



# **The management of natural competencies**

DBA research by

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**Abstract**

Management science, as well as psychology, has tended to avoid the issue of why people like different activities, and why they tend to be good at the activities they like. The aim of this thesis is to tackle this issue by motivating and introducing a construct, called “natural competencies”, and exploring it empirically. “Natural competencies” are defined as resources that enable activities that are inherently rewarding or exciting for the subject, thereby creating positive emotions. Performing them is viewed as being part of their personal identity which transcends the social roles in which a person engages. Utilizing “natural competencies” may also result in feelings of fulfilment.

It is hypothesized that natural competencies tend to appear in leisure (non-working) activities, that is, activities chosen by the subject because they are pleasurable and, therefore, motivating. So, leisure activities should be a source of information regarding an individual’s natural competencies. Ideally, occupational activities reflect natural competencies too, but alienation may prevent this.

An empirical investigation was performed by in-depth-interviewing 20 subjects whose hobby it is to collect art. Collecting art may stimulate informal learning and may be intellectually challenging; so it might elicit pleasure, engagement, and ultimately fulfilment, thereby being relevant to natural competencies. Analysis of interviews was performed by “modified grounded theory”, an approach blending inductive and deductive, theory-driven methods. By combining the interviews with observations, a triangulation method was also utilized.

The results are preliminary and qualitative, but they indicate that subjects experiencing and utilizing their natural competencies at occupational activities will experience a greater level of fulfilment. This basic result is stated in the “competency fulfilment model”. A basic practical implication of the work is that non-working activities may be fruitful for identifying and developing competencies in working adults. However, more work is needed to test and develop the competency fulfilment model in other domains, and to continue sharpening the concepts involved.

**Table of contents**

**Table of contents ..... 6**

**Figures ..... 10**

**Tables ..... 10**

**1 Introduction ..... 11**

1.1 Background and research gap ..... 11

1.2 Deriving the objectives of the thesis ..... 14

1.3 Method ..... 19

1.4 Thesis structure ..... 19

1.5 Research background and development ..... 21

1.6 Definition of key terms ..... 22

**2 Literature review ..... 27**

2.1 Overview ..... 27

2.1.1 About the literature review ..... 27

2.1.2 Literature of main importance ..... 27

2.2 Identity theory ..... 30

2.2.1 About this section ..... 30

2.2.2 Definition of identity ..... 30

2.2.3 Basic concepts of identity ..... 33

2.2.4 Identity and natural competencies ..... 37

2.2.5 Specific concepts relating to identity ..... 39

2.2.6 Conclusions ..... 44

2.3 Fulfilment ..... 45

2.3.1 About this section ..... 45

2.3.2 The importance of aspects of positive psychology ..... 45

2.3.3 The term ‘fulfilment’ ..... 47

2.3.4 The components of fulfilment – positive emotion, engagement, and meaning ..... 49

2.3.5 Influences on fulfilment ..... 51

2.3.6 Characteristics and strengths that influence fulfilment ..... 56

2.3.7 Conclusions ..... 57

2.4 Working life and non-working life ..... 58

2.4.1 About this section ..... 58

2.4.2 Definition of working life and non-working life ..... 58

2.4.3 Impact of work on overall fulfilment ..... 60

2.4.4 Fulfilment and job-success ..... 63

2.4.5 “Spill-over” or “compensation” to find fulfilment? ..... 63

2.4.6 Collecting Art ..... 64

2.4.7 Summary ..... 67

2.5 Skill-development / competencies ..... 68

2.5.1 About this section ..... 68

2.5.2 Sharpening competencies ..... 68

2.5.3 Competency-training in non-work life ..... 70

2.5.4 The right career path ..... 70

2.5.5 Character strengths and natural competencies ..... 71

2.5.6 Self-efficacy beliefs as related to success ..... 72

2.5.7 Summary ..... 73

2.6 The academic importance of this research ..... 74

2.7 The practical importance of this research ..... 76

2.7.1 Why the subject is important in practice ..... 76

2.7.2 Some quotes by people with whom I discussed the subject ..... 78

2.8 Conclusions and managerial relevance ..... 79

**3 Methodology ..... 80**

3.1 Overview of chapter 3 ..... 80

3.2	Methodology .....	80
3.2.1	The basic approach .....	80
3.2.2	Modified grounded theory .....	82
3.2.3	Case Study .....	85
3.2.4	Illustrative writing .....	86
3.3	Research development.....	86
3.4	Detailed research process .....	89
3.5	Research design.....	91
3.6	Practical tools and methods .....	92
3.6.1	Rationale of choosing different tools and methods .....	92
3.6.2	Diary of notes from the art world .....	94
3.6.3	Character sketches .....	96
3.6.4	Assumptions before the interview .....	98
3.6.5	Reflections after the interview.....	99
3.6.6	Observations.....	99
3.6.7	Final focused interview: techniques and questions .....	101
3.6.8	Summary of practical tools and methods .....	103
3.7	The candidates targeted for this research .....	104
3.7.1	Definition of an art collector – the subject of interview .....	105
3.7.2	Sampling subjects.....	105
3.8	Codification .....	107
3.8.1	The guiding idea behind codification .....	107
3.8.2	Codification at various stages.....	107
3.8.3	Final Codification.....	108
3.9	The ongoing process of analysis.....	114
3.9.1	Within-case analysis.....	114
3.9.2	Cross-case analysis.....	115
3.10	Performing the coding process .....	117
3.10.1	Handling bias.....	117
3.10.2	Acting ethically, being critical .....	119
3.10.3	Reflective vigilance and monitoring of assumptions.....	119
3.10.4	Understanding and retaining information.....	120
3.10.5	Keeping boundaries.....	120
3.11	Summary of chapter 3.....	120
<b>4</b>	<b>Empirical results.....</b>	<b>122</b>
4.1	Within-case analysis.....	122
4.1.1	About the within-case analysis .....	122
4.1.2	Case Peter .....	123
4.1.3	Case Axel .....	125
4.1.4	Case Sandra.....	127
4.1.5	Case Bruno .....	129
4.1.6	Case Eva .....	131
4.1.7	Case Baruch.....	133
4.1.8	Case Evelyn.....	135
4.1.9	Case Gregor.....	138
4.1.10	Case Fritz.....	140
4.1.11	Case Hans-Heiri .....	142
4.1.12	Case Isa .....	145
4.1.13	Case Gian .....	148
4.1.14	Case Joe.....	150
4.1.15	Case Miriam .....	152
4.1.16	Case Mark .....	155
4.1.17	Case Sarah.....	157
4.1.18	Case Patrick.....	159
4.1.19	Case Richard .....	160
4.1.20	Case Urs .....	162

4.1.21	Case Ian .....	165
4.1.22	Overview of within-case analysis .....	167
4.2	Cross case analysis .....	178
4.2.1	About the cross-case analysis .....	178
4.2.2	Cross-Case analysis on the central code of “identity” .....	178
4.2.3	Cross-Case analysis on the central code of “art-collection-life” .....	183
4.2.4	Cross-Case analysis on the central code of “job-life” .....	186
4.2.5	Cross-case analysis on the central code of “competency” .....	188
4.2.6	Cross-case analysis on the main code “success and satisfaction” .....	190
4.2.7	Cross-Case analysis: Final Remarks .....	192
4.3	Summary of chapter 4 .....	195
<b>5</b>	<b>Discussion .....</b>	<b>196</b>
5.1	Competency-Fulfilment-Model .....	196
5.2	Identity theory: meaning and originality of results .....	199
5.2.1	Identity and distinction .....	199
5.2.2	Identity and centrality .....	202
5.2.3	Identity and continuity .....	205
5.2.4	Originality of results: Summary .....	206
5.3	Fulfilment: meaning and originality of results .....	207
5.3.1	Influences on fulfilment .....	207
5.3.2	Character traits influencing fulfilment .....	208
5.3.3	Events influencing fulfilment .....	211
5.3.4	Attitude or relative point of view influencing fulfilment .....	212
5.3.5	Originality of results: Summary .....	213
5.4	Working and non-working life: meaning and originality of results .....	214
5.4.1	Impact of working life and non-working life on overall fulfilment .....	214
5.4.2	Fulfilment and job-success .....	219
5.4.3	Originality of results: Summary .....	220
5.5	Skill and Competency Development: meaning and originality of results .....	222
5.5.1	Sharpening competencies .....	222
5.5.2	Competency-training in non-working life .....	222
5.5.3	The right career path .....	224
5.5.4	Self-efficacy beliefs as related to success .....	226
5.5.5	Originality of results: Summary .....	227
5.6	Summary of chapter 5 .....	228
<b>6</b>	<b>Implications .....</b>	<b>229</b>
6.1	The implications of these findings for theory and practice .....	229
6.2	Identity theory: Theoretical and practical implications .....	229
6.3	Fulfilment: Theoretical and practical implications .....	230
6.3.1	Influences on fulfilment .....	230
6.3.2	Character traits influencing fulfilment .....	231
6.3.3	Events influencing fulfilment .....	233
6.3.4	Attitude or relative point of view influencing fulfilment .....	233
6.4	Working life and non-working life: Theoretical and practical implications .....	234
6.4.1	Impact of working life and non-working life on overall fulfilment .....	234
6.4.2	Fulfilment and job-success .....	236
6.5	Skill and competency-development: Theoretical and practical implications .....	237
6.5.1	Competency-training in non-working life: A powerful training arena .....	237
6.5.2	The right career path: Focusing on strengths .....	238
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>240</b>
7.1	Restatement of thesis .....	240
7.2	Review of findings .....	240
7.3	Theoretical and practical contributions .....	241
7.3.1	Contribution to the literature on identity theory .....	241
7.3.2	Contribution to the literature on fulfilment .....	242



7.3.3	Contribution to the literature on working- and non-working-life .....	243
7.3.4	Contribution to the literature on skill- and competency-development .....	243
7.4	Limitations.....	244
7.4.1	Methodological limitations.....	244
7.4.2	Conceptual limitations and open questions .....	246
7.5	Future Research.....	247
7.5.1	Twenty cases .....	247
7.5.2	Different leisure time activities .....	247
7.5.3	Analysis of individuals with the help of art.....	247
7.5.4	Time limited research.....	247
7.5.5	Conscious applications of the model.....	248
7.5.6	Values and competencies .....	248
7.5.7	Does working life also help to understand oneself better? .....	248
7.6	Final word.....	248
<b>8</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>262</b>
9.1	Final list of candidates.....	262
9.2	Data-collection in practice: Samples .....	264
9.2.1	Assumptions before the interview .....	264
9.2.2	Record of observations .....	265
9.2.3	A character sketch .....	268
9.2.4	A focused interview transcript.....	273
9.3	Codification trajectory.....	293
9.3.1	Codification of the diary.....	293
9.3.2	Codification of the press-articles.....	295
9.3.3	Codification of the pilot .....	296
9.3.4	Experimenting with data-codification .....	298
9.4	Full list of natural competencies per candidate .....	301

**Figures**

Figure 1: Research Development .....87  
 Figure 2: Research Design .....92  
 Figure 3: Example of how a natural competency is marked in the data: Fritz ‘fascination’ .....114  
 Figure 4: Cross-case analysis method: “Axel”, “Baruch” and “Bruno”, code “Centrality” .....117  
 Figure 5: CF-Model.....198

**Tables**

Table 1: Definitive codes and sub-codes used for analysis .....90  
 Table 2: Structural basis for the character sketch.....97  
 Table 3: Structural basis for handling of assumptions .....98  
 Table 4: Structural basis for reflective notes after the interview .....99  
 Table 5: Structural basis of observation .....100  
 Table 6: Helpful points observed in carrying out the focused interview.....102  
 Table 7: Final questions about success and satisfaction.....103  
 Table 8: Definitive codes and sub-codes used for analysis .....111  
 Table 9: Example of concepts for Fritz .....112  
 Table 10: Example of natural competencies for Fritz .....113  
 Table 11: Example table of within-case analysis .....115  
 Table 12: Within-case analysis overview.....177  
 Table 13: Cross-case analysis summary: competencies and overall fulfillment .....191  
 Table 14: Core-theme overview .....194

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and research gap

It is a common wisdom that almost every person experiences activities or situations in which he or she feels more comfortable, and performs better in, than in others. When we watch children play, they might seem to delve into something, forgetting about everything else. Experiences, of course, may not always appear in such a pronounced way. But even for adults, there are activities that are more fun than others, and in which we feel more comfortable and – simultaneously – more competent in performing as compared to others. Moreover, there are significant individual differences. An activity might be exciting for one person but annoying to another, and vice versa.

This is, of course, common sense. But it is much less clear where these differences stem from, and why we are good at and like to do specific things even if they might be tedious or even boring from another person's point of view. Put as simple questions: Why do people like different activities? Where do differences in preferences and corresponding differences in ability come from?

Psychology, for example, approaches the issue of individual differences from different directions. The psychology of personality identifies several personality traits that might offer explanations to some degree. For example, let us imagine two persons, A and B, preparing for their 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. Person A plans a big party and is eager to invite everyone he knows. In contrast, person B just prefers celebrating with family and, maybe, a few close friends. The psychology of personality would explain these differences by basic personality traits, like extraversion (person A) and introversion (person B). More generally, different behaviour patterns are also traced back to the “Big Five” personality factors (i.e., Laux, 2008, p. 177). However, these concepts seem to be rather broad. Maybe person A, being an extravert, likes to prepare a meeting together with colleagues, but may hate giving a presentation at this meeting. Personality factors might create the “big picture”, but they do not seem to be designed for explaining specific preferences, or likes and dislikes.

Motivation is another intensively researched field in psychology. Motivation could lie more closely to the heart of what might be meant when talking about likes and

dislikes. But the aim of motivation research is to identify more general regularities of behaviour control. For example, the motivation of learning tries to explain study behaviour by general terms such as hope for success, or expectation of a reward. A person might be motivated to do something because the result of it is of much personal value, or because it is instrumental to some other, higher goal (Vroom, 1964). So, the reason for performing an activity is because the activity itself or its outcomes are of value. But this does not really try to answer the question of *why* the activity, or its results, or consequences are of value. What makes it valuable to the person? There is also the notion of intrinsic motivation, but what makes a person be intrinsically motivated towards some specific activity?

Another source of individual differences might be intelligence. There are differences in people with respect to intellectual ability but, more importantly in this context, there are different facets of intelligence. A person might perform well at verbal activities but less well in recognising geometric figures, and vice versa. So theories of intelligence might help to explain why some people are good at certain things and less good at others. But, again, the question raised above cannot be answered satisfactorily because intelligence focuses only on the cognitive part. There is no cue of why it is *fun* to solve Sudoku for one person, and to write poems for another person.

Altogether, major fields of psychology seem not to have contributed so much to the question of why people enjoy specific activities (other than activities fulfilling biological needs). This is, in part, because the objectives of psychology may be different from this, as psychology tries to identify general rules and regularities of behaviour and experience.

