choosing Relationships as a middle value ‘I like to get on with everyone… I don't want to have enemies’. Kevin disagreed,

You can work with someone and you don’t have to like them…, I wouldn’t focus too much on relationships…., you can't make people like you…

Sean supported Kevin’s opinion, he expressed a view regarding not changing to suit other people, ‘don’t change for other people’. The female perspective was in direct contrast to Kevin and Sean, this will be discussed later.

In summary, male group members shared some commonality in relation to middle values, particularly Leisure Time, Security, Money and Family.

Finally, in both focus groups the male perspectives on the least important value (No 4) varied by all participants and there was little agreement among the group regarding the choices made, (see Table 1.1 & Table 2.1).

4.2.6 Female Perspectives

The common theme that emerged from the female perspective in both focus groups is that Family is an important value. In focus group 1, Elaine and Claire placed Family as their most dominant value, stating that it is important to have time to spend with family. While in focus group 2 Lisa and Jane also placed Family as their most dominant value.

In a job, I'd look for time where you'd be able to take off and go places with the family and spend time with them more… (Jane)
I think it is just important to have some support the whole time because…. (Lisa)

In Focus Group 1, Laura placed Family as a middle value and hesitated when discussing this, she feels Family should also be ‘kept separate’ from work. Niamh placed Family in number 4. There was consensus from all group members that Family is an important value and this is represented in Table 5.1, however Liam feels he will have a greater appreciation of this value ‘later on in life’. However, as previously mentioned, in the second group Kevin rejected Family as a value.
In summary, it is clear that Family is an important career value to consider when making careers decision from a female perspective.

Security for females ranked as the most important middle value in both groups. It appears from the findings in Group 1 that Security ranked as important for 3 out of 4 of the females and interestingly this appeared as the most dominant value from in CVI in Phase One. Elaine said that,

For me it's important to be in a job and to know I wouldn't be losing it at any stage so a secure job is the thing.

Niamh strongly agreed with Elaine stating,

Just to have a secure job and know you’re getting money in for food and stuff…

Similarly, in Group 2 Jane stated that,

I think it is important if you work that hard towards something you would love to do… it would be awful for it to be unstable…

While both males in Focus Group 1 agreed that Security is important they both feel no need to have a permanent contract and neither of them chose Security as an important value. Tom suggests that the nature of many jobs nowadays is flexible and Liam is content when the job has other offerings, the security of the job is secondary to other values. Likewise, in Focus Group 2, the majority of males disagreed that Security is important. Participants strongly felt that other values were more important,

But I would rather have a good job that pays well that wouldn’t have as much security than an average job that would give you security….. (Kevin)

There is therefore a contrast here between male and female perspectives in relation to the value of Security.

The third value that two of the female participants agreed was important is Travel, however there was a noticeable difference in choice of hierarchy. Laura placed Travel as her number
one value while Elaine placed it as the least important of her four values. There was no consensus among the group that Travel was a value to be prioritised. Claire said,

I'd probably be the same... I wouldn't rule it out but it's not something I'd look for, if there was something better I'd consider it but it's not that important to me...

while Niamh said, ‘I wouldn’t travel anyway’. Neither of the female participants of Focus Group 2 chose Travel as a career value.

In Focus Group 1, Claire and Niamh agreed that Money is a middle value and it became clear that there was widespread recognition within the group that Money is important while Niamh related the importance of having money to the issue of homelessness,

I think it's important to have a good job with a good income just so to have an easier life and not to have money as an issue, you see lots of homeless people, they have lost their homes and I just think if they had a good stable job with a high income it would never have gotten to that…

(Claire)

Niamh’s perspective regarding Money was also related to having a steady income,

I think it is important to have income, a steady income and that you’re getting the money you deserve for the work you’re doing…. (Niamh)

In summary, female group members shared some commonality in relation to middle values, particularly Security and Money. Other middle range values chosen were: Education, Helping Others, Relationships, Excitement, Variety and Family.

In addition, Structure and Prestige were placed as the least important values from a female perspective.

4.3 Comparing the Findings of Focus Groups to the CVI in Phase One

The findings were then compared to the overall findings from the CVI in Phase One which can be seen in Figure 2.1, Table 3.1 and Figure 5.1. The parallel in values chosen between Phase One and Phase Two are: Family, Security and Money.
The researcher presented the results from the CVI in Phase One (see Figure 2.1) to the participants in the focus groups. It was immediately clear that the findings from the CVI were very similar to the themes emerging in focus group 1. It became clear that the most dominant value in Phase One, Security, was agreed unanimously by participants of focus group 1 to be an important value. There was widespread recognition that the results of the CVI that identified Security, Money and Family as the dominant and middle values were also chosen by participants of focus group 1 and focus group 2. There was a mixed reaction to the fourth value, Leisure Time in the results of the CVI. While one participant contributed a humorous response, another participant expressed disbelief that it appeared in the results of the CVI.

![Figure 5.1: Breakdown of Results in Focus Group 1](image-url)
Leisure Time emerged in the CVI conducted in Phase One as a value by 10% of participants, while 20% of Focus Group 2 participants perceive Leisure Time to be a career value. There appeared to be consensus between both Phases that Family, Money and Security were important career values, (see Figure 2.1 & Figure 5.1). However, there is clear difference between the percentages in both figures. Kevin in Focus Group 2 expressed his surprise in relation to Family appearing as a middle Value in the CVI of Phase One.

I am surprised Family was so low… I thought that would be one (number one) …(Kevin)

While 17% of participants in Focus Group 2 and 25% in Focus Group 2 perceive Family as an important value, the findings in Phase One show that only 12% of the 50 participants rank Family as important. Correspondingly, the difference of opinion within both groups during discussions in relation to this value reflects these findings.

When the researcher asked if there may be any particular reason why Security emerged strongly in Phase One, Elaine in Group 1 referred to the recession saying,

I suppose there is a lot of people who have lost jobs, they thought they were secure and they weren't so it's important…

Kevin in Group 2 also referred to the recession while Jane said that ‘unemployment was high’.
Money ranked 16% in the CVI, 8.3% in Group 1 and 12.5% in Group 2. Interestingly, both groups members were at variance regarding the importance of Money as a career value. Group members in Group 2 were very divided on their perceptions of Money.

![Figure 7.1: Breakdown of Results in Focus Group 2](image)

![Figure 8.1: Composition of ‘Other’ Values in Focus Group 2](image)

4.3.1 Sub Themes:

4.3.2 Strengths and Limitations of the CVI
As previously stated, group members regarded considering values as part of career decision-making an addition to the process practiced by Guidance Counsellors. Participants identified some strengths of the CVI as an instrument that could be used in practice. Sean stated that ‘it narrows things down’ while Jane felt the variety of values in the CVI allowed her to,

think of personal space and information… and all those things that you wouldn’t really necessarily think about for a job…

Limitations of the CVI were also discussed. In Focus Group 1, Liam expressed concern that ‘how you feel at the time’ may be a limitation of this instrument and he stated that ‘life can change pretty quickly’. Kevin felt that ‘it boxes you in to certain things’ while Lisa stated that choosing certain values shouldn’t ‘define you’.

4.3.3 Used alongside other interventions, would the CVI support your career decision-making?
There was unanimous support from the groups to this question. The groups agreed that the instrument would allow ‘a little scope to think outside the box’. Participants who contributed a reply to this question were strongly agreeing that considering their values would enhance their overall career decision-making process.

4.3.4 Would you change your choices if you were to repeat the CVI?
The researcher asked individual participants how might they change their responses if given the opportunity. The group unanimously agreed that they would in no way alter their choices. Some participants drew attention to the fact that they had never considered values in relation to career decision-making up to this point. However, there was agreement in the group that they would reflect on their values in the future career decision-making process.

4.4 Summary of the Findings
To summarise, the primary findings explicated the main aim of this research, to explore the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values in relation to career decision-making. The findings reveal the multiplicity of participants’ perceptions of their values. It also revealed the gender differences in perceptions. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the adolescents who participated in this study had clear and well-articulated opinions on the topic discussed.
The research elucidated that the CVI instrument may be considered for future work by Guidance Counsellors in helping students with their career decision-making processes.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from Phase One and Phase Two of the analytical strategy. Data from Phase One was used to triangulate the findings from Phase Two. Using thematic analysis, the three main themes and sub-themes were identified, presented and analysed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 will synthesise the primary research findings with the findings from Chapter 2, the Literature Review.
Chapter 5  Discussions

5.0  Introduction
The focus of this chapter is to review the purpose of the research, to discuss the research findings yielded from the data gathered in the light of the literature review chapter and finally to expound on implications and recommendations for future practice. This will be facilitated by a discussion of the main themes that emerged in this research and be guided by the relevant literature previously outlined in Chapter 2.

5.1  Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values in the context of career decision-making. Participants’ perceptions were viewed through the theoretical frameworks of appreciative inquiry and positive psychology (Seligman 1998). Firstly, the researcher critically examined relevant literature relating to value systems, provided an overview of adolescent development and finally examined the relationship between career theories and adolescent development. Career interventions implemented in Irish post-primary schools were also examined through the literature and a succinct illustration of the Guidance Counsellor’s role was presented. Following this, a Career Value Inventory (CVI) and two focus groups were carried out to explore the main research questions in this study. Thematic analysis extracted themes from these sources of data. The data and findings of such will be discussed in the following sections.

5.2  Overview of Research Findings
The primary research question in this study set out to explore the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values in the context of career decision-making. In addition, secondary research questions sought to examine the characteristics of values that adolescents identify with, how other people, for example, teachers, peers and parents impact on post-primary Senior students’ career decisions, how career development theories and interventions assist post primary students in the career decision-making process and finally, the implications for Guidance Counsellors in understanding the students’ perceptions of their value-systems.

The three main themes and three sub-themes that emerged in the data analysis, in the previous chapter, assist the researcher to answer the primary research question. However the scope of the research did not allow for all the secondary questions to be answered. The researcher
extrapolated findings in relation to the characteristics of values and how career development theories and interventions assist post primary students in the career decision-making process. Following on from this, inferences can be drawn from the findings regarding the implications for Guidance Counsellors in understanding the students’ perceptions of their value-systems. However, there is a lack of satisfactory data to examine how other people, for example, teachers, peers and parents’ impact on post primary senior students’ career decisions.

The following overarching themes will now be discussed:

1. Perceptions of Career Values Identified
2. Male V’s Female Perspectives of Career Related Values
3. Interventions in the Career Decision-Making (CDM) Process

5.2.1 Perceptions of Career Values Identified

The researcher acknowledges that Values are a complex domain. While examining the historical perspectives of value-systems in Chapter 2, it became clear to the researcher that there is little harmony regarding the definition of values in the literature. Supporting this, Patterson states,

Values are difficult to define even though everyone recognises and uses the concept. The failure of writers to define values or attempt to delineate the nature of the concept has led to some confusion and fuzziness in discussions in the literature.

(Patterson 2000, p.164)

Nevertheless, one adolescent taking part in this research defined values as, ‘something you think is important’ (Jane, focus group1), overall findings suggest an unanimity among the participants of both focus groups regarding this broad definition of values. Participants respectfully acknowledged each other’s differences and the diversity of each other’s perspectives regarding their selected values. This is in line with literature research, for example, Schwartz (1992) asserts that values can have a different meaning for all of us. He also stated that ‘a particular value may be very important to one person but unimportant to another’ (Schwartz 2012, p.3). This was clearly the case many times in this research when participants strongly disagreed with the career values chosen by other participants. Furthermore, the term ‘it’s important to me’ and ‘it wouldn’t/isn’t important to me’ was used frequently during focus group discussions.
It should be noted that the term Career Values used in this study is often referred to as Work Values in the literature. According to Lewin (1951) values are the guideposts that provide meaning to work experiences. Furthermore, Crace and Brown (2002) refer to work values as those values that clients expect to fulfil as a result of choosing and entering an occupation. Interestingly, this is supported in the findings in this study. Much of the values selected by participants were referenced to future work life. For example, participants who chose Family as a career value expressed concern regarding ‘working all the time’ and ‘getting time to spend with your family… not to be stuck in work all the time’. Another participant who chose Relationships as a career value was clarifying her expectations in the workplace and said, ‘I think it’s important to have good relationships with the people in a work environment’.

The experience of work is multifaceted and the diversity of values (relating to work experience, as perceived by participants) selected, outlined in the previous chapter, validates this finding. Leuty and Hansen (2012) articulate that the relationships between work values and other constructs also have implications for practice. Participants referenced the different values that may underpin different careers relevant to them personally. There was consensus among the groups that understanding their values would enable them to make better career decisions and thus it may be argued that individual factors such as values may influence the career decision-making process. This is supported in the literature by Ferrell and Gresham (1985) citing values and attitudes as individual factors that influence decision-making.

According to Curry and Milsom, (2017, p.215) ‘knowing oneself is the key to early adolescent career growth’. Self-awareness is enhanced when adolescents are given the opportunity to reflect on their values, interests, skills etc. Literature highlights the importance of self-awareness, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), describes guidance within education systems as having an important role to play in laying the foundations for lifelong career development, including knowledge and competencies regarding self-awareness, the world of work, and making decisions and transitions (OECD, 2002). It emerged in this research that a contemplation of values may assist adolescents prioritising what they regard as important in a job. Interestingly, two out of twelve participants in the focus groups chose Prestige as a career value, it also emerged in the finding under ‘other’ values in both the Career Value Inventory and focus group, and according to literature this may be a sign that students are considering the social value of things and people (Curry and Milsom, 2017). To
summarise, it is clear from both the literature and this research that there may be a link between considering values and work experiences.

5.2.2 Male V’s Female Perspectives of Career Related Values
Adolescence is a time of unparalleled changes and although there are similar patterns of development, it is period of phenomenally complex growth (Hindley 1983). According to Gottfredson (1981), children develop their career aspirations through a process of circumscription and compromise informed by their interests, intelligence, competencies, social class, perceived abilities, gender and values. By this Gottfredson means that by early adolescence some students may have restricted themselves from aspiring to certain careers, due to their self-concept of the above-mentioned compromises. However, ‘although constrained by circumstance, young people are simply not creatures of it’ (Gottfredson 2002, p.134). Most career theories in psychology stress the importance of a good match between person and job (Ibid). Focus Group participants expressed similar opinions, Niamh stated that she wouldn’t want values to ‘define her’ and were a component of other consideration when making career decisions.