But, still, the field is of much practical relevance too. If a person is aware of personal likes, and what they does well, it might be easier to find the right occupation and leisure activities. Conversely, it might create problems if that person has trouble discovering what they really like to do. With respect to occupation, it might be really nontrivial to find a satisfying place to work as occupational activities rapidly change, as they tend to keep up with rapid technological progress.

On the other hand, the question does also have important managerial implications, as it costs the company money to hire the wrong person for a job – and “wrong” does not only refer to cognitive ability and skill in this context, but also to the enjoyment of the activity by the employee, as an employee who basically likes their job might perform better. Management of personnel is generally faced with the challenge to find best-suited employees for given tasks, to educate employees in order to meet future demands, and to employ people so that they meet and are motivated for the challenges of the tasks they are responsible for. But these tasks are complex and multi faceted. Han (2008, p. 31) describes the “irrelevance of much knowledge-based education to occupational qualification and the failure of educational qualifications to predict occupational success”. Obviously, in hiring employees, and in planning further education for given employees, some central aspects seem to be missing (Promis, 2008). What is the reason for this? Why is it so difficult to identify really predictive indicators for later occupational success?

Of course, there might be many reasons for this. With respect to recruitment and further education, one straightforward problem is that the demands to be met are not yet known, as they lie in the future. In addition, demands may be changing. This is all the more true in the world of today which, as mentioned, is facing a rapid technological change. With respect to already working staff, employees might work on tasks that are too demanding, or that are not demanding enough. Another problem has been an over-emphasis on cognitive challenges. But occupational success may also depend on “soft skills” (Promis, 2008) as well as on the cultural “fit” of an employee and the company or, more specifically, the team he is working with.

So, experience suggests that cognitive, as well as non-cognitive, aspects might be responsible for occupational success because they may comprise not only cognitive, fairly easily described skills but also soft skills that may be hard to grasp. These aspects may translate into individual competencies as well as interests and preferences that are not always easy to pinpoint. Therefore, they may tend to be overlooked, which adds to the challenge of hiring the right person for a job. In addition, employees themselves may tend to apply for certain jobs, for example, because of good salary, even though they feel they are not really suited for them.

In part, companies help themselves by conducting tests and assessments of what is interesting and enjoyable for a candidate. Tests and assessments of interest have had a longstanding tradition in practical application; however, what “interests” are in relation to motivation and cognitive skills is not really clear. “The history of interest measurement is notably for its practical potency and success, and yet virtual emptiness of psychological conceptualization.” (Borgen, 1986, p. 106). Even 25 years later, this statement basically seems to be true, as there are barely attempts to attach interest and preferences for specific activities to theoretical concepts of psychology.

To sum up, there appears to be a research gap with respect to the following two questions, one theoretical and one practical:

- *Theoretical*: Why do people like different activities? Why do they tend to be good at the activities they like? How can we describe these preferences / competencies?
- *Practical*: Are there ways to help people gain aware of these preferences / competencies? How could management identify these preferences and competencies of their staff, or of people to be hired?

## **1.2 Deriving the objectives of the thesis**

In talking about individual preferences and competencies, it is also valuable to draw on the psychological research directions of identity theory, fulfilment, and positive psychology. After all, it seems natural to assume that individual preferences and competencies have something to do with individual identity, and with the experience of satisfactory activity and positive emotions, which are also addressed in theories of fulfilment and positive psychology. Nevertheless, it should be noted it is somewhat surprising that much that is known about identity theory, fulfilment, and positive psychology is not utilised in a systematic way for tackling the research gaps described above.

In order to tackle this issue, a basic assumption will be made (which will have to be motivated later): This assumption is that in an occupational context, activities a person is particularly good at and activities he particularly likes tend to be the same.

The skills and competencies underlying these particular activities will be called “natural competencies” in this thesis. This is a working term for now, and this construct will be explicated in detail later. For now, it suffices to define natural competencies as resources (like skills) that enable activities that are inherently rewarding or exciting for the subject, thereby creating positive emotions. They may range from a mild feeling of comfort to an intense emotion of joy and delight.

Utilising natural competencies in an occupational setting would mean that if an employee is employed such that they exert their particular strengths on challenging but not over-burdening tasks (i.e., “stretching” tasks, Ohlott, 2003), they might be more satisfied, and at the same time this would help to solve or alleviate the problems mentioned above. But what is even more, employing staff so that they might utilise their natural competencies might enhance creativity since, in this situation, the employees might tend to exploit their knowledge and skills more fully. While much attention has been paid to creativity and innovation power of customers, this means that exploiting the creativity of employees might be enhanced by letting them work in accordance with their natural competencies. This way, the employees might be more creative, engage in more fruitful processes of discussion and knowledge sharing (Miles, 2007) and, ultimately, contribute to more innovative power of the company.

Just in line with this, albeit using a different terminology, Ahonen, Hussi & Schunder-Tatzber (2007, p. 32f.) state that work-related well-being might be a precondition of intellectual capital of a company. Work-related well-being is affected considerably by the kind of work somebody performs, more specifically: by the relation of this work to individual preferences and strengths. Intellectual capital, among other things, comprises the intellectual abilities of the employees. So, letting employees work according to their natural competencies might add to the intellectual capital of the company.

Consequently, it should be important for management (as well as for the employees themselves) to be able to identify “natural competencies” of their employees in order to be able to deploy them in an effective and efficient way, and in order to be able to design effective qualification and training. Indeed, being able to utilise

instruments of recruiting and staff deployment effectively and efficiently may generate competitive advantage.

Supposing a relevance of natural competencies to job success is, of course, a hypothesis, and in order to be able to test it, natural competencies of individuals and their relations to job success have to be identified. This requires a clear conceptualisation of “natural competencies” in the first place.

At first glance, this seems to be a quite simple strand of thought but, quite often, employees and companies do not act according to this. This might be because it might be quite difficult for an employee (and for his superior, as well) to identify what he is particularly good at. It might even be difficult to put into the right words (or categories) the occupation-related activities one really likes to do. Research on knowledge management has shown that the so-called “implicit knowledge” or “tacit” knowledge (Nonaka, 2000, p. 98) is hard to grasp, and hard to put into words. So this poses the question how natural competencies of individuals could be detected, or discovered at all. Skill profiles, for example, might not be enough since they tend to focus on cognitive tasks and skills and may fail to grasp other important aspects that may be harder to pinpoint but may be more important. Up to now, how to achieve such a discovery of natural competencies in a systematic way seems to be a difficult problem. This is even more true for the question how an individual could actively develop and utilise these natural competencies.

Nevertheless, maybe part of the problem is that in trying to identify and describe competencies, a too narrow focus is often adopted: The focus on occupational activity itself. However, there seems to be no attempt to look at activities outside the occupational context, too, in order to support identification of natural competencies; although, looking at the activities of the individual from outside work might be a viable approach. More specifically, leisure activities of employees might be interesting from a managerial point of view for two reasons:

First, it might be likely that individuals exhibit natural competencies within the non-work domain more easily than at the workplace because, in this context, they tend to be less restricted by fixed processes and responsibilities. So, it might be easier to



identify natural competencies - as they might be useful in the work domain – by also looking at leisure activities.

Second, there might be interactions between leisure activities and workplace activities such that there might be a positive “spill-over” from leisure activities to workplace activities. In other words, if staff is employed in accordance with their natural competencies, they will tend to utilise and further develop their knowledge and skills acquired during leisure activities. That is, they will bring in more knowledge, and they will be motivated more intrinsically. If these arguments are valid, this stresses the importance of leisure activities for activities at the work place. More specifically, it might be valuable to develop natural competencies shown at leisure activities even from a managerial point of view.

However, to my knowledge, there is no research yet aimed at identifying natural competencies that may be utilised at the workplace by establishing a link to non-work life. Therefore, the research gaps stated above can be put more precisely, stating the research goals of this thesis:

- *Theoretical:* If we term peoples’ activity preferences as natural competencies: How can we describe natural competencies in terms of identity theory, fulfilment, and positive psychology?
- *Practical:* Is it feasible to identify natural competencies of subjects drawing on their leisure activities? Is it feasible to do this from a management point of view also?

So, with respect to the first question, the issue is what natural competencies are, and how the natural competencies of working individuals might be connected to their job-success and satisfaction and, hence, their overall fulfilment. Taking a broader view, the question will be asked whether natural competencies add to creativity and innovation of a company, and in what ways.

With respect to the second question, the issue is how it is possible to discover natural competencies in, or by, the individual: Is it helpful to look at non-work activities? Can natural competencies be developed? If so how? And, of course, is it warrantable to look at natural competencies from a managerial point of view?

Therefore, this thesis seeks to elucidate the relationship between a working individual's natural competencies and the degree of success, satisfaction and overall fulfilment that they experience in life. The research is informed by existing literature in the areas of personal fulfilment, the relationship between working- and non-working life, skill- and competency-development, and personal identity. The result of this study is a model, which illustrates the relationship between identity, an individual's natural competencies and their overall fulfilment.

These central research questions, however, highlight some further issues such as identity, skill- and competency-development and the link between working and non-working life, which the present research intends to help bridge. These relations are outlined in greater detail in chapter 2; however, a brief sketch will be outlined here:

*Identity:* As will be argued, natural competencies are part of a subject's personal identity. Therefore, identity theory might shed some light on the question of the nature of natural competencies.

*Fulfilment:* As will be argued too, experiencing fulfilment is an important aspect of utilising natural competencies. What can an individual do to actively influence their chances of fulfilment in life? What attitudes should they adopt and which personal characteristics should they focus on in this task?

*Working and non-working life:* What are the best non-working activities to engage in to improve one's working life? How can an individual use their non-working time to generate inner motivation and achieve success at work? How do personal values relate to an individual's competencies and how do both of these influence job-success?

*Skill- and competency-development:* How can working adults develop those competencies, especially when avenues for such training are closed in their current work-place? How can a person develop the self-belief and positive attitude necessary in order to achieve success as well as fulfilment at work?

### **1.3 Method**

The research questions are complex and mostly ill-defined. At this stage of the research of these issues, stating specific hypotheses would seem to be premature. Therefore, in addition to a conceptual theoretical analysis, a qualitative empirical analysis will be conducted: In-depth interviews will be performed with subjects as they talk about and describe their leisure activities in a specific field. The empirical data that informs this research comprises twenty case-studies of candidates who all have different occupations but who all share the same leisure activity, namely art-collecting. Interestingly however, each individual carries out that particular leisure activity in their own individual way. It is in these differences in behaviour that the focal point of this research lies. The data informing this research has been acquired during 2007-2010. This data consist of recorded interviews, notes and press-articles, only a small sample of which is explicitly mentioned or quoted in the thesis. All of the material is, however, available from the author. The 20 cases, the character sketches and the focused interviews, which are coded and used directly for this dissertation, form part of this research and are also available digitally, on demand.

### **1.4 Thesis structure**

The research is presented in the following structure:

Chapter two provides an overview of some of the existing literature concerning the field, showing areas where research has already been carried out, as well as areas where gaps become apparent and new questions emerge. It discusses four main academic fields: Part one looks into the question of personal identity, part two focuses on positive psychology, especially regarding the subject of fulfilment; part three reviews the literature on working- and non-working life; part four discusses skill and competency development for a working individual. Finally, the importance of the chosen topic is illustrated from an academic and a practical point of view.

Chapter three outlines the qualitative methodology of data collection and data analysis behind the research and the various research tools employed. It lays out the research design and the codification and analysis processes, and introduces the candidates who took part in the project. It concludes with a section on the

safeguards put in place to ensure the robustness, validity and reliability of the research, providing some information on research procedures pursued in practice.

Chapter four discusses the 20 candidate-cases that form the core of the research, and is structured so that the reader can get a good picture on the nature of the individuals that were interviewed. The chapter closes with a cross-analysis, comparing the differing data across individual cases, and briefly discussing the results that emerge from the comparison.

Chapter five motivates and presents the resulting model (“CF-model”) and discusses the results presented in chapter four at greater depth and explores the link between the empirical results and the existing literature concerning each of the four areas of identity, fulfilment, working/non-working life, and competency-development.

Chapter six discusses the implications of the research, both practical and theoretical, on each of the four focal areas of literature that were brought to bear on the project. It closes by stating what is particularly original about this research and the results.

Chapter seven concludes this study by summarising the results, illustrating the practical and theoretical value of the CF-model, outlining possible limitations, and suggesting possible areas of future research.

The last two sections of this introductory chapter serve two special purposes. In the first section, some personal experiences made during the project are described. They are not at the core of the scientific analysis, but the intention of this section is to motivate some feeling for the enthusiasm the individuals showed when talking about collecting art. Understanding concepts of fulfilment, identity, or natural competencies also requires some personal experience, or some sense of this enthusiasm, this is my personal conviction. For this reason, the following section is written from my personal perspective.

The last subsection comprises a glossary of some important terms used often throughout the thesis.

## 1.5 Research background and development

My research focuses on working individuals who collect art in their spare time. This is due to the fact that I initially began by focusing on questions around art-collecting, personal identity and fulfilment. However, this led to a series of discoveries that led me to my present study:

While I was interviewing art collectors and discussing their art-collecting habits, I discovered that the interviewees loved to talk in such depth about their art collection – for them it’s a field of pleasure in their leisure time – that they often opened themselves up and shared personal opinions and experiences in all aspects of their lives, to the extent that their habits and character traits seemed to begin emerging. It was there that I saw that each art-collector engages in a very individual way with his favourite leisure activity.

By investigating this further, I discovered that some individuals have certain characteristics, which are active throughout their lifetime, and which allow them to act with great competence in certain arenas. I came to call these characteristics their “natural competencies” and set out to understand exactly how the interviewees behave and, in particular, what the essence of these competencies might be, and how the interviewees develop these competencies in their leisure time by collecting art. This was then contrasted to their activities at work, and the success and satisfaction they experience there.

By looking through my notes and analysing interviews, I discovered that some of my collectors seemed to employ their individual competencies, skills and particular attitudes not only in the field of art-collection, but also in their job. Yet, others saw art-collecting as an opportunity to act differently. What was interesting was that those individuals, who were acting in a similar way both in their leisure art-collecting activities and in their working life seemed to be more successful, satisfied and somehow more fulfilled in life. Those individuals who seemed to exhibit a congruent behaviour in both fields were successful in their jobs and reported experiencing high levels of work satisfaction and overall fulfilment.

So, I set out to understand more about what I call “natural competencies” through this study, focusing my interview questions so as to gain some insight as to the

relationship between natural and required competencies and overall fulfilment, understood in terms of professional success and satisfaction. By studying my empirical results and the existing literature on related topics, I set out to produce a model which might help to approach the phenomenon, and also to provide practical guidance, that is, guiding working individuals in making better decisions with regards to their working life.