According to Turner et al. (2010) researchers continue to identify ways in which the career development of male and female adolescents differs. In examining the source of gender differences in career development, researchers have indicated that as early as middle school, young people circumscribe their interests to be consistent with social expectations regarding gender-based career options (Gottfredson & Lapan, 1997). Also, in their expectancy values model, Eccles and colleagues have conceptualised values in a variety of ways, including the perceived importance or utility of careers, interest or enjoyment of careers, and the cost of choosing one career over another (Eccles 1983).

Inferences can be drawn from discussions in the focus groups with research literature which suggests that gender is an influential factor in occupational preferences (Weisgram et al. 2010). Within the vocational psychology literature, studies have consistently demonstrated that occupational values, typically defined as desires one most wants to be fulfilled within a career (Singer & Stefflre 1954; Zytowski 1970), are associated with occupational preferences (Judge & Bretz 1992; Lindsay & Knox 1984). Weisgram et al. (2010) found that by late adolescence, individuals highly endorsed only a select subset of occupational values. Although it is not wholly apparent from the quantitative data in this study, whereby the most accounted value
chosen by males is Leisure Time (chosen by 5 out of 6 male participants) and the most accounted by females is Family (chosen by 6 out of 6), the qualitative analysis generates a clearer view of gender differences in participants’ value perspectives which provides partial support for what presents in the literature. Furthermore, it became apparent in focus group discussions that participants were strong in their selection of the 4 values chosen. Liam, Tom, Kevin and Sean in focus groups 1& 2 presented strong views on the value of Leisure time while Elaine, Claire, Lisa and Jane repeated opinions and appeared to justify the importance of choosing Family as a career value.

Once adolescents become selective, they generally value money, security and family time more highly than power and responsibility (Lee 1984; Thomas 1986). The CVI result in Phase One of the study corroborates this and interestingly, is in line with what emerged in the findings concerning Male and Female Perspectives (see Table 2.1 & Table 3.1) where all three values, Security, Money and Family were chosen by Claire & Niamh and all 12 participants chose at least one of these 3 values. However, Family was clearly more important to females than to males. This is most apparent in the focus group discussions. Females expressed a connection between selecting other values such as Relationships, People, Money, Helping Others and Security to Family values. All females were unanimous regarding the importance they placed in considering Family as a career value. This is evident in the literature and it has been argued that men and women have different preferences relating to occupational choice, suggesting that females choose less prestigious positions in the labour market (Mendez & Crawford 2002; Shapka et al. 2006) and place greater value on jobs that help them to fit in family roles (Eccles 2007; Frome et al. 2006). In contrast, males have shown to place more value than females on making money, seeking out challenging tasks, and work that involves mathematics and computers (Eccles et al. 1999; Ruble et al. 1998). Similarly, literature highlights that males typically prefer jobs characterised by high salaries, power or influence over others, opportunities for advancement or achievement, risk taking, challenging tasks, a high level of responsibility, and a high level of prestige (Eccles 2007; Konrad et al. 2000; Post-Kammer 1987). Such is corroborated in this research when there is a strong male proposition, for example, that money and prestige are more important than having good relationships in the workplace and that values with personal gain were more important that values that would fulfil other people, i.e. family. Leisure Time represented the most dominant value among the male participants. There was a consensus that having leisure time was important for general well-being and that life should be about having fun as well as working.
According to literature, females, in contrast, typically prefer jobs that allow them to work with or help others, develop their knowledge or skills, and spend time with family (Cinamon & Rich 2002; Eccles 1994; Konrad et al. 2000; Post Kammer 1987). This is in line with the findings in this study when females strongly argued for the value of family and security and there was general disagreement with selecting money and prestige, however, it must be noted that one female chose both money and prestige simultaneously. Discussions among female participants placed importance on developing skills also and when Education emerged as a value female voices were tenacious in relation to developing life skills, continuing in education and upskilling.

A study carried out by Weisgram et al. (2010) hypothesised that gender differences in occupational values may be a driving force in gender differences in occupational interests. Due to gap in the literature in relation to career values, the researcher will draw on Hollands’ Typology theory outlined in Chapter 2 to further advance this suggestion. In a study based on Holland’s Typology done by Migunde et al. (2011) the researchers concluded that there are certain careers that are preferred by both males and females, i.e. investigative and enterprising careers however the realistic career type was mostly chosen by males while the social career type was mostly chosen by females. Although this study endeavours to explore values in CDM, much of the literature previously referred to has coupled interests and values as influencers of CDM. Focus groups discussions did not relate specifically to any particular occupations.

Eccles et al. (1999) found that the values attached to relevant job characteristics were significant predictors of teenage career aspirations. For example, valuing helping others predicted teenager's plans to enter either human service or health related professions. In contrast, valuing occupational prestige predicted not aspiring to a human service occupation. These findings lend tentative support to the findings in this study.

According to Weisgram et al. (2010) work fulfills personal values, perhaps differently for males and females. Thus, the question of whether traditionally masculine and feminine jobs are perceived as affording different occupational values is unanswered. It is clear, however, that gender differences characterise adolescents’ and adults’ interest in many, if not most, of the career subtypes on Holland’s and other scales. For example, males score higher on the realistic and investigative Holland subscales, whereas females score higher on the artistic,
social, and enterprising subscales (Tracey & Ward, 1998). In a study done by Gribbons and Lohnes (1965) some gender differentiation occurred in the typical hierarchies, they contended that similarities in the data outweigh differences, and the boys and girls appear to be rather alike in their employment of vocational value categories. That is similar to the findings in this study. A review of literature makes it apparent that additional research is needed to understand the contributions of values to the development of occupational interests and vocational values in both genders. The researcher is unable to reach conclusive evidence of gender differences regarding perceptions of career values although differences in perceptions have emerged in this study.

5.3 Interventions in the Career Decision-Making (CDM) Process

Participants in this study conveyed the viewpoint that if they were to discuss the topic of values in career guidance classes or in one-one meetings with their Guidance Counsellor that it would assist them understand important constructs in their work lives. Literature supports this position,

> Critical reflections and discussions about how different aspects of work (e.g., pay, variety, helping others) would result in an increased quality of work and life could engage students in raising their awareness of and appreciation for the value of work.

(Hirsch 2010, p.14)

However, the position or relevance of values in the career decision-making process is ambiguous. There have been no theoretical statements about values forthcoming to guide the work of guidance counsellors (Brown and Crace, 1996). In fact, few studies have examined adolescents’ attitudes towards values.

In Ireland schools are required, in accordance with the Education Act (1998), to ensure that ‘students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices’. The guidance service is normally managed and delivered by a guidance counsellor and supported by other teachers with expertise in the area. The guidance team helps and supports students to understand the concept of guidance and to facilitate the career decisions of students. In a review conducted by the Department of Education and Science (2006) it was reported that the main activity undertaken by guidance counsellors with Senior Cycle students was that of providing one-to-one career counselling and educational guidance. There is no
reference to a Value Inventory in the Circular 0034/2015 from the Department of Education and Skills, (DES 2015), which outlines the instruments that can be used in post-primary schools. While the DES Circular 0034/2015 sent to schools in 2015 provides a list of assessment instruments, it also states that the list ‘is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive. Other assessment instruments which are not listed may also be used if deemed appropriate to identify students’ needs’ (DES 2015, p.1). A weakness of this quasi-legal document is that the guidance counsellor is left with the decision of which instruments to use and with which class group to use them. According to McMahon and Watson (2009), greater emphasis should be placed on qualitative methods using narrative processes and discursive practices, than on the single empirical (quantitative) approach, such as psychometric testing.