The reader might wonder why I took this discovery about natural competencies, work and fulfilment to be so important. I am convinced that it is important to see what is at the root of this phenomenon, and how individuals can actually use this knowledge to improve their own working lives or hire the appropriate employees and create the necessary environment to render their business more successful.

### **1.6 Definition of key terms**

Certain key-terms and phrases that are used throughout this thesis have been given a specific meaning for the purposes of this study, outlined below. Most of these terms need more thorough theoretical exploration to be defined clearly, and this cannot be done at this stage but will be part of the theoretical chapter (chapter 2). Therefore, the discussion and theoretical justification of these definitions will be provided later. But this glossary is intended to serve as a quick look-up during reading the sequel of this thesis.

*Art:* For my dissertation I focused on collectors of visual art and I let them define for themselves, what they think art is. I left it up to them to decide, for instance, where art ends and decorative work begins.

*Art collector:* This is a person who likes to buy and possess works of art rather than simply being satisfied to look at such works in a gallery or museum. For the purposes of the present research, the notion of an art-collector is defined rather narrowly focusing on visual art only.

*Codification:* This term denotes a technique used in the research process to mark issues within the original data material in a way that allows it to be easily located, retrieved and analysed. It is done with the help of codes which are used on three

different levels. These codes are called “nodes” in the NVivo-program used for codification, but the term “codes” is used here.

*Collecting art:* This term denotes the bringing together of various pieces of art – as defined above – through ownership. The collection may have a common theme running through it, or it may contain works that exhibit similar techniques or that are from the same historical period.

*Competency/Natural Competency:* (different to ‘skill’ or ‘talent’) Natural competencies may be defined as resources that enable activities that are inherently rewarding or exciting for the subject, thereby creating positive emotions. Natural competencies lead to behaviour patterns or aptitudes, often of an unconscious nature, which have become habitual to the individual and which has often been acquired in childhood and developed by constant practice over a long period of time. As these behaviour patterns usually bring positive results for the individual, they are reinforced and refined. The term “natural” does not necessarily mean “innate”. It denotes competencies that are “natural” from the subject’s point of view, that is, they are utilised by an individual in a somewhat habituated form which, at the same time, give rise to an outcome that is perceived as satisfactory and positive on a long-standing base. Examples might be to be able to socialise quickly and in a satisfactory way, or to be able to feel other peoples’ needs, or to get deeply involved in work, or play.

In that sense, a competency is more deeply ingrained than a skill: While skills can be acquired quickly, a competency must be acquired and developed over a longer period of time, allowing an individual to employ it naturally, without having to think about how to act. The difference between a competency and an ability or talent, on the other hand, at least in how these terms are used here, is that talents often imply some kind of inheritance, but a competence is neutral to this, as it may be acquired during lifetime.

Natural competencies sometimes begin as qualities “sleeping” or latent within an individual, which can be awakened and trained. In that sense competencies are also taken to differ from character strengths, in particular, for their greater flexibility and

amenability to training. The terms ‘competency’ and ‘competence’ are sometimes used interchangeably here.

*Congruence of competencies/Congruent Competencies:* A congruence of competencies occurs when a person’s natural competencies match those that are required of them in order to do well at work. In particular, a ‘congruence of competencies’ is achieved when a person’s natural competencies match those required in working life, and in particular when there is no required competency, which is not also a natural competency. Similarly, the term ‘congruent competencies’ refers to those natural competencies that match the competencies required at work. The CF-model promotes the idea that if there is congruence between natural and required competencies, namely, if those competencies naturally employed by an individual outside their working life are congruent to those required at work, then the individual is overall fulfilled.

*Fulfilment:* For the purposes of this research, the term ‘fulfilment’ is used to denote the particular psychological state which results, in various degrees, from the experience of success and satisfaction at work. Some support from the literature for this particular usage of this term is given in chapter 2; however, it is not the aim of this research to further analyse the link between success, satisfaction and fulfilment. The term is used in this research to indicate how an interviewee is faring on the matters of satisfaction and success which, by definition, in the present context, lead to a greater degree of fulfilment. No interviewee is ever asked whether they are truly fulfilled in any deeper sense. As the CF-model indicates, if both factors ‘satisfaction’ and ‘success’ are positive, the individual is fulfilled. If one factor, either success or satisfaction, remains unattained, then fulfilment, by the present definition, will not be likely to occur. The term ‘fulfilment’ is used interchangeably with ‘overall fulfilment.’

*Identity:* This term, in the context of the present research, denotes a person’s distinct personality, or projected sense of identity, as expressed through the person’s characteristic behaviour patterns. The term, thus, denotes an individual’s own view of themselves and how this subjective self-conception informs their outward



behaviour. The term is used interchangeably with ‘personal identity’ or ‘individual identity’.

*Increasing competency:* This expression denotes a competency which the candidate has been developing and sharpening over the years.

*Modified grounded theory:* This expression denotes the methodology employed to derive theory from data in this research. It is a method whereby a theory is allowed to arise almost solely from the generated empirical data, with only minimal assistance (in this case, simply to lend the project some structure), by extra theory. The methodology employed to arrive at the conclusions of this dissertation, is that of “modified grounded theory” as Perry and Jensen (2001) define it, when they amend the purely inductive approach originally specified by (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

*Non-working life:* Compared to the time spent under employment, or in any activity that provides the means necessary for survival, the term ‘non-working life’ refers to an individual’s leisure time, that part of their life where they are more or less free to choose their own activities. This non-working aspect of life proved very important during research in uncovering a person’s natural competencies. The contrasting term, ‘working life’, is used to denote the time an individual spends in paid employment.

*Satisfaction:* This term is taken to denote happiness and contentment experienced by an individual in or through their working life, over a long period of time. Positive employment of the term ‘satisfaction’ simply means that the person feels good and satisfied with the kind of work they do and with the results of their work. Such results may include good living standards through earning a good salary or through having flexible working hours. In that sense, satisfaction with one’s working life may spill out into satisfaction with certain aspects with one’s life which are the direct result of one’s work. The term ‘fulfilment’, in contrast, is used as a theoretical term to describe a person who is both satisfied and successful at work, as defined above. So, for the purposes of this dissertation, it is possible for a person to be more or less satisfied with their work but not fulfilled. The interviewee is asked

to evaluate their current degree of personal satisfaction, at a relaxed moment during the interview, with a simple question such “do you consider yourself satisfied?”

*Success:* This term is employed in the business sense and relates to the interviewee’s success in their working life. Success is judged with reference to the individual. It is the interviewee and not the interviewer who decides whether the interviewee is experiencing success at work. It is very important to note that the term “success” is not used to evaluate, in black and white terms, whether a person has been successful in their career, all things considered (say at the end of their professional life). It is simply used to capture the success an individual is experiencing in doing their particular job. For instance, if a baker is asked whether he is successful in his job, we simply look at what he is currently doing and how well he is doing it. If he is making the bread that is asked of him, and if he thinks that his bread is well-made, that may be enough for him to consider himself successful. It is not also necessary for him to factor in how much bread he sells, or whether his bakery makes a profit, if he does not think these factors are important for success. All that he personally needs to judge is whether he is carrying out the tasks required of him at work and doing them well.

*Required competency:* This is a competency that is needed in a person’s working life, in order for that person to be able to succeed, that is, do well, at his job.

*Working-life:* This is the time an individual spends in paid employment, that is, where they earn their living.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Overview**

#### **2.1.1 About the literature review**

The following chapter discusses literature that has had an impact on the field of interest. Even though the literature on competency-development, working and non-working life, and fulfilment is plentiful, discussions tend to skirt around the question of how one's natural competencies can help one achieve a greater sense of overall fulfilment, never really addressing it.

The purpose of this literature review is:

to provide a clear concept of what “natural competencies” are by embedding, and deriving, them from literature on identity and subjective well being/fulfilment. In particular, this discussion has to work out the meaning of the term “natural”;

to pinpoint the research gaps that exist with respect to natural competencies more precisely; and

to define the research questions that will guide the subsequent empirical case analyses more precisely.

On behalf of these purposes, the literature review will outline the strands of existing academic literature, which will provide the theoretical context for the research questions and the evaluation of the research results. In that sense, the CF-model aims to fill the gaps found in the literature, but also elucidates the relationship between the results of the current research and the literature topics presented here.

#### **2.1.2 Literature of main importance**

There are four main research areas informing the subject in question and these are outlined in the following four sub-chapters: the first outlines issues of individual identity, a subject with roots in sociology, psychology and management theory (Shipton & Shackleton, 1998, p. 276f.); the second focuses on positive psychology, especially as related to the question of overall fulfilment; the third addresses working life versus non-working life in connection with fulfilment, arising within

such different disciplines as psychology, sociology and management theory; and the final section discusses skill development.

As already indicated above, these questions are hypothesised to be relevant not only to individuals, but also to organisations. The links to organisation and management will be explored more thoroughly within the context of the CF model, but the reasons to discuss research in the areas just mentioned and their general relation to organisation and management are described now.

First, there is the topic of identity. Identity is a multi faceted construct, but very basically, identity may be seen as a bundle of meanings giving structure and content to the self concept, and anchoring a person into social systems (Gecas, 1982). Identity, in part, also explains a person's behaviour patterns. Among other aspects, identity is comprised of what a person likes to do and what they are particularly good at (of course, a person might not really be aware of this). But, if a person acts according to their identity in professional and occupational contexts, they may not only feel more comfortable, they may also show higher performance and team orientation. An example for this is the inclination to share knowledge with colleagues. In addition, a person being aware of their identity might create future plans that adhere to this identity more closely so they will tend to perform better in future too. As Whetton, Cameron and Woods (2000, p. 29) put it, "a map is useless unless you know where you are now." So, a person more aware of their wishes, plans and strengths will tend to make more informed plans for the future, like carrier plans. This may reduce the likelihood of wrong decisions concerning the carrier, and from the perspective of an organisation, this will reduce the risk of miscast.

Moreover, the purpose of the section on identity is to a) understand interviewees and b) connect personal identity with the subjects outlined in the following three sections: fulfilment, working and non-working life, and skill development. So, in a sense, identity is the starting point to the other three issues.

This seems most obvious with respect to positive psychology and fulfilment. As will be discussed, fulfilment is most likely to be reached if the person behaves according to basic elements of their identity, like values and conjectures but, also,

skills and competencies. Therefore, if a person reaches fulfilment in their working environment, this indicates that they utilise their natural competencies. And, of course, the managerial implication of this is that the organisation might benefit from this too.

Natural competencies might be identified easier within non-working contexts because they are usually less restricted by organisational framing conditions. In addition, the workplace might benefit from a “spill-over” stemming from fulfilling leisure activity. Therefore, the relation between working life and non-working life is relevant to the discussion. Also, the issue of balancing working and non working life has received some managerial attention as it might be an important source of energy for subjects being busy in an organisation. “Work life balance” has been an important issue for organisations because it tends to enhance motivation, load capacity and performance of the workforce (Perrons, 2003). Therefore, work-life balance is an important additional factor of maintaining and improving long-term motivation and performance from the perspective of the individual in addition to the organisation.

Finally, it might be necessary not only to identify natural competencies, but to develop them, too. Therefore, skill development is a subject often found discussed in psychology and management literature and which bears on how we might think about the development of competencies. There is a general concern in the management literature that too much effort might be invested in trying to remove employees’ weaknesses – instead of trying to further foster and emphasise their specific strengths (Whetton, Cameron & Woods, 2000). And, of course, the development of specific skills and competencies a person is already good at and identifies with tends to contribute to their fulfilment and, ultimately, performance.

Finally, the section will end with spelling out the research gaps that motivated this work, as well as some perceived practical consequences of it.

## **2.2 Identity theory**

### **2.2.1 About this section**

Without delving into philosophical issues on whether there is an objective identity, and what their characteristics are (see Parfit, 1971), personal identity may be defined as the concept of a person of herself, the self concept (Simpson & Macy, 2004). Briefly, the self concept consists of beliefs and attitudes about the self, as well as associated emotions and behaviour tendencies. Therefore, the self concept also contains information about values held which, in turn, comprises the rationale for goals set and for acting according to these goals. Personal identity might reveal what activities a person likes, and what activities she feels she is good at. These activities are, in turn, the key for underlying competencies, which are called “natural competencies” in this work. Therefore, investigating personal identity might be a key for investigating natural competencies.

I became particularly interested in identity literature as it helped me understand interviewees and ask them the right questions at the very start of this research. It allowed me to make sense of how they see themselves, how they want to be seen, and how they behave during their leisure activity – art-collecting in this case – as well as in their working life.

Upon clarifying my main subject of research – with its focus on positive psychology, success, fulfilment and skill development towards natural competencies – I repeatedly came across the subject of personal identity and realised that these topics are inextricably linked. The literature on identity has been brought in with the purpose of better understanding interviewees and in order to make sense of the results in the light of the literature outlined above. Further, I believe that there are some gaps in identity theory where the present research might fit.

### **2.2.2 Definition of identity**

There is a wide range of literature on identity, stemming from various academic fields, focusing on topics such as social identity, identity formation, and the concept of self, to name but a few mentioned by Howard (2000) whose research lies in social psychology. The sociological perspective, as, for example, provided by Gecas

(1982) defines concepts of self with an eye to social, structural and contextual influences. Further insights can be gained in the field of social psychology, where the focus is more on the consequences of self-concepts for individual functioning.

The term identity was used early in psychoanalytic literature. Sigmund Freud perceived identity as the “Ego”, conceptualised as the person’s self as a whole (Mann, 2006). As Erikson (1959) notes, identity may be defined as “the way a person understands and views himself, and is viewed by others” (Erikson, cited in Cain, 1991, p. 212). Belk (1988), on the other hand, uses identity as a synonym for how a person subjectively perceives who he or she is. This rather loose definition of identity contains various sub-subjects, explored by authors in various fields, some of which come to bear on the present topic of research and are outlined below.

In general, identity may be defined as an attitude about the self. So, the concept of identity implies that the self is reflexive as it can take itself as an object (Stets & Burke, 2000). Identity refers to the self concept of a person. It is a system of internally consistent, hierarchically organised concepts contained within a broader conceptual system (Epstein, 1973). Being an attitude, the concept of identity inherits basic attributes of attitudes, that is, a cognitive, an emotional, and a behaviour aspect. Cognitively, identity comprises of a set of convictions the individual has about herself, including their social roles.

Together, these convictions indicate what makes the person unique to other individuals. These convictions might be associated with emotions. For example, a person viewing herself as brave may feel proud, a person viewing herself as craven or a person often experiencing anxiety might feel ashamed, and so on. But emotions might also be associated with the social group to which the subject belongs. These emotions arise because, as noted, the self concept is embedded in a system of broader conceptual systems, like values and beliefs. Values and beliefs determine the emotional quality of some perceived trait (for example, being brave, or being intelligent, are positively valued traits.) Finally, identity correlates with behaviour, for example, people may try to get a job in which they think they might do well. Again, behaviour might also relate to social roles, for example, boys trying to act in a “masculine” way.

There are several dimensions of identity.

First, a fundamental distinction may be made between personal and social identity (Simpson & Macy, 2004). Personal identity refers to unique individual characteristics, it is “highlighted by thinking of the self in terms of unique attributes” (Deaux, 1996, p. 780). In contrast, social identity (also called “social self”, Epstein, 1973) refers to characteristics a subject inherits by being a member of some social group, like being a girl, a lawyer, a football player, or whatever. Some authors try to reduce “identity” to the sum of social identities, but, as Craib (1998, p. 4f.) points out, social identities might change. A person may turn from being single to being married and being a parent. So, besides social identities, there appears to be a personal identity that seems to change much less (Craib, 1998). But, altogether, identity is a dynamic organisation that changes with experience (Craib, 1998; Epstein, 1973).

The situation is more complicated though. People tend to rationalise negative traits. For example, if somebody behaved cowardly in some situation, he might explain this away by a variety of arguments. Cognitive processes like this can be viewed as coping strategies designed to protect the self esteem of the subject (Cast & Burke, 2002). The self esteem is the result of a self evaluation process and is strongly emotional. So, the personal identity may be distorted by re-evaluation processes like this. In addition, identity does not only stem from introspection but is also developed in social interaction, that is, influenced by others, for example, by giving feedback, or by behaving in typical ways.

As another dimension, identity might relate to what a person actually thinks she is, but it might relate to desired states too, and it might relate to the presented state. That is, identity might refer to a) what somebody actually thinks she is (“extant self”), b) what she would like to be (“desired self”), and c) what she tries to bring out (“presented self”) (Rosenberg, 1976). If large differences exist in these areas for a longer time period, this might lead to anxiety and cognitive strain.

Next, there are certain concepts relevant to identity: Centrality, distinction and ‘enduring’, or continuity (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The first concept relates to understanding the values a person holds dear, and which are created over a lifetime.



The next notion refers to what characteristics make this particular person – or art-collector in our case – unique and distinguishes them from other people, whether employed consciously or unconsciously. ‘Distinction’ is closely related to the presenting self. The third idea introduces issues of time, enduringness and continuity as well as drawing attention to any special events that may have an impact to a person’s behaviour, in this case the collecting of art. Overall, this three-fold distinction can throw light on a person’s identity within different areas of life, elucidating the basis of their behaviour and their view of themselves (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). I aim to outline these differentiating notions below with special reference to the behaviour of art-collectors, which forms the empirical basis of this research.

Finally, the concepts of autonomy and alienation are important. They do not refer so much to identity, per se, but to the relation between extant self, desired self, and presented self. There are links of the concept of autonomy to the concepts of intrinsic motivation, meaning, and engagement in activities to be discussed later.

These dimensions of identity will be discussed in the outcome. With respect to the distinction of personal and social identity, some general concepts of identity will have to be discussed. The aim of this discussion is to pinpoint the concept of “natural competencies” within theories of identity. Then, the concepts of the presented self and the concepts of distinction, centrality, and continuity, and alienation will be discussed. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn.

### **2.2.3 Basic concepts of identity**

Earlier in this thesis, identity has been defined as the self concept of a person. There is a long standing tradition that conceptualises this self concept as a social product. This tradition consists of a social psychological view looking at the individual, and a sociologic view looking at groups and intergroup relations (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995).

According to the social psychological view, individuals take on several roles in their daily life, and there are meanings associated to these roles. These meanings are, in part, products of tradition and expectations and, in part, they are products of demand characteristics of social situations (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). By the process

of identification (as a father, as a mother, as a student, as a sales person, and the like), the subject attributes these meanings to herself (Burke & Reitzes, 1981).

In contrast, the sociological view, i.e., social identity theory, conceptualises identification as the result of a process of self categorisation and social comparison. This means that the individual classifies herself as belonging to certain social categories (Stets & Burke, 2000), or – on the contrary – not belonging to them, that is, being distinctive. A group, or social category, becomes a frame of reference for the individual, thus it is no longer viewed as consisting of concrete individuals. Thus, the process of social categorisation goes along with a depersonalisation (Reza, 2009).

So basically, according to these two perspectives (social psychological and sociological), individuals do not, in effect, have just one identity but several identities, stemming from the social roles they engage in and identify with, and stemming from the social categories they feel they belong to, and they commit to (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). According to this view, identity is the result of the process of self-categorisation (that is, assigning oneself to various social groups, or roles, or social classes (Aries & Seider, 2007, Cerulo, 1997) or identification (Stets & Burke, 2000). That is, “identity” is not possible without reference to social entities. Identification implies distinction, too (Cerulo, 1997), therefore the term “distinction”, then, refers to emphasising the membership (or non-membership) to certain social groups or roles.

One must be careful not to confuse the distinction of desired self and extant self with the distinction between social identity and personal identity, as social identity as described by Craib (1998) and Simpson and Macy (2004) also pertains to the extant self. Social identity is just that part of identity that is defined by the social roles in which a subject engages.

According to the view described above, the uniqueness of each individual can be traced back to the specific combination of roles and social categories to which a person feels committed. In addition, different salience or importance may be dedicated to the different roles. Salience influences how much effort is invested into a given role (Burke & Reitzes, 1981, Reza, 2009), that is, the extent to which the

subject commits to this role. Saliency is closely related to the “centrality” of a given role for a person. The more “central” a given role is to a person, the more committed she will feel to behave according to this role. Similarly, if a given situation may invoke different roles, it is most likely that behaviour relating to the most salient, or central, role will be invoked. Thus the identities of a person form a hierarchy according to the criterion of saliency, and overall identity of an individual consists of the specifically weighted identities.

This view has been challenged from several perspectives. The first challenge relates to the fact that, implicit in this conceptualisation, identity is a state, or outcome (Cote & Levine, 1983; Lavoie, 1994). As Lavoie (1994) claims, this is, in part, due to methodological issues, as most studies on identity tend to be cross-sectional but not longitudinal. In contrast, Craib (1998) discusses identity formation as an ongoing process, a view that is also emphasised by stage models of identity formation such as that of Marcia (Cote & Levine, 1983) or Luycks et al. (2005). If identity is viewed as a process, then the question of what fuels this process arises. There might be external changes in the life of the individual, for example, getting a job, becoming a parent and so on, that lead to taking new social roles. But, more importantly, there might be a striving for consistency, or congruency, between different roles (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). For example, if different roles of a subject may lead to conflicting behaviour tendencies, the subject might strive for achieving consistency by re-evaluating the saliency of these roles. So, there is an ongoing negotiation process (Stets & Burke, 2000) between conflicting roles and corresponding (partial) identities.

Assuming conflicts between different roles is similar to the concept of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1964). Experiencing internal conflicts between roles, or role based activities, and accompanying attitudes is uncomfortable, which motivates reducing the dissonance and establishing consistency. This leads to another important aspect: negative emotions that fuel striving for consistency and thus fuel the negotiation process between conflicting identities. On the other hand, the experience of positive emotion might be a result of achieved consistency of role-based activities, attitudes, and beliefs.

Identity seems to be more than just role taking. Subjects exhibit specific patterns of emotions when performing specific activities in specific contexts. Thus, as Craib (1998, p. 105f.) warns, one should be careful not to reduce the issue of identity to the social identities a person engages in. They are important, but they are not the whole story. Moreover, social distinctions on the base of, for example, wealth, gender, skin colour, intelligence, and the like are likely to be transient. The role of the father in the family has changed, for example. Accordingly, identities (viewed as social roles) may change, but still there are certain “deeper” patterns of identity that remain. Thus, identity in this “deeper” sense consists of something else that has some degree of autonomy from the social and society. Psychology has explored traits of personality that are relatively invariant regardless of social roles. According to Craib (1998, p. 107), emotional experiences are a key concept of this personal identity because they may in part be influenced but are not produced by society. (Even the behaviouristic view perceives emotions as original expressions of life, since they exist prior to being coupled to external stimuli.) This view has been corroborated by empirical results indicating that emotions might arise prior to cognitive interpretation of a situation, but cognitive interpretation, in turn, might determine the specific “colour” of the emotion (Schachter & Singer, 1962). Cognitive appraisal theories, too, suggest that emotions are determined by the cognitive evaluation or appraisal of a personally relevant event, and that they serve important functions on the social and individual level (Garcia-Prieto & Scherer, 2006). In essence, according to Craib (1998), emotions extend processes of social construction; they relate to and are influenced by social contexts (Garcia-Prieto & Scherer, 2006) but cannot be reduced to social aspects, or social roles, as is discussed, for example, in Hogg, Terry and White, 1995. Moreover, emotional experiences are closely related to personality traits. A simple example is the extraversion-introversion dichotomy. An introverted person may like visiting an old friend but he is unlikely to throw a party. An extraverted person might show the opposite behaviour.

In sum, identity cannot be reduced to the specific set of social roles a subject engages in since there may be specific positive or negative emotions a subject might experience in specific situations that might not fully be explainable by social roles.

The attachment of the emotions to the specific situations might, of course, be the result of prior processes of social learning. Although, at a given point in time, these specific individual emotional experiences – together with activities and underlying skills and competencies that may elicit them – cannot be explained by pertaining to social roles alone. Therefore, emotional experiences constitute an important part of personal identity that is “surplus” to socially based identity.

#### **2.2.4 Identity and natural competencies**

Now the question arises regarding what elicits positive emotional experiences. Several studies identify eight main sources of joy and satisfaction (Argyle, 1992, p. 289): Eating and drinking, sex, social relationships, success, using skills and doing interesting work or similar leisure occupation, sport and exercise, music, nature and reading a good book, and drinking alcohol in modest doses. In the current context, “using skills and doing interesting work or similar leisure occupation” is of central concern. This means that there are certain work- or leisure-related activities that elicit specific positive emotions, like joy, pride, and deep satisfaction.

Now, these activities, in turn, may require specific competencies. Competencies may be viewed as resources (Stets & Burke, 2000) for enabling positive emotions by using skills and doing interesting work or similar leisure occupation. They may lead to experiencing fulfilment and positive emotional experiences, and thereby they contribute to constituting personal identity as it extends socially based identity. This does not, of course, exclude the possibility that these fulfilling activities are performed within the context of some social role in which the subject engages. But it is not fulfilment of a social role itself that leads to positive emotions, rather, the activity itself, and the underlying competencies lead to positive emotion. Thus, these competencies may be viewed as resources, or even as “identity capital” (Cote, 1997) since they, in effect, enable acting out personal identity. Identity capital is perceived as consisting of tangible and intangible attributes. Examples of tangible attributes are financial resources, educational credentials, socially rewarded competencies (human capital, such as specific learned and trained skills and competencies), club memberships, speech patterns, and the like. Intangible attributes are psychosocial vitalities as, for example, ego strength, internal locus of

control, critical thinking abilities, moral reasoning abilities, social perspective taking, and the like.

A competency is the ability or a component of such an ability, to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context through mobilisation of psychosocial prerequisites (cognitive and non-cognitive) (Han, 2008, see also McCartney & Campbell, 2006). Boudreaux defines the competency of business directors and managers as “... an underlying motive, trait or skill that leads to superior job performance. It is “underlying” in the sense that it is a motivator of behaviour, and people who have the competency may not even be aware that it is why they are effective on the job” (Boudreaux, 1997, p. 33). Boudreaux explains and differentiates the three concepts of knowledge, skills and competencies very well:

Knowledge is acquired by reading, studying or attending seminars and entails understanding and being able to use basic information and concepts in some area.

Skills are job-related abilities and are generally acquired through practice.

Competencies are more fundamental than knowledge or skills and generally more difficult to acquire. It is the underlying desire and motivation of an individual to want and be able to know, understand and be able to explain something. Compared to the first two concepts, competencies are acquired by constant practice of the relevant skills until it becomes a habit to think and act in a certain way.

The term “natural competency” used throughout this thesis may be defined now in a more precise way. “Natural” in this context refers to what is “natural” for the subject, that is, she feels most comfortable with, and likes to do most. Since in the current context we look at using skills and doing interesting work or similar leisure occupation, a “natural” competency may be defined as:

- a competency (an ability, or a component of an ability) or skill that
- is necessary in order to perform a range of activities that
- are accompanied by positive emotions, that is, these activities are inherently interesting and rewarding to the subject. The subject engages in the activity and experiences some kind of (subjective) meaning (see below).

Since a subject performing such an activity experiences positive emotions, performing the activity – and the underlying competencies – is part of their personal identity. By utilising a natural competency, an individual is experiencing personal identity, which is more fundamental than their social identities.

It is important to note that natural competencies may incorporate, but may not be equal to, “soft skills” and emotional competencies, such as self awareness, self regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills described in the “emotional competence” framework of Goleman (1995, see also Promis, 2008). The term “natural competency” is meant to be neutral towards the “soft skill – hard skill” or “cognitive – emotional” distinction.

Having defined the concept of natural competency with respect to identity theory, we turn to some of the more specific concepts mentioned above: distinction, centrality, continuity, alienation and, finally, professional identity.

## **2.2.5 Specific concepts relating to identity**

### **2.2.5.1 Identity and distinction**

Goffman (1959) proposes that the interactions between people provide a certain picture, known as the ‘dramaturgical model’. In his most famous book, Goffman (1959) describes the world as a stage and defines the self as the result of what he calls “impression management”, which is done consciously or unconsciously and contains special information that is regulated through language, clothes and gestures (see also Craib, 1998, p. 75f.). People try to provide a certain picture to others and position themselves as distinct from others. In that way, they exhibit certain uniqueness; they express their “presenting self” in the sense of Rosenberg (1976). Elaborating on this theme, as Craib (1998) states, “there are two major aspects of identity: A certain sameness and a certain distinctiveness.” Being on life’s stage surrounded by others confers a need to fit in or belong – a need for sameness – on the one hand, but also a need to be unique and differentiate from others – a need for distinctiveness – on the other hand. Both these complementary aims are often achieved with the help of clothes, language, unique taste and overall behaviour.

So, buying something, which constitutes acting in a very specific way, may be a strong expression of one's own identity as shown to the outside world. The person wants to be part of society, while standing out for unique individuality, and decides to possess something to that end, which is visible to others.

This "presented self" identity is crucial to a person's identification with, and distinction, in society, as Holt (1998) notes, and buying things often plays an important role in the expression of a person's identity. Holt is referring here to products of a higher value or those of a high profile brand. Schau & Gilly (2003) offer a similar approach, according to which people exhibit their tangible assets to show their own distinctiveness. To quote Schroeder "... cultural codes contribute to, and constrain, how brands work to produce meaning" (Schroeder, 2005, p. 1291). Beck (1992) finds that people within the same income class like to differentiate themselves from each other by choosing different lifestyles, participating in different subcultures and forging different social ties. So, all in all, we can safely assume that the process of individuation exhibits a certain market-dependency in all dimensions of life. In the extreme, as Wong (1997) notes, the need for consumption of more and more expensive goods and status products, in order to stand out from others and show one's distinctiveness, is the key characteristic of poor materialism.