As described in Chapter 2, theoretical perspectives of career counselling and career development have their roots in psychological approaches (Hearne 2007), however, Kidd (2006) suggests that these approaches have recently been challenged and new approaches to guidance should be examined. Therefore, Savickas’s constructionist approach may be relevant to post-primary students who might benefit from being ‘active agents’ in their own lives (Patton et al. 2006; Reid 2006; Savickas 1997, 2005). The student voice in this study was, in general, a well thought-out articulated opinion. The researcher had a strong sense of young people who were willing to contribute to their own destiny regarding career decisions. Savickas’s approach would enable them to tell their story and perhaps include what they perceive as important to them, i.e., career values. The implications for the Guidance Counsellor in understanding the importance of discussing values and carrying out a Value Inventory could be far-reaching. Unfortunately, the scope of this study is limiting, thus the researcher is unable to determine the outcome of such measures.

According to Curry and Milsom (2017 p. 215) a focus on career development is crucial in early adolescence and most importantly, career and college readiness in early adolescence is largely influenced by self-concept and an awareness of one’s own interests, abilities, values and aptitudes. Some participants drew comparisons between their interests and their values in the Focus Group discussions. As stated, much of the literature on career intervention focuses on interests, however, findings in this study suggest there may be a place for a Value Inventory in guidance interventions with Senior Cycle post-primary students. Focus Group participants unanimously agreed that doing a Value Inventory is a worthwhile guidance instrument.
5.3.1 Integration of Models

The literature review in chapter 2 established that adolescence is a time of tremendous change. It also examined theories of career development and career decision-making. Literature suggests that guidance counsellors must look beyond Holland’s ‘trait and fit’ theory and must realise that traditional guidance should adjust to incorporate the dynamic and ever-changing labour market that young people are entering. Mitchell and Krumboltz (1996) argue that matching individuals to particular environments assumes that individuals do not change, whereas in reality, individuals constantly change and develop. This was referred to by participants in the Focus Group discussions with many talking about how they will change and what might appear important to them now might be very different in the future.

There is a myriad of career development theories and career interventions that a guidance counsellor can use with students. According to Hirschi & Lage (2007) by noticing the needs and goals of students in career counselling, counsellors can not only determine which kind of intervention would be best suited for a specific client but they can also make implications concerning the career-choice readiness of the students and thus about the intensity of the required intervention.

It was crystal clear in Focus Group discussions that each participant had an individual voice and therefore, perhaps a blend of various career theories and CDM approaches should be considered by the guidance counsellor. The Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) discussed in Chapter 2 ‘focuses on the ideas of authenticity, balance and challenge that are important in creating an integrated lifestyle’ (Tajlili 2014, p. 256). The voice of participants in this study had well-founded opinions regarding ‘an integrated lifestyle’, many spoke about having ‘a balance between work and leisure time’. In fact, Tom, Liam, John, Kevin and Sean placed enormous focus on the importance of having both a challenge and balance, articulating that reaching this would be achieved by incorporating leisure time as a priority in their lives. There was a general concurrence from the groups regarding this perspective. Sullivan and Mainiero (2005) found that the KCM seeks to explain the key differences between men’s and women’s careers. Sullivan and Mainiero (2006) outline some interesting gender differences between male and female careers outlining that while men’s careers were in the past more linear and predictable, this is no longer the case. Male career trajectories undergo greater change today than ever and like females may have to embrace the KCM to help them adjust to various career patterns. The research refers to contemporary concepts about careers including boundaryless
and protean careers. These careers differ from traditional careers in that they may be defined by individual values or individual self-development (Arthur et al. 2005; Hall 2004). It is important the guidance counsellor is familiar with these new career concepts to better understand their students’ needs.

Chen (2003) asserts that the most recent attempt to integrate various career theoretical perspectives was done by Savickas (2001) who proposed a four-level model for comprehending career theories and integrating them into a comprehensive theory of careers. Tajlili (2014) suggests that the career practitioner would be well advised to use a holistic approach with students by building a rapport allowing them to disclose personal information in a narrative approach. Bronfrenners’ model discussed earlier outlined the importance of considering environmental constructs, some of which may emerge in the students’ narratives of their lives to date. ‘By discussing and identifying intentions in the decision-making process, clients are provided with insights and an understanding of what they value, as well as the systems framework in which they live’ (Tajlili 2014, p. 265).

There is a profusion of CDM theories in the field of guidance counselling. Bimrose and Barnes (2010) describes 4 styles of CDM and among them is evaluative career decision-making, it involves self-appraisal through the identification and evaluation of individual needs, values and abilities. This career intervention allows the student to explore and learn more about themselves. Traditional theories of career development propose that career aspirations develop in specific stages from childhood to adulthood, Migunde et al. (2011). However, the dynamic changing workplace that we live in today forces a re-evaluation of that perspective. Indeed, participants in the focus groups chose values such as Travel, Excitement, Variety, Skills and Informality which might suggest a link to broader constructs outlined in contemporary approaches to CDM as discussed in Chapter 2. In summary, constructivism keeps developing and invites various interpretations. One such example is the Systems Theory Framework (STF), (see Figure 9.1). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to describe the STF of Career Counselling in detail, it has been described by McMahon and Patton, (2006, p. 153) as ‘an overarching framework within which all concepts of career development described in the plethora of career theories can be usefully positioned and utilized in theory and practice’. The SFT approach is represented in Figure 9.1 and it contains many constructs that influence the CDM process, among them are Values. ‘Despite many attempts at reflecting the phenomena
related to the career development process, it is difficult to capture such a complex process in one figure’ (Bilon 2013, p.226).

Figure 9.1: Career in the STF, source: McMahon and Patton, 2006.

5.4 Ethical Considerations

The Career Value Inventory (CVI) used in Phase One of this study may be regarded as a psychometric instrument. ‘No matter how well any assessment is constructed, how accurate or valid it is, the results are worthless unless it is administered, scored and interpreted fairly and accurately’ (Coaley 2014, p.76). According to Coaley (2014) the dangers of misuse or incompetent use are considerable and it is generally accepted that tests should be used only by qualified practitioners. The use of psychometric instruments (as set out by the DES in the aforementioned Circular 0034/2015), comes under the remit of the guidance counsellor. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the executive arm of the DES responsible for the dissemination of research to assist DES policy, which in turn guides the standards in an Irish context on guidance in the education sector (NCGE, 2012), categorically states that, ‘the Guidance Counsellor is trained to use a range of psychometric tests and other evaluative instruments to support relevant objective of the school guidance programme’ (NCGE, 2004, p.21). It is crucial that all test results are treated confidentially (EFPA, 2012), thus if a guidance counsellor was to use a CVI with their students, it would be crucial that
findings generated be treated in confidence and in line with ethical guidelines set out in the IGC Code of Ethics for practitioners, (IGC 2012).