As this type of identity pertains to the desired self and the presenting self in the sense of Rosenberg (1976), it does not relate to the personal identity as explicated above with reference to positive emotions.

#### **2.2.5.2 Identity and centrality**

As noted, the subject of centrality has to do with the core values that a person holds dear. The term "centrality" denotes the fact that certain aspects are more relevant to personal and social identity than others. The concept of ego involvement is closely related to this, as ego involvement denotes the relation between an activated attitude and the self concept (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1987). Thus, aspects more central to the subject's identity are noticed more rapidly, or more carefully.

Goffman (1959) illustrates, through his dramaturgical model, that being on 'life's stage' and showing one's identity to others with the help of language, clothes or



gestures, provides much insight about a person's core values. One's choice of art seems no exception to this.

Ullrich (2000) illustrates that art is often employed by famous politicians or business leaders to project a certain image – a certain set of core values – to the outside world. He talks about individuals in the public arena, who try to transmit a certain picture or feeling to their audience by consciously providing their audience with certain images or items. Schau & Gilly (2003) further state that with help of the world-wide-web, nowadays, any individual can project a particular identity to the outside world, matching how they see themselves or how they want to present themselves toward others. Such images, even if they leave out certain aspects of one's personality may, in truth, represent what an individual values most highly and wishes to be seen to possess, that is, they may transmit the subject's core – or central – values. These may show up most clearly in the desired self, that is, the ideal self (Ogilvie, 1987). Similarly, putting a particular piece of art on the wall might be a method of projecting a desired image to others and displaying one's most central values.

The concept of centrality may also pertain to natural competencies. There might be natural competencies that are more “central”, or salient, to the subject than others, because they might elicit more deep, and more intense, positive emotions. In connection with art-collection and identity, for example, the question arises whether a collector buys only those pieces that they personally desire, or whether their collection is dictated more by their social surroundings. Either way, the particular pieces collected can be taken to reflect a person's values, even if those values include following the dictates of a certain social milieu.

### **2.2.5.3 Identity and continuity**

Erikson (1959) is seen as the founder of the classical theory of identity formation. He states that every person goes through several stages in life, each stage with its own particular crisis. Marcia (1966), also adopts this theory. More information is provided by Kroger (2000) who places stronger focus on interaction, communication and the family-unit as identity-influencers that prompt continuous “reformulation”. Lastly, Jones & McEwen (2000) see the process of building an

identity as an ongoing journey that never finds completion. One may suppose that, where collecting art is or becomes part of that process, this will be subject to change, matching different stages of the collector's ongoing journey of identity formation.

As noted, identity is not a static state but an ongoing process (Craib, 1998). This implies that the relationship between extant self, desired self, and presented self are fragile as they may have to be renewed from time to time. On the other hand, as suggested by Craib (1998), there might be some underlying kernel of the personal identity that encompasses this relationship too. For example, for some people the discrepancy between extant self and desired self will never grow too large, no matter what adversary events might happen to them, they always seem to be able to adjust their desired self to some realistic level. As already indicated above, the relation between extant self, desired self, and presented self relates to the concept of autonomy, which will be discussed next.

#### **2.2.5.4 Identity, autonomy, and alienation**

Autonomy might be viewed as the ability, and willingness, to deliberately generate decisions according to goals and preferences derived from them, and to generate and to implement plans of actions. That is, autonomy denotes a state of minimal external control. As will be seen later, a certain amount of autonomy is necessary in order to be able to experience engagement and meaning in tasks.

There are close links between autonomy and identity. First, in identity formation during adolescence, autonomy of the subjects facilitates taking different roles, that is, "experimenting" with different identities. This process facilitates identity consolidation (Kamptner, 1988). Erikson (1950; 1959), lists eight stages which every person goes through from childhood to death. It is adolescents, traditionally, who undergo an "identity crisis", but Erikson sees identity formation through various stages of crises as a lifelong process which, moreover, involves the acquisition of selected objects and cognitive abilities. Similarly, Kroger (2000) speaks of an identity "trajectory". Under this conception, cognitive abilities need to be construed more or less along the lines of Elliott & Dweck (1988) who promote

the conception of a cognitive ability as an acquirable skill, rather than as a more or less fixed capacity.

Conversely, if there are large gaps between the extant self, the desired self, and the presented self, this might be detrimental to autonomy too. This relates to Ego Depletion theory (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven & Tice, 1998) stating that psychic energy is a limited resource. When there are large gaps between the extant self, the desired self, and the presented self, the individual is inclined to obscure this gap in social life. She will present herself in a way different from what constitutes the extant self. This requires psychic and cognitive energy. Consequently, there is not much energy left for setting goals, deciding, and planning, as would be the case if there was no such gap. In other words, there is not much energy to exert one's natural competencies. Instead, people who always look at what they would like to be tend to be driven by external norms or standards. They do not experience themselves as origins of their activities, that is, their activities are not derived so much from individually set goals and preferences. Instead, they are more inclined to impress others than to maintain their own internal standards (Cote, 1997). Kuhl & Beckmann (1994) describe a situation where a subject tends to ignore preferences as alienation. Alienation goes along with undesirable emotional states, like anxiety and a diffuse feeling of being "pushed around".

There are relations to the concept of action and state orientation (Kuhl & Beckmann, 1994), as well as to the earlier concepts of "locus of control" (Rotter, 1966) and "origin – pawn" (DeCharms, 1968) too. According to DeCharms, for example, people may differ in the way they may perceive themselves as "origins" of events or actions, or whether they perceive themselves merely as passive "pawns" being pushed around in a world over which they have little influence. Kuhls and Beckmann's (1994) distinction of state and action orientation is similar to this. DeCharms (1968) conceptualizes the origin-pawn-distinction as a personality trait, but it is clear that viewing the self as origin or pawn is also part of the personal identity.

Accordingly, individuals may differ within the extent to which they experience personal identity. Individuals experiencing inconsistency between the different

aspects of identity may lose track of what they really like to do, and what they are really good at. They tend to lose track of their natural competencies. To put it another way, in order to experience autonomy, or in order to experience the self as origin of personally relevant events, some level of consistency between different aspects of identity of an individual seem necessary (Khan, 2006). If these aspects fall apart too much, a person is driven more by the external environment, and this will mirror in perceiving the self more as a pawn than an origin.

In contrast, developing a coherent identity seems to be only a necessary condition for autonomous and self-determined activity. Identity theory helps answer the question, “Who am I?” which is linked to the particular roles a person occupies (Stryker & Serpe, 1982) These influence a person’s behaviour by placing different expectations on the self and providing different sources of meaning for one’s identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). As Dawis & Lofquist (1984) note, it is reasonable to suppose that a congruence between work and personal values has a higher likelihood of leading to fulfilment. However, a certain degree of congruence alone is not always sufficient to guarantee the success and fulfilment of the individual. According to Diener (2000), a central issue is how a person's values and goals mediate between external events and inner experience, so as to provide, to a lesser or greater extent, fulfilment.

### **2.2.6 Conclusions**

Identity is more than the sum of social roles in which a person is engaged. This is obvious from the fact that the engagement in several roles may have to be integrated; otherwise the person may feel uncomfortable. Emotions seem to be a major driving force in further developing identity, thus identity is rather a continuous process than a specific state.

In general, there are many classes of activities that may lead to positive emotions. In the current context, the class of activities “using skills and doing interesting work or similar leisure occupation” is of main interest. Since these activities lead to positive emotions, the underlying competencies necessary to perform them are viewed as part of the personal identity of the subject, that is, that part of identity that transcends the socially defined identity. (This, of course, does not deny the possibility that these

underlying competencies have been acquired in social contexts or by social processes, nor that they are exerted in social contexts.) These competencies may be viewed as resources of personal identity, or “identity capital”. They are called “natural competencies” in this thesis. Utilizing natural competencies means that the respective individual acts in accordance with personal identity. Natural competencies - just as behaving in accordance with social roles – may be of varying salience, or centrality. In order to be aware of and make use of natural competencies, a certain minimum amount of autonomy may be necessary. Persons always looking at what others think will be more likely to have difficulties in utilizing their natural competencies.

In contrast, “natural competencies” are not encapsulated, of course, and they may be subject to negotiation processes between individual and social standards. This is especially true with respect to professional identity. Therefore, it may be difficult to distinguish between personal and social identity in some cases.

Accordingly, this section gave an account on “natural competencies” with respect to identity theory. The discussion revealed the importance of emotional life for the issue of identity.

But what exactly is it that leads to positive emotions when exerting natural competencies? This question will be explored in the next section.

## **2.3 Fulfilment**

### **2.3.1 About this section**

In the last section, it was argued that there are certain competencies where utilisation may lead to positive emotion, and that this comprises (part of) the personal identity of an individual. This section on fulfilment takes a closer look at the conditions that might determine, or foster, this process of elicitation of positive emotions, by pertaining to literature on positive psychology and fulfilment.

### **2.3.2 The importance of aspects of positive psychology**

Positive psychology is a rather new field within psychology, the purpose of which is to complement traditional psychology’s more well-known focus on disability, illness, and on generally how to address malfunction in life. This newer field within

psychology is concerned with the hitherto neglected question of how to improve peoples' lives and how to nurture genius. About 30% of people suffer from some psychological problem at some point in their lives. Positive psychology focuses on the other 70% who are healthy but who would like to improve their life and develop in a direction that makes them happier or more fulfilled. In order to achieve this, there are three basic research fields that positive psychology deals with: first, the study of positive emotion, like confidence, hope, and trust; second, the study of positive traits, like strengths, abilities, and virtues; and third, the study of positive institutions such as democracy, free press, freedom of speech, and family (Seligman, 2003).

Researchers in the past saw human strengths as buffers against mental illness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). There is empirical evidence that human strengths might invigorate resilience against adversities of life (Ryff & Singer, 2003; 2004; Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2006). The mission of positive psychology is to focus on studying strength and virtue as opposed to pathology, weakness and damage. It asks "what makes life most worth living?" and seeks to 'improve quality of life'.

In earlier centuries, these questions fell within the realm of religion and philosophy. In the last 30 years, eastern religions such as Zen-Buddhism or Indian gurus have tried to provide an answer to this question. Historically, the roots of similar thought can be found in humanistic psychology and in the thought of people such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Rollo May and Victor Frankl, whose interests revolved around the positive characteristics of human beings, and the experience of optimism, joy and meaning in their lives (Fineman, 2006). By the end of the last century, psychologists became concerned with the question of how psychology, as a science, can help deliver people from greater problems such as depression, demoralisation, or other negative conditions, bringing these more forcefully into the foreground of psychological theory and practice.

Now, in the new millennium, Ryan & Deci (2000) describe the social conditions that facilitate self-motivation and healthy psychological development, which lead to mental health and well-being. Similarly, in their introduction to positive psychology, Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000) note that well-being as well as factors that favour the flourishing of fulfilment have being of increasing interest to

academics in this field. According to Money et al. (2008), “ positive psychology research has concentrated on understanding people’s lives and the factors that are associated with life satisfaction”. So, positive psychology approaches the individual from the positive perspective and concerns itself with the conditions and traits that underpin the good life, and hence individual fulfilment. (c.f. e.g. Keyes & Haidt, 2003; ( Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

Why did it take so long to establish a positive psychology? One difficulty of the field is constituted by the fact that it seems much more difficult to define concepts such as human growth, or fulfilment (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003, p. 9f.). A deficit oriented perspective is much easier because the goal states “normal” functioning that is usually measured by some means of social comparison is much easier to define. But what might be a goal state of individual strengths, or personal growth? This can, at best, be determined at an individual level. Trying to prescribe what people should do and how they should live would be an error. A related difficulty is comprised by the problem of operationalising terms like personal growth, or fulfilment. For example, how could it be decided whether objective or subjective indicators would be used (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003, p. 10)? And if both types of indicators are used, the question arises of how to merge them. There are some solution attempts to these problems, but in actuality, many concepts of positive psychology do not seem to be that easy to grasp.

### **2.3.3 The term ‘fulfilment’**

There are many terms that can describe the positive human state of feeling good. Some authors often use the term “happiness” as a synonym for “well-being”, “welfare”, “high positive effect”, or “flourishing”. Except where I discuss approaches of other authors, I use the term “overall fulfilment” to denote enduring positive feelings that are not subject, or directly the result of certain events, but which have arisen over time, and which provide individuals with a certain sense of well-being – overall fulfilment – across all areas of their life. Equalization of “well-being” and “fulfilment” or “full life” can also be found in the literature (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2006, p. 276f.).

Thus, the term “well-being” (or: fulfilment) refers to the broader evaluation of a person’s life as a whole (Diener, 2000, p. 34-35), it may be defined as “peoples’ positive evaluations of their lives, including positive emotion, engagement, satisfaction, and meaning” (Diener & Seligman, 2004, p.1). This overall evaluation may take important domains of life like family and work satisfaction as well as experiencing many positive affects into account. The aspect of positive emotion is particularly apparent in the following definition of a fulfilled individual: “A person who frequently experiences positive emotions [such] as joy, satisfaction, contentment, enthusiasm, and interest.” (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008, p. 101). The definition of Diener & Seligman (2004) does not contradict this but is more comprehensive because it contains “positive emotion” as one component. The other components (“engagement” and “meaning”) are particularly important in the current context. They will be explicated more thoroughly later; however, before coming to this, it is important to point out two aspects of the definition of well-being, or hitherto fulfilment:

First, well-being is to be understood in the sense of subjective well-being. The person’s subjective evaluation of their life as a whole is what matters, it is the person themselves who judges how well they feel, given their circumstances (Diener, 2000, p. 34-35). This implies, for example, that subjective well-being cannot be measured by data discernable solely by a second person.

Second, fulfilment does not refer to short term pleasure but to long term enjoyment and satisfaction as expressed through engagement in life and meaningful activity. So, emotions associated with fulfilment are not rare intense positive emotions, which do not necessarily lead to happiness, but are more stable and frequent. Seligman et al. (2005) note that pleasure is the good feeling that comes from satisfying homeostatic needs such as hunger, sex, and bodily comfort. In contrast, enjoyment is the good feeling that people experience when they overcome their own limitations, such as, in the case of an athletic event, an artistic performance, or a stimulating conversation. They further note that, where fulfilment is concerned (in the sense of overall fulfilment), long-term enjoyment is much more important than short term pleasure.



Looking at Greek philosophers, “eudaimonia”, from the Greek “eu” (good) and “daemon” (spirit or minor deity), has often been translated as the “science of happiness” (Wikipedia, 2009). Haybron (2008) promotes the non-subjectivist approach to welfare, which grounds fulfilment in our own natures, in particular, in self-fulfilment. According to him, this state consists partly in “authentic happiness” which bears a special relationship to the self. However, since happiness seems to refer more to a state of mind, which is related to temporary joy or pleasure, and eudaimonia rarely has such connotations, the term “human flourishing” seems a better translation of “eudaimonia”. According to Aristotle, eudaimonia involves “activity” “exhibiting excellence” (virtue, arête) in accordance with “reason” (Wikipedia, 2009).

#### **2.3.4 The components of fulfilment – positive emotion, engagement, and meaning**

Today, millennia after the flourishing of Greek philosophy, research by Vella-Brodrick et al. (2008) also confirms that “engagement”, “meaning” and “pleasure” are the three key components of well-being, or, what I call “overall fulfilment” (see also Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2006). These three components are described for example by Seligman (2002) and Seligman, Parks, and Steen (2006).

Positive emotion might simply be viewed as the amount of positive arousal, and absence of negative arousal, in the past, as felt by the individual. However, positive emotions have positive side effects. First, positive emotions tend to contribute to more positive emotions in the future, because people we socialize with tend to reward positive emotions by acting in more positive ways too or giving more positive feedback, so there is some reciprocity in social contexts. Second, positive emotions tend to enlarge the thought-action repertoires, thereby widening the stem of thoughts and corresponding action options that come to mind, this aspect is captured in Frederickson’s (2001) broaden-and-build-theory of positive emotions. Positive emotions tend to have a positive effect on a person’s resources, like physical, intellectual, and social resources. They might even help to undo negative effects of negative emotions on action repertoire, such as worry cognitions (i.e., Beck et al. 2001) after failures, for example, that lead nowhere. Because of this

positive effect on personal resources, positive emotions tend to strengthen resilience, too.

Turning now to the element of engagement, Robinson & Martin (2008) note that happier people report being more active in social activities, religion and things like reading the newspaper and, by contrast, spend less time watching television. Engagement is the act of taking an interest in life's activities, learning and growing. The prototypical situation of engagement is when a person is fully absorbed in work or leisure activity (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2006). The person is fully involved in an activity, and this involvement leads to gratification even if, at times, the pursuit may be unpleasant. An example of this might be a person preparing for a marathon. There is a strong association of engagement to the concept of flow described by Csikzentmihalyi (1990), (Csikzentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989). "Flow" is an experience of being fully integrated in an activity, as if time has stopped. People who often experience high levels of flow tend to be more motivated and creative (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2006).

Nevertheless, engagement by itself is not enough: It is also important that the activity has some personal meaning for the subject. Seligman sees "a meaningful life [as] one that joins with something larger than we are – and the larger that something is, the more meaning our lives have" (Seligman, 2002, p. 260). Meaning or meaningfulness refers to the pursuit of, and involvement in, something bigger than oneself in the service of an overall purpose or meaning. There is some controversy in that it might not be "largeness" that matters, but rather the quality of the impact that meaningfulness has in a person's life (Peterson, 2004). Overall, we can say becoming part of something that transcends ourselves and is of some more general importance can give our life meaning and overall fulfilment. Meaning provides the "red thread" to activities pursued; it provides the deeper reason for why the activity is considered important by the subject. What is perceived as meaningful may vary a lot between different individuals (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). It might mean being active in favour of community, politics, justice, the family, or even some spiritual power.

Seligman et al. (2005) suggest that an equal balance between all three dimensions – engagement, meaning and pleasure – is most favourable. To come back to the ancient Greeks: it is amazing to see that the ancient and modern approaches to

fulfilment, despite being 2000 years apart from each other, come to what appears to be a very similar conclusion.

### **2.3.5 Influences on fulfilment**

There is a rather depressing school of thought to the effect that one's level of overall fulfilment depends on the characteristics that one was born with, or on those that were developed early in life, making it extremely hard to change one's already set level of fulfilment later in life. One such set-point theory is promoted by Lykken & Tellegen (1996) who found that neither socioeconomic status, nor educational attainment, family income, marital status or religious commitment had any major impact on happiness. A similar theory, put forth by Brickman et al. (1978) and emphasising the ability of a person to adapt to different circumstances, also exhibits data which shows that the relative happiness of people in various life circumstances is not much affected by the occurrence of positive or negative life-events. Along similar lines, Costa & McCrae (1980) see well-being as influenced mostly by personality.

On the other hand, there is a body of research evidence that shows that fulfilment may be affected by a variety of external events, or attitudes and activities of subjects that are, in principle, amenable to change. Starting with the three components explicated above – positive emotions, engagement, and meaning - fulfilment, or well-being, may be influenced by a) increasing the occurrence of positive emotions, b) increasing the opportunities for being fully engaged in an activity, and c) pursuing activities that are subjectively meaningful.

#### **2.3.5.1 Influences on experiencing positive emotions**

In order to increase the occurrence of positive emotions, people might do different things. For example, within the social realm, increasing closeness of extended kin, or developing deep friendships, have turned out to contribute to subjective well-being (Buss, 2000). Other studies found that simple exercises, for example, regularly thinking about things one is grateful for, or “counting one's blessings”, seem to make people happier and more optimistic (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2006). Optimism may be defined as a (positive) attitude about the social or material future (Peterson, 2000) and seems closely related to well-being. Another way of

turning thinking more positively is to challenge negative thoughts about the past, that is, regrets (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2006). Theoretically, the effect of simply thinking about positive things like well-being, and re-evaluating negatively valued past events and activities, might be attributable to the “set point effect”. The set point (already briefly mentioned above) is viewed as a “base line” for happiness, it is a starting point but it is amenable to some variation (Huppert, 2006). For example, if a person thinks about positive things that happen in their life, this might alter their set point in the positive direction.

Set point theory might also serve to integrate a genetically oriented view of happiness with an environmentally oriented view (Huppert, 2006): The set point may be, to some extent genetically determined, but life events or even individual cognitions might alter it temporarily or even permanently. For example, there are certain life-events, which do have an influence on a person’s level of fulfilment and overall happiness. Getting married, for instance, temporarily raises most people’s levels of happiness, but then most people return to their previous happiness levels, or set-point (Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2003). This even seems to be true for material welfare. As Diener & Seligman (2004) show, subjective well-being did not significantly rise with growing material welfare in the industrial nations since about 1940, and above a certain level, socio economic status does not significantly correlate any more with welfare. Similarly, as Easterlin (1973) reports, in the US the average level of happiness in 1940 compared to that of 1970 was not very different, despite the fact that people could buy much more with their earnings. Set point theory would explain this effect by assuming that people, when experiencing a higher level of welfare, will soon return to their original level of well-being. So there has been some adaption to a higher state of welfare.

Conversely, rather amusingly, it seems that of all possible life-occurrences, it is postoperative patient satisfaction which raises life fulfilment in a long-lasting and enduring way (Wengle, 1986).

But severe or very negative life-events, such as the unexpected death of a child (Wortman & Silver, 1987) or repeated unemployment from which most people would not recover (Clark, Georgellis, T.E., & Diener, 2004), prevent affected

individuals from return to their previous happiness set-point or equilibrium level, after the event has passed.

The outcomes of social comparison seem to have positive or negative effects on emotion and on happiness in general, too. American soldiers in World War II, who enjoyed a higher level education and greater chances of being promoted, were less happy with their promotion chances than the less well educated soldiers. Brickman (1975) explains this phenomenon by noting that individuals enhance the relative value of their own achievements by comparing it with that of others. That explains why the less educated, comparing themselves with their peers in civilian life, would feel more fulfilled than their better educated counterparts, who would have higher expectations, comparing themselves with officers who had already moved up the ranks.

Schwarz et al. (2002) ask whether maximising or simply being satisfied with what a person already has would be more conducive to achieving overall fulfilment. The implication is that higher expectations could lead one to try and derive life satisfaction by perpetually working to achieve yet higher and higher goals, never being satisfied with what one has already achieved. While Schwarz has a point, as Park, Peterson and Seligman somewhat sarcastically comment, the danger with that approach is that "... the strengths most robustly associated with well-being might be considered prime targets" (Park et al., 2004, p. 617). However, this might be due to a confusion of "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" goals, as will be discussed later.

The effect of social comparison might explain also why welfare might not increase happiness. If people perceive large differences in welfare between the members of a society, the more their set point is upwards. Consequently, they tend to feel unhappy even when they are moderately wealthy. In contrast, if differences are low, the set point remains on a low level too. That is why it is not surprising that inhabitants of poorer cities (Schneider, 1975) or countries (Easterlin, 1973) are not less happy than inhabitants of richer places. Research also suggests that the blind, the retarded, and the malformed are not less happy than other people (Cameron, Titus, Kostin, & Kostin, 1973). In addition, two US surveys (Andrews & Withey, 1976) confirm the same results, found in Europe, namely that sex, age, race,

income, education, family, life-cycle stage, and other demographic classification variables have a minimal effect on general happiness.

### **2.3.5.2 Influences on experiencing engagement**

The probability to experience engagement and – possibly – flow is largest if a person pursues a task that is challenging but not frustrating. This typically might occur if individuals use their specific strengths (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2006) or – to pick up terminology used earlier – their natural competencies. Similar to competencies, which might comprise mainly intangible attributes, specific “strengths, or “natural competencies”, may consist of intellectual as well as of social skills and emotions. So, specific “strengths” do not just refer to skills, or abilities, they are also determined by what a person likes to do. This shows that natural competencies are not equal to strengths; rather they comprise a subset of those specific strengths a person is not only good at but also likes to exert since this is accompanied by positive emotions. Strengths might vary according to individual, social, and cultural contexts (Baltes & Freund, 2004), but they are involved in activities a person feels good at and – at the same time - comfortable with. Strengths may be conceived as traits but also as processes, or life management strategies (Baltes & Freund, 2004) like, for example, the process of applying resources flexibly in order to solve problems or to pursue goals set (Aspinwall, & Staudinger, 2003).

For the moment, what is important is that tasks or activities may be chosen by a person so that their strengths are challenged. This work will be subjectively perceived as “good work” (Verducci & Gardner, 2006, GoodWorkProject, 2011), that is, work that feels good. If a person is predominantly engaged in “good work”, that is, activities that tend to challenge their strengths, then the chance of experiencing deep involvement and flow rises. So another route to enhance fulfilment is to pursue tasks, and goals, that challenge one’s strengths.

“Good work” in this sense requires a minimum amount of autonomy of the person. A task where a sequence of steps is prescribed and fixed in much detail will not require autonomy and these kinds of tasks will not lead to much engagement because the task is not challenging. Because, what is “challenging” differs from

person to person, but “challenge” requires a minimum of decision and design performed by the problem solver.

This idea is, of course, anything but new. In his “Authentic Happiness” Seligman (2002) puts forth a theory of what makes for true happiness. It is not hedonism, money, or leisure. According to Seligman, authentic happiness matches Aristotle’s notion of eudemonia – identifying, enhancing, and living in accordance with what is best for oneself: being true to one’s inner “demon.” Aristotle reasoned that every being fulfils a certain role, or designation, in the world. For every being, there is a set of tasks or activities that correspond to this designation. Happiness occurs if a being is engaged in these tasks that lead to fulfilment of their designation. Now the designation of a human being is to make use of their mind, because it is only the mind that distinguishes human beings from other beings, and thus leads to fulfilment of their designation (Spaemann, 1974).

The concepts of Aristotle referred to mankind in general. But, if we conjecture that if individuals use their strengths then this may increase their chances of engagement and flow experience, then Aristotelian ideas are transferred to the level of the individual.

### **2.3.5.3 Influences on experiencing meaning**

The third influence to be discussed is on meaning. Subjective “meaning” is closely related to what a subject identifies with, what she believes in, their general attitudes and values. The importance of subjective meaning and setting goals on subjective well-being has been documented by several studies (Emmons, 2003, gives an overview). Long-term goals give life structure and direction; they are “signals that orient a person to what is valuable, meaningful, and purposeful.” (Emmons, 2003, p. 107). There seem to be four basic domains of goals that might improve subjective well-being: intimacy, spirituality, generativity, and work (Emmons, 2003). “Intimacy” relates to goals that express a desire for close social relationships. Spirituality refers to goals oriented to transcending the self, like striving for things that exceed personal benefit. Generativity refers to a commitment and concern for future generations. Work in this context refers to goals that are fuelled by commitment to one’s work, believing in its worth, and liking the challenge.

There are several ways to enhance meaning. Kearns, Forbes, & Gardiner (2007) found that if subjects develop long-standing goals for themselves, it seems easier for them to commit to these goals and to pursue them with more energy. This is because goals derived from more basic long-standing goals and “life goals” lead to more commitment, these goals are filled with personal meaning. There is a close relation of this discussion to the distinction of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Activities that are intrinsically motivated are pursued with more persistence, especially in case of difficulty, and – more important in the current context – they correlate with higher degrees of well-being (Ryan et al., 1999). Experiencing meaning seems to be the underlying variable that determines intrinsic motivation as well as an enhanced well-being.

Nevertheless, the creation of meaning might not simply be a “top down” process, like thinking about one’s general goals in life, combining them with personal strengths, and then deriving more specific and concrete goals from this. In addition to this “top down” identification of personally meaningful activity, meaning might also emerge “bottom up” from engaged activity (Nakamura & Csikzentmihalyi, 2003). This is especially true in case of an extended relationship to some object, like experiencing an enduring positive relationship to one’s work. The fact that meaning might emerge from absorbing activity and flow points to the close relationship between the three components of well-being: meaning, experiencing engagement, and positive emotions.

At the same time, it is important to note that this is no automatism: People might experience meaning but fail to experience engagement and positive emotions as, for example, people struggling with burnout. Alternatively, people might feel positive engagement but fail to recognise a deeper meaning, or long-term importance, in their activities (Nakamura & Csikzentmihalyi, 2003). So, it seems to be important to foster all three aspects of well-being and fulfilment separately in a consistent way.

### **2.3.6 Characteristics and strengths that influence fulfilment**

In preparing for asking whether there are certain competencies that enable, or support, development of positive emotion, engagement, and meaning, this section



will take a look at some research emphasising individual characteristics and strengths that might influence well-being and fulfilment.

Some researchers focus on trying to find a particular character strength (or virtue) that leads to fulfilment, with candidates ranging from hope (Snyder & Lopez, 2002), kindness (Taylor et al., 2000), gratitude (Emmons & Hill, 2001) and forgiveness (McCullough, 2000), to open-mindedness (Baron, 2000) and curiosity (Loewenstein, 1994). Philosophers also analyse the importance of character virtues, often judging one to be more important than another in one's search for fulfilment. For instance, Confucius (1992) sees benevolence as the most important character strength, whereas Cicero (1960) takes gratitude to be the highest virtue, and Comte-Sponville (2001) crowns love as the master over all good character traits, organising other virtues and adjudicating conflicts among them.