Furthermore, among the other relevant governing legislation and policies that must be adhered to are: Child protection as set out in the Children First Guidelines 2011, Data Protection Acts 2003 and 2008, Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003, Equal Status Act 2000 and as stated, the IGC Code of Ethics 2012. Although not binding on guidance counsellors, ‘best practice’ would see them following the PSI and Test Use Policy from the International Test Commission (ITC 2000), these will maintain professional and ethical standards are administered.

Kline (2000) suggests that there is much innovation and research still required to form the basis of new psychometrics. As this study focused on Career Value Inventory which could be used as a psychometric tool, it is important to note that its misuse may lead students into stereotypical occupations. Thus, it is extremely important that Value Inventory tools keep up to date with societal and cultural changes. Literature in the field of psychometrics suggests that practitioners are keen to keep abreast of the variation of instruments available, ‘enlightened career practitioners and inventory administrators are critical for effective service delivery to provide staff with copies of and training in alternative instruments, because the one-size only approach does not fit all’ (Harrington and Long 2013, p. 91).

In summary, ‘the main aim of career guidance is to help people with their career decision-making’ (Kidd and Watts, 1996, p.1), thus the researcher is left to ponder;

The question relative to career assessment is: do our current instruments measure personal flexibility, commitment to continuous learning, comfort with cultural diversity, ability to work in teams, willingness to engage in multitasking, self-initiative, the ability to be creative, and the motivation to be responsible for one’s own career development?

(Whitfield et al. 2009, p. 17)

5.5 Conclusion
This chapter discussed the overall findings of the study in the context of the literature. Primary themes and sub-themes were examined to extrapolate the perceptions that post-primary Senior Cycle students have of their values. The findings revealed that the adolescents can have a strong
sense of what their career values are and how they can assist them in their career decision-making. While opinions expressed during Focus Group discussion had many similarities, contrasting opinions were also evident. The findings lean tentatively towards suggesting gender differences contributed towards contrasting perspectives, which is supported in the literature. This chapter explicates the gap in research literature in relation to the topic of values in guidance counselling. It established that there is currently no evidence of Values Instrument being used in post-primary schools in Ireland in guidance classes. However, participants in this study appraised the prospect of discussing their values, many stating that it would be far better than ‘reading from a guidance textbook in class’. This chapter has also illuminated the prospect of advancing the narrative approach in guidance counselling which if integrated with other approaches, may assist both the student and guidance counsellor in the guidance service provided in post-primary schools in Ireland.

Chapter 6 will conclude the research study and outline any recommendations for policy and practice.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.0 Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the findings of this study within the context of the aims and objectives set out in Chapter 1. Strengths and limitations of the study are presented and implications of the findings for guidance practitioners are examined also. Additionally, this chapter purposes a number of recommendations pertaining to the findings in this study and in research literature. Finally, the conclusion is a reflection on the personal learning from the researchers’ perspective.

6.1 Summary of Findings
The overall aim of this study was to explore the perceptions Senior Cycle students have of their values in the context of the career decision-making process. Additionally, a number of objectives were addressed to expand the primary aim. The complex area of adolescent development and the career decision-making process was presented, as both areas form a key role in the work of a guidance counsellor. In order to explore the research title in greater detail a mixed methods approach was adopted, which involved two phases of data collection. Phase 1 involved the administration of a Career Value Inventory with fifty 5th year students in a post-primary school in the West of Ireland. In Phase 2 twelve students from the same cohort took part in two focus groups.

In the previous chapter the three overarching themes discussed were (1) Perceptions of Career Values Identified, (2) Male V’s Female Perspectives of Career Related Values and (3) Interventions in the Career Decision-Making Process. This study concurs with literature citing values as difficult to define, although everyone recognises and uses the concept (Patterson 2000). Adolescent development is also a complex area and this study is based on the basic assumption that adolescence is a period where much change occurs for an adolescent (Hindley 1983; Steinberg 2005). This was acknowledged by the adolescent participants in the focus groups who collectively agreed that values emerging for them now may possibly change as they develop into adults.

Arising from the findings of the study the researcher can elucidate a connection drawn by participants’ perceptions of their values and the career direction they may embark upon in the future. It was evident that participants in both focus groups had a comprehensive understanding
of what they regard as ‘career values’. Similar to findings by Crace and Brown (2002) participants were anticipating their work values to be those they would fulfil as a result of choosing and entering a particular occupation.

Literature research suggests that males and females have different work values (Tracey & Ward, 1998; Eccles et al. 1999; Frome et al. 2006; & Weisgram et al. 2010). In the findings in this study some gender differences in values did emerge. Similarities in gender perspectives were also apparent but overall findings would suggest a commonality between males and females in relation to values chosen and discussed in both focus groups. The most significant overt female perspective regarding work values appear to be ‘people-orientated’, while values of self-interest appeared more important to male participants. However, researchers should be careful not to gender pigeonhole which was highlighted in a recent study conducted by Pizzorno et al. (2015). That study aimed to ‘turn on its head the deterministic proposition that gender differences, being considered innate and/or socialised in childhood, lead to different careers’ and career counsellors are invited to ‘(re)consider how career narratives reinforce traditional gendered discourses and practices in the context of career counselling practices’ (Pizzorno et al. 2015, p.202).

Traditional theories of career development propose that career aspirations develop in specific stages from childhood to adulthood (Migunde et al. 2011). However, according to Nkoane and Alexander (2010), the postmodern perspective of career counselling in school settings demands that the holistic development of learners’ needs be facilitated in a more collaborative and interactive way, thus giving expression and meaning to learners’ life stories (narratives) by creating opportunities during the counselling situation. Only in adolescence do youngsters turn to their more personal interests, capacities, and values as criteria for further narrowing their choices (Gottfredson 1981).

6.2 **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

A key strength of this study is that it created an opportunity for the voice of Senior Cycle students to be heard regarding their perceptions of career values. In addition, the strong emphasis on the interpretivist paradigm, which underpinned the research, created an opportunity for the researcher to observe subtleties and draw inferences from participants’ perceptions of career values. These observations may have gone unnoticed had a greater emphasis been placed on a positivist approach (Cohen et al., 2007). Instead, the researcher
entered the world of the participants and gained a deeper understanding of career values leading
to thick descriptions (Thomas 2009) emerging from the viewpoint of the participants.

An additional strength of this study is the openness and honesty of participants, which was

clear to the researcher during Focus Group discussions. It was an advantage that the researcher

had many years teaching experience and understood the importance of mutual respect and

professionalism which was observed during all stages of data gathering.

There are several limitations to note in this study. Firstly, the research was conducted in a post-

primary school in the West of Ireland with samples of Irish adolescents. Therefore, no cultural

considerations are referred to in the study. Furthermore, participants are from a rural

background and findings could appear different if participants included a more urban region.

Secondly, the size of the sample used was small, specifically the 50 participants in the CVI. If

all Senior Cycle students were to be included in the sample, perhaps a more diverse reflection

of perceptions of career values could be gleaned.

Thirdly, the CVI used in Phase 1 of data collection contained 30 statements and this may be

regarded as extensive and confusing and thus a limitation of the study. The researcher observed

a difficulty with this instrument, as participants struggled to narrow their choice down to 4

values from a list of 30 statements. The CVI as an assessment instrument should be carefully

considered in future research as the design and length of the instrument used in this study may

have challenged an adolescents’ cognitive ability and memory.