Park et al. (2004) investigate the question as to what character strengths show the strongest link to overall life satisfaction. They come up with a list of 24 character strengths of which hope, zest, gratitude, love and curiosity show the strongest correlation to higher levels of satisfaction and wellbeing. Park et al. speculate that such character strengths are grounded in biology, and have been carried through the evolutionary process as those predispositions that are necessary for the survival of the species.

Authors, as mentioned above, view character strengths as inherited and, therefore, as relatively unchangeable or unnameable to improvement. Park et al. further note that such "character strengths can be distinguished from related individual differences such as talents and abilities" (Park et al., 2004, p. 604).

An alternative approach already mentioned briefly (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2004) does not focus on specific traits but rather on the ability to flexibly utilise resources according to situational demands. This might be viewed a "meta trait", or process, rather than a fixed set of traits that have an impact on fulfilment.

### **2.3.7 Conclusions**

Positive psychology constitutes the basis of the present research in that it provides helpful insight into the impact of the subject of fulfilment on the life of individuals.

This question of fulfilment was already in discussion in ancient Greek times, which corroborates the saying that such subjects gain importance precisely when a culture is highly developed. Some authors seem to suggest that individual fulfilment is influenced by external factors or that, while it depends on the point of view and attitude of the individual, as well as their degree of pleasure, engagement and meaning in life, such factors are often determined by external circumstances over which the individual has no influence. If fulfilment cannot be influenced by one's own action, then it follows that individuals have to live with the "fulfilment level" set for them by external forces, and by their own character strengths, which are fixed in their early years. Moreover, there might be character strengths that might lead to fulfilment. But, as individuals can do little to change their character traits, this way forward also seems somewhat limiting in terms of what the individual can do to affect their overall fulfilment. And of course, there is empirical evidence that positive emotions, engagement, and meaning can be changed by a variety of activities and patterns of thought. Apparently, this evidence rejects the conjecture that fixed traits and external events determine the level of well-being and fulfilment. Rather, the evidence points to the hypothesis that the individual level of experienced fulfilment can be changed, albeit within limits. So the question about competencies and skills enabling these change processes remains.

## **2.4 Working life and non-working life**

### **2.4.1 About this section**

Positive emotions, meaning, and engagement might arise from activities at the work place, of course. But as mentioned in the introduction, natural competencies might exhibit themselves more easily, and more naturally, in contexts outside work. Moreover, it might be possible that there is a positive "spill-over" from leisure activity to work activity. The aim of this section is to explore the relevance of non-working life, and, more specifically, leisure activity, to working life.

### **2.4.2 Definition of working life and non-working life**

Leisure time, free time or non-working time is defined as the time that is spent away from paid employment (Argyle, 1992, p. 102f.). It is usually associated with play and free time, but, of course, there is no strict separation of "work" and "leisure

time” because child raising, caring for relatives, doing work at home, or going shopping are activities of non-working life but might be tedious and physically and mentally straining (Stock-Homburg & Roederer, 2009, p. 24). Thus “leisure time” consists simply of a fraction of non-working life, this seems to be especially true for women with full-time jobs and family (Stock-Homburg & Roederer, 2009). Main functions of leisure time seem to be fulfilment and personal growth on the one hand, and relaxation and compensation for work on the other (Argyle, 1992, p. 109). With respect to the first category, many leisure activities are experienced as being intrinsically enjoyable. As such, they are associated with the use and development of skills, and making use of the natural competencies of the subject, thereby implementing the personal identity (Argyle, 1992, p. 109) of the subject. The second category of leisure activity, in contrast, is more directed towards recovering and getting mentally and physically prepared for the next working day. Leisure activity, perceived as enjoyable by enacting natural competencies, may have a relaxing effect as well.

Art-collecting, as engaged in by the candidates whose interviews will be analysed in the empirical part of this thesis, represents a much-loved leisure activity, an enjoyable activity chosen by the candidates themselves and done without any external pressure, allowing the candidates total freedom of action within that field. Art collecting is not an activity that the interviewees have to do but something they love to do, spend time, effort and money on; an activity that is chosen voluntarily. It is their passion, and even though some candidates have art-related jobs, collecting art for themselves does not bring them an income – it is rather expenditure of time and resources, a way to spend their spare time. It is their hobby, their passion, a non-working activity they chose of their own volition.

In contrast, working-time is the time spent in paid employment. For some people, for example those who have their own business, the boundaries between working and non-working life are less well-defined, because they switch between the two modes of behaviour many times throughout the day. As could be seen in the section on professional identity, there may be intra-individual differences at different points in time (Nyström, 2008): The distinction of working life and non-working life may be blurred at times, and these two realms may be compartmentalised at other times

(Stock-Homburg & Roederer, 2009). For present purposes, suffice it to say that the defining feature of a working-time activity as opposed to a non-working time activity is that the former, unlike the latter, is done with the purpose of earning money and making a living.

### **2.4.3 Impact of work on overall fulfilment**

It seems clear that there is a relation between a person's working life and their fulfilment. Empirical research such as by Near et al. (1980) concludes that "there is a reliable statistical association between ... personal reactions to work and other domains of life". Taking 'satisfaction' in the present context to mean 'fulfilment' Banner and LaVan (1985) note that there is no cross-over between leisure-time satisfaction and job satisfaction. Near et al. (1978) conclude that "job satisfaction is apparently not a particularly central component of life satisfaction". So, according to these 1980's scientists, the extent, if any, of how non-working life influences personal fulfilment remains unclear. These conclusions seem questionable, however, in the light of what has been said above with respect to engagement and meaningful activity. Moreover, unemployed people are definitely unhappier than people having a job (Argyle, 1992). Satisfaction and fulfilment at the work place may depend on the conditions at work as, for example, shown by Herzberg's two-factor-theory of work satisfaction (Maddox, 1981). According to this theory, hygiene factors like fair payment are only necessary conditions for work satisfaction. For real work satisfaction, employees must experience at least some degree of meaning and autonomy at work, that is, "good work" in the sense described earlier. Hence, more recent authors see a direct connection between work and wellbeing, noting that work experiences affect a person's mental state (Kelloway & Barling, 1991) and hence their long-term life satisfaction (Hart, 1999; Higginbottom, Barling, & Kelloway, 1993; Judge & Watanabe, 1993).

This is also follows from what was said above. For example, for Seligman (2002), individual happiness in the long term depends upon three elements in life:

Engagement: Taking an interest in activities, learning and growing

Pleasure: The pursuit of tangible pleasures and activities

Meaning: involvement in something bigger than the individual itself for an overall purpose

Of course, the key concept explaining the relevance of engagement, pleasure, and meaning in a working context is motivation. Maslow writes: “Self-actualizing people are, without one single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves. They are devoted, working at something, something which is very precious to them – some calling or vocation in the old sense, the priestly sense. They are working at something which fate has called them to somehow and which they work at and which they love, so that the work-joy dichotomy in them disappears.” (Maslow, 1954, p. 42).

In the same way, Seligman states that “a calling is the most satisfying form of work because, as a gratification, it is done for its own sake rather than for the material benefits it brings” (Seligman, 2002, p. 166).

Many authors believe that it is motivation that leads to high performance or success at work. This, again, leads to the distinction of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation: “Intrinsic job satisfaction reflects aspects that are inherent to the job itself (e.g. feelings of accomplishment) and extrinsic job satisfaction reflects aspects that are ... usually under the control of the work environment (e.g. salary)” (Ryan et al., 2000, cited in Eggerth, 2008, p. 71). Even though Dawis (1991) notes that both extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of job satisfaction must be identified in order to understand overall satisfaction, Eggerth (2008), again cites Ryan et al. (2000): “... individuals who are intrinsically motivated tend to experience greater levels of well-being than do individuals who are extrinsically motivated” (Eggerth, 2008, p. 71).

As Seligman et al. (2005) suggest, the more a person is able to balance these three approaches, with particular emphasis on developing a sense of an engaged and meaningful life, the more positive it is for this individual. Money et al. (2008) adapt this theory to put it to the test. Their results show that the theory can be adapted to fit a work-context. In a work-context, just as in general life, it seems that the combination of meaning and engagement at work offers the most job-satisfaction. The combination of all three key elements, engagement, meaning and pleasure is equally, if not more, effective. This is true for both, work satisfaction for

organisations as well as individuals. Money et al. (2008) hence confirm what we already know about fulfilment in general: engaged and meaningful work results in more sustained happiness in the long term for employees. Moreover, Money et al. also discovered that meaning and engagement at work are key drivers of performance. In other words, providing meaningful and engaging work surroundings for an employee is beneficial to both the employee and the organisation, since fulfilled employees provide higher profits in the long term.

Recently, Money et al. (2008) note that people spend such a large portion of their lives at work, that the latter influences their non-working life very much and, therefore, that overall fulfilment is very much connected with satisfaction at work. Money et al. conclude that "work is a part of individuals' lives and feelings and behaviour within organisations cannot be studied in isolation of employees' overall approach to life and their wellbeing" (Money et al., 2008, p. 33). According to this school of thought, there is a broader connection between working life satisfaction and overall fulfilment.

Another stream of thoughts corroborating a tight relationship between work and fulfilment emphasises work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). This theory states that the abilities and interests of an individual must mirror, or correspond to, how the individual sees themselves, in order for the individual to experience satisfaction. This is the product of more than five decades of research at the University of Minnesota and has been adopted by U.S. government agencies responsible for public health and the welfare of workers. The theory of work adjustment works as an interactive and reciprocal process between the individual and the work environment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). It requires 27 propositions and 10 corollaries (Dawis, 2004) to fully outline the details, assumptions and predicted outcomes of this model, which matches an individual to their work environment and describes the ongoing process of interaction (called work adjustment) between worker and work environment (called the interaction model). Overall, adjustment theory assumes that each individual seeks to achieve and maintain correspondence with their environment, either by trying to adjust to their environment, or by adjusting the environment to their own values and abilities. Most importantly, the better the work environment corresponds with a working individual's values, the

greater the fulfilment of the individual. This follows from the notion of the importance of meaning for fulfilment described earlier.

#### **2.4.4 Fulfilment and job-success**

From a managerial point of view, the importance of “fulfilment” depends on whether it relates to job success. This may be true, even if the job is very demanding, as indicated by the long lists on what skills are needed in order to be successful at a certain job, as e.g. for library management (Promis, 2008), or for board members (Boudreaux, 1997). And, indeed, research has demonstrated that there is connection between happiness and workplace success. Diener & Biswas-Diener (2002) note that happiness is related to income and favourable evaluation by a superior (Cropanzano & Wright, 1999) in which case one may say that an employee is happy and satisfied because he or she is successful. On the other hand, Boehm & Lyubomirsky (2008) find that happiness leads to success precisely through the experience of positive affect. People in a good mood are more likely to enter novel situations, interact with other people, and pursue new goals further (Carver, 2003). In the field of positive psychology, the findings are similar: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions Frederickson (2001) states that a safe and comfortable environment allows one to build and increase intellectual, social and physical resources, which can help later in life, so that these people experience more success. Boehm & Lyubomirsky (2008) find that happy people are more satisfied with their jobs, perform better, receive more social support from their co-workers, are less likely to be unemployed, are physically healthier and live longer overall: “...happy people enjoy greater workplace success, and engage in more behaviours paralleling success, than do less happy people” (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008, p. 110).

#### **2.4.5 “Spill-over” or “compensation” to find fulfilment?**

A possible answer to the “spiral” hypothesis, discussed above, is the “spill-over” hypothesis. Banner & Himelfarb (1985) outline two different hypotheses concerning the relationship between working and non-working life. The “spill over” hypothesis, which is the more popular of the two, states that the nature of a person’s work directly influences the type of leisure activity in which they choose to engage.

“Obviously, the hypotheses on work explicitly recognise that there are different kinds of work and that these different kinds of work may lead to different kinds of leisure” (Banner & Himelfarb, 1985, p. 29).

Recent research has found that playing different roles in one’s working life and non-working life has beneficial effects on fulfilment (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). As already pointed out, these effects are especially positive if these roles are enjoyable, but moreover, Perry-Jenkins, Rapetti, & Crouter (2000) see positive experiences in one role as producing positive outcomes in another, thus positive experiences are being transmitted from one role to the other. Markus (1977) argues that the energy that is produced in one role can be transmitted onto another to enhance one’s experience there. Positive effects from non-working life (and, specifically, leisure time) to working life may also arise if, that is, employees who are parents are unburdened from organising child caring, for example, by offering company-operated kindergarten. This is a goal of Work Life Balance projects (McGovern, 2009), that is, there tends to be a positive “spill over” from non-working to working life (and vice versa, of course).

The alternative to this “spill over” hypothesis, which is corroborated by Banner and Himelfarb’s research, is the “compensation” view, according to which an individual chooses their leisure activity to compensate in some way for deficiencies in their work (see also Argyle, 1992).

#### **2.4.6 Collecting Art**

Having highlighted the relationship between working life and non–working life, the question arises regarding the kind of leisure activities that might lead to the effects described, like spill over and compensation effects. In the current context, investigation of leisure activity is oriented towards the following goals:

The activity should be “diagnostically” relevant to natural competencies. This means that the activity has potential to be intellectually challenging so that competencies might shine through.

The activity should be suited to elicit pleasure, engagement, and meaning for the subject (after what has been said above, this goal implies the first one, of course).



As has been pointed out, activities that might lead to pleasure, engagement, and meaning for the subject might be activities that utilise the natural competencies of the subject. Thus, natural competencies enable satisfying activities that in turn may lead to positive emotional experiences, and so they are viewed as an important aspect of personal identity. These competencies are called personal resources or identity capital (Cote, 1997) which enables a person to experience those positive emotional experiences that comprise the kernel of the personal identity that exceeds identity as it is defined by social, or sociological, categories (Craib, 1998). So, the activity we look for should contribute to personal identity.

When a person coming from higher education enters working life, they will undergo lots of adjustments and experiences that might lead to an almost permanent change of what might be called professional identity (Nyström, 2008). “Professional identity” is that part of personal and social identity that involves activities, responsibilities, and underlying attitudes as well as skills and competencies. Typically, there might be three stages of professional identity that tend to progress in a certain order: It begins with a non-differentiated identity with diffused boundaries between the different spheres of life. Later, these spheres will be separated, often caused by a focus on professional development. This stage might be called “compartmentalised identity”. Finally, the different spheres tend to be integrated, thus resulting in an integrated identity. Within integrated identity, the subject might utilise resources in a most flexible manner. Like the process of identity formation in general, the formation of professional identity is fuelled by an ongoing negotiation between personal and socially derived imperatives (Nyström, 2008), thus, there is a close and ongoing interaction between internal standards and socially imposed expectations.

Competencies may also be relevant with respect to leisure activities. The relevance of personal identity may become particularly obvious when it comes to collecting art. The following characteristics might apply:

Collecting art (and, more generally, being involved in art) might stimulate informal learning, specifically by two mechanisms: Creating cognitive conflict (Webb & Palinscar, 1996, p. 844), and self-regulated, autonomous acting (Donald, 1991, p.