Another limitation of the study was the narrow topic guide used during focus groups. While it

focused the discussion on the primary research question it didn’t allow for all secondary

questions to be answered. Further research may include discussions on teachers, peers and

parents influence on adolescents’ career decision-making.

Finally, this study adopted a strong qualitative approach and while the researcher aimed to

objectively study the subjective states of her subjects (Bogdan and Biklen 2007) nevertheless

personal bias may be an issue. Therefore, the positionality of the researcher was outlined,

rigour observed during data analysis and a reflective approach applied (Cohen et al. 2011).
6.3 Implications for Guidance Practitioners

This study has identified a gap in the literature in relation to values and career decision-making and in particular a lack of guidelines for a guidance practitioner about how to incorporate values in his/her work (Brown and Crace, 1996). Findings in this study illuminate the potential of including a Career Value instrument in guidance practice, as well as using the topic of values in the narrative of guidance classes/one-to-one guidance sessions with Senior Cycle students. Participants expressed a unanimous opinion that discussing values has a place in guidance practice. Additionally, literature suggests a link between values and morals (Durkin 1995; O’Flaherty & Gleeson 2014; O’Flaherty and Doyle 2014), the latter researcher posits that regardless of the career path students embark upon once they graduate, they will be faced with having to resolve moral dilemmas in both their personal and working lives.

The earlier literature review highlights the out-dated use of ‘matching people to jobs’ in guidance counselling (Bimrose et al. 2013). However, research also illuminates the diverse approaches used by guidance counsellors, person-centered approach (Bozarth and Fisher 1990), Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994), Career Construction Theory & Life Design (Savickas, 2013; Reid & Westergaard 2011; Patton McMahon 2014), cognitive behavioural approaches (Sheward and Branch, 2012), integrative models (Ali and Graham 1996; Egan, 2013), Cognitive Information Processing Theory (CIP) (Sampson, Lenz, Reardon, & Peterson, 1999), and Integrative Life Planning (ILP) (Hansen 1997). These approaches and interventions in practice may be integrated in different ways depending on the needs of the individual. Additionally, Watson (2006) proposes that career counsellors should understand their own values and assumptions about human beings, including their cultural values, biases, prejudices and attitudes that might limit their role as a career counsellor.

6.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study the recommendations in terms of policy, practice and research are as follows:

Policy

- The DES Circular 0034/2015 should consider adding a Career Value Inventory (CVI) to its list of psychometric instruments which would allow the guidance counsellor the option of using it with Senior Cycle students.
• The DES should reverse all cuts made to Guidance Counselling in Budget 2012. This would enhance the possibility of students receiving ‘appropriate’ guidance that could incorporate various guidance interventions, including a CVI.

• The school management and guidance counsellor should take some responsibility for including moral education, including values in their WSA to guidance. This could be included in the school policy.

Practice

• The guidance counsellor could amend the current CVI used in this study to include less statements and clearer instructions on how applying the concept of values to the career decision-making process could be beneficial.

• The topic of values could form part of the narrative approach in guidance one-one sessions with Senior Cycle students.

Research

• Further research on the potential link between values and career decision-making is recommended.

• A longitudinal study is recommended to gain a richer comparison of differences in gender perceptions of career values.

• Focus group topic guide could include questions in relation to how parents, teachers and peers influence the perception an adolescent has of his/her values.

6.5 Reflective Learning

At the outset of this study I had a preconceived idea that values should surely be considered as part of the career decision-making process. This study allowed me to critically evaluate that preconception and gain a broader understanding of the career decision-making process. I appreciate that the career decision-making process is complex and intricate. As a trained guidance counsellor, I will keep sight of the process, involving not just the individual but the context in which decisions are made. Reviewing the literature has highlighted the vastness of career theories and interventions and has exposed the gap in literature in relation to values and career decision-making.

This qualitative research taught me to set aside my personal opinions and assumptions in relation to values and to instead use a critical eye to observe the insightful learning from participants in the focus groups. I was struck by the openness, articulation and well-formed
opinions of the adolescents who generously offered their time to my research. I had a concern that because I was a practicing teacher in the school that students may not feel comfortable to contribute openly but the entire opposite occurred. Also, as a researcher I was aware of my role and kept an awareness of my ‘part in, or influence on’ (Cohen 2007, p.171) the research, thus always keeping a reflective approach to the study.

Maree and Molepo (2006) suggest that clients and career counsellors should develop a keen understanding of the developmental context of the career counselling setting. Furthermore, they highlight the enhancement of the two-way, active engagement process between client and counsellor. In line with this, I will regard our young people as active agents in choosing and constructing their careers. I understand that no single theory is comprehensive and I need to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each theory and intervention. I foresee utilising the theories best by integrating them in to the field of practice in accordance with the unique needs of each student.

Finally, what has emerged in this study imply that encouraging adolescents to consider their values could go some way in shaping their career development in later life, thus policy makers, educationalists and guidance practitioners might also consider integrating the topic of values in their work with Senior Cycle students.

6.6 Conclusion
This chapter has provided a conclusion to the research study by presenting an overview of the findings in the context of the primary research aim and objectives. Additionally, the strengths and limitations of the research were addressed along with the implications for practice outlined. A number of recommendations in terms of policy, practice and research were presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with the researcher’s reflection on her personal learning.
References


Baines, J. (2009) *What are the factors that shape the careers decisions of LSE students?*, unpublished thesis (M.A.), University of Reading, available: [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/28750](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/28750) [accessed 13 March 2017].


European Federation of Psychologists Association (2012) *EFPA Standards for test use: work, education, and health and social care, levels 1, 2, and 3*. European Federation of Psychologists Association (EFPA), available: http://www.efpa.eu/download/5cb1db81322f855b6aaf3f96be6a61a [Accessed 18 June 2017].


Appendix A

EHS REC no.
Date: 30/01/2017

Research Title: An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students' perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

Dear Principal,

I am currently a student of the MA Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development course with the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Tom Geary. As part of my studies I have to complete a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling.

In my research, I aim to explore the topic of values in the context of career decision-making. In order to gather this information, I would appreciate if you would give me consent to carry out the research study in your school. This would involve me administrating a Career Value Inventory on Careers Portal with two 5th Year class groups (approx. 50 students) and two follow up focus groups with 12 of these students.

All information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. Focus groups will be audio tape recorded and the data will be destroyed after analysis according to UL guidelines. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time prior to the data analysis stage. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick. It is important to note that the school’s name and the name of the individual participants will not be used in the research and the school will not be identifiable to anyone other than those directly involved.

If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:

Researcher: Cathleen Lynskey
UL Email address: 15064506@ul.ie
This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHS REC no:          ) . If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee
EHS Faculty Office
University of Limerick
Tel (061) 234101
ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
Appendix B

UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

School Principal Consent Form

EHS REC no.

**Research Title:** An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students' perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

I have read the project Information Sheet and understand in detail the particulars of the research project. I understand that the identity of the participants and school X, will not be revealed in the reporting of this research study. The conditions involved in the research which are designed to protect the privacy of participants and respect their contribution are:

1. Participation is entirely voluntary.
2. Participants are free to withdraw at any time prior to the data analysis stage and any contribution made will be subsequently destroyed.
3. The data gathered from the Career Value Inventory and both focus groups will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the research and the supervisor. Data from same may be part of the final research dissertation but under no circumstances will names or any identifying characteristics be included in the report.

I hereby give my consent for Cathleen Lynskey to carry out this research in school X.

Signature:_____________________________________

Printed name:__________________________________

Signature of Researcher:________________________

Date:_________________________________________
Appendix C

Participants Information Sheet (Career Value Inventory)

EHS REC no.
Date: 30/01/2017

Research Title: An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students' perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

Dear Student,

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study on values in the context of career decision-making through a Career Value Inventory. I am currently a student of the MA Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development course with the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Tom Geary.

Sixty students will be invited to participate and should more than fifty students accept then random selection will apply. The inventory should take approximately 20 minutes of your time, and needs to be completed by (date to be inserted). By completing this inventory, you are consenting to participate in this research. The inventory will be administered through the website, www.careersportal.ie.

All information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. The data will be destroyed after analysis according to UL guidelines. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time prior to the data analysis stage. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

The collected data will be stored in the PI’s office in the University of Limerick for seven years. It is important to note that the school’s name and the name of the individual participants will not be used in the research and the school will not be identifiable to anyone other than those directly involved.

If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:

Researcher: Cathleen Lynskey
UL Email address: 15064506@ul.ie

Supervisor: Tom Geary
Phone number: 085 778661
UL Email address: tom.geary@ul.ie
This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHS REC no: ). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee
EHS Faculty Office
University of Limerick
Tel (061) 234101
ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
Appendix D

Participants Consent Form (Career Value Inventory)

EHS REC no.

**Research Title:** An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students' perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

- I understand what this research project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I am fully aware of the procedures and of the risks and the benefits of the study.
- I am fully aware that the data generated from it will be kept confidential.
- I am aware that my identity will remain anonymous.
- I know that my participation in the research study is voluntary and I can withdraw my involvement at any time prior to the data analysis stage.

I hereby agree to take part in this study:

Signature:_____________________________________

Printed name:__________________________________

Signature of Researcher:_________________________

Date:_________________________________________
Appendix E

Participants Information Sheet (Focus Group)

EHS REC no.
Date: 30/01/2017

Research Title: An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students' perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

Dear Student,

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study on values in the context of career decision-making through participating in a focus group. I am currently a student of the MA Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development course with the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Tom Geary.

Students invited to participate in the focus group will be audio recorded. Only volunteers who agree to be audio recorded will participate in the focus group.

Convenience sampling from a cohort of 125 5th year students (with whom the researcher does not have a relationship with in any capacity) will be used for the Career Value Inventory. Following on from this, eighteen students will be invited to participate in focus groups. If more than 12 volunteer random selection will apply.

The focus group should take approximately 45 minutes of your time, and needs to be completed in the coming weeks. By participating in this focus group, you are consenting to participate in this research.

All information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. Focus groups will be audio tape recorded and the data will be destroyed after analysis according to UL guidelines. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research prior at any time prior to the data analysis stage. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

The collected data will be stored in the PI’s office in the University of Limerick for seven years. It is important to note that the school’s name and the name of the individual participants will not be used in the research and the school will not be identifiable to anyone other than those directly involved.

If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please
contact me or my supervisor:

Researcher: Cathleen Lynskey  
UL Email address: 15064506@ul.ie

Supervisor: Tom Geary  
Phone number: 085 778661  
UL Email address: tom.geary@ul.ie

This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHS REC no: ). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
EHS Faculty Office  
University of Limerick  
Tel (061) 234101  
ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
Appendix F

Participants Consent Form (Focus Group)

EHS REC no.

Research Title: An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students' perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

- I understand what this research project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I am fully aware of the procedures and of the risks and the benefits of the study.
- I am fully aware that the data generated from it will be kept confidential.
- I am aware that my identity will remain anonymous.
- I know that my participation in the research study is voluntary and I can withdraw my involvement at any time prior to the data analysis stage.
- I understand that students invited to participate in the focus group will be audio recorded.
- I understand that only volunteers who agree to be audio recorded will participate in the focus group.

I hereby agree to take part in a focus group in this research study:

Signature: ______________________________

Printed name: ______________________________

Signature of Researcher: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________
Appendix G

Parent/Carer/Guardian Information Sheet (Career Value Inventory)

EHS REC no.

Date: 30/01/2017

**Research Title:** An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students' perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

Dear Parent/ Carer/ Guardian,

I am currently a student of the MA Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development course with the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Tom Geary. As part of my studies I have to complete a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling.

In my research, I aim to explore the topic of values in the context of career decision-making. I am writing to you to enquire whether you would be willing to consent to your son/daughter taking part in a research study in school X, through a Career Value Inventory with me. This established inventory should take approximately 20 minutes and will be administered on [www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie).

All information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. The data gathered will be destroyed after analysis according to UL guidelines. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time prior to the data analysis stage. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

The collected data will be stored in the PI’s office in the University of Limerick for seven years. It is important to note that the school’s name and the name of the individual participants will not be used in the research and the school will not be identifiable to anyone other than those directly involved.

If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:

Researcher: Cathleen Lynskey  
UL Email address: 15064506@ul.ie
Supervisor: Tom Geary
Phone number: 085 778661   UL Email address: tom.geary@ul.ie

This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHS REC no: ). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee
EHS Faculty Office
University of Limerick
Tel (061) 234101
ehresearchethics@ul.ie
Appendix H

Parent/Career/Guardian Consent Form (Career Value Inventory)

Date: 30/01/2017

Project Title: An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students' perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

EHS Rec. No:

I have read the Career Value Inventory Information Sheet and understand in detail the particulars of the research project. I understand that the following conditions are designed to protect the privacy of all participants and to respect their contributions.

(i) Participation is entirely voluntary. Even if I consent to my child taking part, he/she still has the right to refuse to take part.
(ii) All participants are free to withdraw at any time in the process prior to data analysis of the Career Value Inventory.
(iii) The Career Value Inventory data will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the research team.
(iv) While findings from the Career Value Inventory data may be made part of the final research report, under no circumstances will any names of students or the school, nor any identifying characteristics be included in this report.
(v) The collected data will be stored in the PI’s office in the University of Limerick for seven years.

I hereby consent to my son/daughter taking part in this research project in the form of a Career Value Inventory.

Parent/Guardian Name: ………………………………………………………………….

Students Name and School Year:………………………………………………………..

Parent/Guardian Signature:………………………………………………………………

Researcher’s Signature……………………………………….. Date ………………
Appendix I

Parent/Carer/Guardian Information Sheet (Focus Group)

EHS REC no.

Date: 30/01/2017

Research Title: An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students’ perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

Dear Parent/ Carer/ Guardian,

I am currently a student of the MA Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development course with the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Tom Geary. As part of my studies I have to complete a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling.

In my research I aim to explore the topic of values in the context of career decision-making. I am writing to you to enquire whether you would be willing to consent to your son/daughter taking part in a research study in school X, through a student focus group with me, the main themes discussed will be a follow on from the Career Value Inventory. The focus groups will take approximately 40 minutes and be audio-tape recorded. It should be noted that as focus groups are conducted within a group setting, each participant’s contributions will be heard by the other participants within the group.

Students invited to participate in the focus group will be audio recorded. Only volunteers who agree to be audio recorded will participate in the focus group.

However, each student will be asked to sign an agreement to keep all opinions expressed during the focus group interview private. The recordings will have any names or identifiers removed, will be stored in the PI’s office in UL or on a password protected computer in UL, and the information will be stored for seven years. It will then be safely destroyed or deleted.

Participation in the study is voluntary and students can withdraw from the research at any time prior to the data analysis stage of the research. Should a student withdraw after the focus group has started their contribution will be removed. If you have any queries or require any further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:

Researcher: Cathleen Lynskey  
UL Email address: 15064506@ul.ie

Supervisor: Tom Geary
This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHS REC no: ). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee
EHS Faculty Office
University of Limerick
Tel (061) 234101
ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
Appendix J

UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Parent/Carer/Guardian Consent Form (Focus Group)

Date: 30/01/2017

Project Title: An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students' perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

EHS Rec. No:

I have read the Focus Group Information Sheet and understand in detail the particulars of the research project. I understand that the following conditions are designed to protect the privacy of all participants and to respect their contributions.

(i) Participation is entirely voluntary. Even if I consent to my child taking part, he/she still has the right to refuse to take part.
(ii) All participants are free to withdraw at any time in the process prior to data analysis of the focus groups.
(iii) The focus group data will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the research team. Contributions during the focus group, however, will be heard by all other participants in that focus group.
(iv) While excerpts from the focus group data may be made part of the final research report, under no circumstances will any names of students or the school, nor any identifying characteristics be included in this report.
(v) The collected data will be stored in the PI’s office in the University of Limerick for seven years.

I hereby consent to my son/daughter taking part in this research project in the form of a focus group.

Parent/Guardian Name: .................................................................

Students Name and School Year: .....................................................

Parent/Guardian Signature: ..............................................................

Researcher’s Signature: ................................................................. Date ..........................
Appendix K

Gatekeeper Information Sheet Careers Portal

EHS REC no.
Date: 30/01/2017

**Research Title:** An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students’ perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently a student of the MA Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development course with the School of Education, University of Limerick, under the supervision of Tom Geary. As part of my studies I have to complete a research dissertation on a topic related to guidance counselling.

In my research, I aim to explore the topic of values in the context of career decision-making. In order to gather this information, I would appreciate if you would give me consent to use the Career Value Inventory on [www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie) as part of my data collection process. This will be administered two 5th Year class groups, approximately 50 students.

All information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. The data will be destroyed after analysis according to UL guidelines. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time prior to the data analysis stage. The results from this research study will be reported in my thesis and may be disseminated through other professional publications and conferences.

The collected data will be stored in a secure location approved by the University of Limerick. It is important to note that the name of the website and the name of the individual participants will not be used in the research and the website will not be identifiable to anyone other than those directly involved.

If you have any queries or require further any further information on the research study, please contact me or my supervisor:

**Researcher:** Cathleen Lynskey  
**UL Email address:** 15064506@ul.ie

**Supervisor:** Tom Geary  
**Phone number:** 085 778661  
**UL Email address:** tom.geary@ul.ie
This research has received Ethical approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EHS REC no: ). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
EHS Faculty Office  
University of Limerick  
Tel (061) 234101  
ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
Gatekeeper Consent Form Careers Portal

EHS REC no.

**Research Title:** An exploratory study of Senior Cycle students' perceptions of their values in the context of future career decision-making.

I have read the project Information Sheet and understand in detail the particulars of the research project. I understand that the identity of the participants and the website [www.careerportal.ie](http://www.careerportal.ie) will not be revealed in the reporting of this research study. The conditions involved in the research which are designed to protect the privacy of participants and respect their contribution are:

1. Participation is entirely voluntary.
2. Participants are free to withdraw at any time prior to the data analysis stage and any contribution made will be subsequently destroyed.
3. The data gathered from the Career Value Inventory will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the research and the supervisor. Data from the Career Value Inventory may be part of the final research dissertation but under no circumstances will names or any identifying characteristics be included in the report.

I hereby give my consent for Cathleen Lynskey to carry out this research using the Career Value Inventory on [www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie).

Signature: ________________________________

Printed name: ________________________________

Signature of Researcher: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Focus Group Topic Guide

- Establish ground rules
- Outline ethical considerations
- You completed the Value Inventory a week ago. To what extent do you think it is an effective questionnaire in supporting your career decision-making
- The dominant values emerging from the Value Inventory across the group are… What do you think of these findings? Do you agree/disagree? What are the reasons for your answers?
- Are the dominant values reflective of your response to the Value Inventory which you completed a week ago?
- If this Value Inventory was used alongside your interests, results of exams and DAT profile, do you think it would support your career decision-making. If so why, if not why?
- What stage in career guidance provision do you think it could be best used?
- What do you think are the strengths of the Value Inventory?
- What do you think are the limitations of the Value Inventory?
- Would it support your career decision-making if you completed an alternative VI? If so why?
- Other topics from the Value Inventory may emerge and be included.
Values are the things that are most important to us in our lives and careers. Our values are formed in a variety of ways through our life experiences, our feelings and our families. In the context of Career Planning, values generally refer to the things we value in a career. For example, some people value job security, money, structure and a regular schedule. Others value flexibility, excitement, independence and variety.

Values are things we feel very strongly about. For example, most of us will say that having enough money to live comfortably is important to us, but many are willing to work for less because what they value most is not money, it's something else such as working for a specific cause, helping people or having free time. Being aware of what we value in our lives is important because a career choice that is in-line with our core beliefs and values is more likely to be a lasting and positive choice. To help gain awareness of your work values, complete the following checklist.

**Directions**
In the following checklist, consider each work value carefully and indicate whether it is Very Important (1), Somewhat Important (2), or Not Important (3) to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It's important to me to:</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>experience change and enjoy a variety of tasks</td>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have little chance of job loss or loss of income</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have defined responsibilities and a hierarchy in the workplace</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a high income</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keep a routine without too many surprises</td>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be given opportunities to travel and see new places</td>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with a diverse group of people and share ideas</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make my own hours and have little direct supervision</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take part in higher education and ongoing training and upgrading</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience adventure, changes and challenges</td>
<td>Excitement</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take on responsibility and help a group reach collective goals</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have time and energy to spend with family and close friends</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend time on hobbies and interests outside of work</td>
<td>Leisure Time</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in an occupation that fits with my religious beliefs</td>
<td>Religious Beliefs</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be recognized and respected for the work I do</td>
<td>Prestige</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work outside, close to nature</td>
<td>Working Outside</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in comfortable surroundings, inside</td>
<td>Working Indoors</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have my own tools and working space</td>
<td>Personal Space</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet a variety of people and work with and/or for others</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with facts and abstract concepts</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with concrete items</td>
<td>Things</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a difference in people's lives individually</td>
<td>Helping Others</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make the world a better place on a grand scale</td>
<td>Community Impact</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have little chance of on-the-job injury or danger</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>12 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
have positive and friendly relationships with colleagues  Relationships  12 3
learn and develop a variety of skills in my work  Skills  12 3
use my artistic talents in the work I do  Creativity  12 3
be in charge  Authority  12 3
work in a casual and relaxed atmosphere  Informality  12 3
become completely wrapped up in the work that I'm doing  Passion  12 3

Type out the values that are most important to you (every number 1 that you selected) and then, if you wish, print out the page for future reference:

**My Work Values**

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5.  
6.  
7.  
8.  
9.  

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Appendix O  
Example of Colour Paper used during Focus Groups