375). Being involved in art may stimulate cognitive conflicts which are defined as contradictions between expectancies and experience. Cognitive conflicts in turn may stimulate curiosity (Berlyne, 1954) which in turn is experienced as a form of pleasure. In addition, curiosity may lead to deep engagement in an activity, and possibly to flow experience. Curiosity, in turn, might lead to autonomous, self-regulated activity. When pursuing this kind of activity, the subject tends to feel as origin, not as pawn in the sense of DeCharms (1968). This tends to be experienced as pleasure, too, and the activity of the subject comes close to experiencing personal identity.

Collecting art may be intellectually challenging for several reasons which depend on the goals and purposes the subject pursues. If the subject has an intrinsic interest and motivation, they might want to learn about the history of a given piece of art, they might want to get in contact with the artist, and the like. On the other hand, a subject treating art collection as a source of creating material values will have to gather detailed information about the market, about trends, and so on.

No matter what the goals are, they tend to be set by the art collecting subject itself, not by any other person. This means that there tends to be a link of this activity to the subject's more general goals, values, and skills which, in turn, convey meaning to the activity.

In sum, collecting art is an activity that has the potential to elicit pleasure, engagement, and meaning for the subject – thus it is suited as an activity that has the potential to help identify natural competencies.

Even though collecting art may be an expression of personal identity, aspects of social identity and even aspects of the desired self and the presenting self may come into play here too, which leads back to (social) distinction. For example, Bourdieu (1979) discusses the different tastes and perceptions of art found in different social and cultural backgrounds. He notes that cultural capital (which can also be the possession of art) is often a matter of social status. So, collecting art may be a matter of social distinction (Bauman, 2001; Schau & Gilly, 2003) and, therefore, of creating and maintaining social identity and showing it to the outside world (see also Ball & Tasaki, 1992; Solomon, 1983; Schulz Kleine, Kleine III, & Allen,

1995). Bryson (1996), on the other hand, concludes that diverse social structures do not generate such great differences anymore and that symbolic items, such as art, can be equally well understood from different social backgrounds. So, even though more educated people may have a broader understanding of culture, stemming from their greater immersion in cultural issues, collecting art may not just be an expression of social distinction but of personal concern and, therefore, may express personal identity too.

The relation of art and social distinction with respect to social background will not be pursued further here, as this might lead away from the basic issues. Keeping these arguments and caveats in mind, collecting art was chosen as a basis on which to allow the identity and natural competencies of each individual to shine through.

#### **2.4.7 Summary**

Time spent earning one's living constitutes one's 'working life'. In contrast, 'non-working life' refers to the time an individual spends on other things, some of which may be leisure activities, namely activities of their own free choice, which a person enjoys and is intrinsically motivated to devote their free time to. For the purposes of this research, the non-working activity focused upon is that of collecting art.

It is now well accepted that a person's working life has an impact on their overall fulfilment and, presumably, the more hours spent at work, the greater the impact. Roles besides those occupied in one's working life, however, help balance things out by allowing a person a chance to be successful in other areas in life, which may, in turn, have a positive influence in one's working life and vice versa ("spill over"). Research shows that what a person does at work influences their non-working activities so that while some individuals compensate in their non-working life for what they miss out on in their working life, others follow similar directions in both.

Further research shows that the more congruent the working environment values to those of the individual, the greater the resulting success and satisfaction for both employer and employee. This is to be expected from the hypotheses about natural competencies. Moreover, it shows that motivation is something that a working individual must generate from within in order to find success and satisfaction at work, and hence a greater sense of fulfilment. What is discussed at length is what

needs to be present for a working-individual to be fulfilled, with the added bonus that the presence of these relevant factors will not only provide individual fulfilment but also business success, through the medium of a fulfilled and motivated workforce. Existing research highlights the fact that already established job-success and personal fulfilment might feed off each other in a positive way creating an upward spiral. But the possible role of activities outside the workplace for job success and personal fulfilment at the job has not yet been explored in much depth.

## **2.5 Skill-development / competencies**

### **2.5.1 About this section**

Natural competencies might not simply be there, they might have to grow and develop. Consequently, there might be conditions affecting this process in positive or negative ways. So, another field of research relevant to the present study is the subject of how individual characteristics or skills might develop in the leisure context as well as in the workplace context.

### **2.5.2 Sharpening competencies**

Highly developed competencies are presumably inherited but also acquired as well. The more traditional cognitive approaches to both skill and competency development outline models that use practical experience as the basis of successful education. Whetten et al. (2000) for instance, present their ALAPA model which consists in five steps: assessment, learning, analysis, practice, and application. The key point is that competencies are to be learnt in practice. This model seems to give further credence to and build upon Kolb's "Experiential learning model", which suggests that people can develop effectively, perceptually, symbolically, and behaviourally through concrete experience (Kolb, 1984). In Kolb's model the person who wants to learn something has an immediate experience; this becomes the basis for observations and reflections. These observations and reflections are assimilated and distilled into a concept or informal theory. Subsequently, the newly acquired knowledge functions as a guide for new experiences and the cycle repeats itself on a higher level. He calls this "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41).

According to Bandura and Wood (1989), what they call “mastery modelling” is very effective in the development of intellectual, social, and behavioural competencies. It seems that mastery consists of three steps: the first step is the teaching of rules or strategies, the second step is practice in real-life situations, and the final step, which is essential for mastery, is the experience of success by executing what has been learnt. A specific cognitive approach is provided by Anderson (1990) who describes the acquisition of mastery as a process of rule conversion. Initially, knowledge is applied piece by piece in an interpretive manner, but with practice, this piecemeal application is changed more and more into direct application by a process called proceduralisation. In addition, procedures may be fine tuned by specific application conditions, so specific strategies for specific situations might be acquired (Anderson, 1990). The sum of procedures and application conditions may comprise the competency.

Whetten et al. (2000) also provide helpful instruction on how skills can be developed by successful practice into competencies. Similarly, as Spreitzer et al. note, many authors see the skills of managers or executives as the end-product of numerous challenging job assignments, exposures to other people, mistakes, setbacks, and training experiences, in short, the “... origins of competencies are based on past success ...” (Spreitzer et al., 1997, p. 7). This, again, stresses what has been said earlier: “Natural” competencies are learned too. They are usually acquired during social processes.

A decade earlier, Morrison & Hock (1986) also suggest that it is work experience, rather than formal training, that is the main source of development for individuals in organisations. McCauley et al. (1994) also take evidence to highlight that work experience is the main pathway to developing critical competencies. Similarly, McCall et al. (1988) note that managers’ job assignments are the primary vehicle for learning. As Ohlott notes, “job assignments are one of the oldest and most potent forms of leader development. They give leaders the opportunity to learn by doing – by working on real problems and dilemmas in situations with real consequences.” (Ohlott, 2003, p. 128). Kolb (1984) sees this learning process as a life-long process empowering people with new skills that go far beyond their working life and

suggests that to turn skills into competencies, rather than simply receiving training at work, one must experiment until successful.

### **2.5.3 Competency-training in non-work life**

Leisure activities are often seen as beneficial for skill-development in adolescents, mainly because the motivation for engaging in them is intrinsic as they provide joy. Thus, Watts and Caldwell see the leisure activities of developing adults as having impact on “the promotion of competence, initiation and socialization” (Watts & Caldwell, 2008, p. 160). Along the same lines, Shaw et al. (1995), note that hobbies can be a positive influence to development. Larson (2000) goes one step further and views leisure activities in adolescence as potentially helping individuals to be more successful in life, stressing the point that socialisation skills can be acquired through such activities.

Along similar lines Csikszentmihalyi (1975), takes fun-activities in non-working life to provide the feeling of “flow”, alongside characteristics which exercise one’s skills by focusing them on a limited stimulus field, providing an area where intrinsic motivation comes highly into play. Dandridge (1986) found play to be affective, while work is effective.

### **2.5.4 The right career path**

To be successful it is important to concentrate on what you do best. This is common sense for individuals thinking about their career (Berrie, 1994). Career exploration, the process that generates information about one’s future career and connects working life with individual identity is often seen as integral to choosing one’s next career step correctly, as Jepsen and Dilley (1974) and Thoresen and Ewart (1976) argue.

Krumboltz (1966) notes that there is a deep need to address individual characteristics, leading career counselling in new directions. By reviewing past evaluations of career counselling interventions, Pelsama & Borgers (1986) found that these interventions, programs, and services often demonstrated a lack of consideration for and appreciation of individual differences.

However, there are some prominent approaches, for example, by Holland, (1980) and Schein, (1978) who promote the typology theory of vocational behaviour, that anchor career choices by looking at the dominant orientations of an individual, and offering ideas to assist and shape career planning and development, aiding students, as well as people who are in the process of changing jobs, to develop in a direction that takes into account their identity and its peculiarities, thus opening the way for greater success and fulfilment.

### **2.5.5 Character strengths and natural competencies**

Money et al. take the following line: “we suggest that job satisfaction (and its associated benefits) should flow from finding a match between one’s strengths and the opportunities to express these in a job.” (Money et al., 2008, p. 27).

The question of human potential met with great interest by the end of the last century, especially the question of what to focus on to achieve greater fulfilment. Seligman explains how, by talking with his five year old daughter, he suddenly knew that “it is about identifying and nurturing their [people’s] strongest qualities, what they own and are best at, and helping them find niches in which they can best live out these strengths” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 6).

As Savickas (2003) points out, this particular positive psychology research agenda advocated by (Seligman, 1998) is not new. It is remarkable how topics in that area, as discussed, for example by Walsh (2003), match the approach of Williamson (1939), even though this is published 60 years earlier.

Along more practical lines, Drucker (2005) advises that, to be fulfilled and successful, working people should concentrate and work on their strengths. Drucker further advises that individuals must find the gaps in their profile and work on these missing skills and knowledge to be able to fully employ their strengths.

The emphasis on strengths led some researchers to look for basic character strengths that, at least in part, might account for them. For example, academics working in this field appear to refer to a list of 24 basic character strengths classified under six virtues as described in Peterson & Seligman (2004), analysing how these can be expressed at work, how they match work demands and which of these strengths are

more or less essential for work success. Their results show that some of the strengths that are important in one's non-working life are less essential to one's working life than others. Money et al. (2008) conclude that many strengths that make for a good human being outside work are not sought after at all by employers, so that key strengths like appreciation and kindness actually need to be suppressed in the field of work.

### **2.5.6 Self-efficacy beliefs as related to success**

In their article Bandura and Wood (1989, p. 362), mention three factors relevant to individual behaviour, beliefs and motivation in connection with the organisational field: (a) the development of individual competencies (as discussed above), (b) an individual's motivation in connection with their own goal system, and (c) the cultivation of a person's belief in their own capabilities and their ability to use their talents effectively. This last factor is very important in the context of the present research question. It is not surprising that Bandura and Wood (1989) see individual performance successes that strengthen self-belief as the most effective factor in gaining efficacy. Favourably comparing oneself to others, as well as being a model of how to successfully manage difficult situations, are factors that increase one's self-efficacy belief just as much as it does to be in good physical condition.

The effects of self-efficacy beliefs are various according to Bandura and Wood (1989, p. 364-366). They seem to influence very different fields of life, ranging from one's psychological well being (Bandura, 1988) to one's choice or creation of personal environment. Individuals with stronger beliefs, therefore, see more options in their further business career; they are motivated to learn more which also influences career choices; they master challenges more easily (Cervone & Peake, 1986); they make a stronger commitment to their own set of goals; they visualise success scenarios; and they seem resilient to adversity. In comparison, people with lower self-belief often fall into depression, allow their partners to influence them in a rather negative way, and choose easier jobs even if their capabilities would allow them to do much more.



### 2.5.7 Summary

Natural competencies are the characteristic way a person acts and thinks, bringing about positive results. These are often underlying unconscious behaviour patterns linked to successful outcomes which have been practiced over many years until they became completely natural. While natural competencies may not be learned at school or university, they are sharpened constantly as the person experiences positive consequences resulting from their actions, and so repeats these actions again and again.

The fields of identity theory and positive psychology are closely related. How a person sees themselves directly influences how they interact with the outside world, hence the results they bring about, and so the degree of success, satisfaction and fulfilment that they experience. Identity theory, as well as positive psychology, promote the idea that people must know the inner “demon” as the ancient Greeks would say, namely to build their life around their inner values, identity and intrinsic motives in order to achieve ‘eudemonia’, that is, in order to be fulfilled.

Skill development through experience is a key subject, and if an individual repeatedly experiences success in applying those skills in real-life situations, these skills can eventually be developed into competencies. However, companies will often not invest their resources into training, say, a good manager, into becoming a business leader, as these two roles require very different sets of competencies. This means that, in practice, the relevant skill-development towards the required competencies is in the hands of the employees themselves.

While skills and competencies may be developed through successful practice, it is unclear how one can practically apply this, especially if – as it often is the case – there are no avenues for doing so in one’s current job. What is surprising is that, while leisure activities are taken to offer a good arena for skill and competency development in adolescents, their potential in the development of competencies in working adults seems to be overlooked, even though it is known that learning best takes place in a positive and motivating environment. The present research indicates that working adults can develop their skills into competencies in their non-working life, while engaging in leisure activities that they enjoy.

So this suggests that one should focus on one's existing strengths. Many models are offered to help one find one's own strengths, some of which focus on predetermined character strengths and do not seem to leave the individual much room for improvement. Still, given the abundance of tests offered today, it is surprising that many managers, now thinking of a career change, still do not really know what their strengths are, what they really love to do, and how they could find out.

Finally, much has been written on how personal beliefs, attitudes and behaviours are connected to one's environment, each feeding off the other, and in particular, on how self-efficacy beliefs are relevant to success. It seems that a person who is in a positive upward spiral can follow this to more and more success.

## **2.6 The academic importance of this research**

At the end of this literature review, the theoretical and practical contributions of this research are spelled out more precisely.

Some literature highlights the influence on fulfilment of character traits and strengths, social circumstances and perceptions, and external events, over which the individual has little control. So, these aspects seem to be amenable to change only slowly or, even, not at all. An example is the well-known flow concept: This has been investigated in some depth, but to my knowledge, the question of whether there are specific competencies that enable behaviour that, in turn, leads to flow experience has not yet been addressed systematically. As a consequence, this question may be of considerable importance because if it would be possible to identify such competencies, it would be possible to deliberately engage in activities utilising these competencies, thereby making flow experience more likely.

The present research provides some hope that by discovering and developing competencies in the right direction, individuals could take an active role in finding fulfilment. In particular, it focuses on natural competencies, which can be actively sharpened into a certain direction to achieve greater levels of success and satisfaction and, so, greater overall fulfilment.

In this work, the idea of fulfilment and its conditions (positive emotions, engagement, and meaning) is attempted to be integrated with the idea of identity.

Following Craib (1998), the hypothesis is explored that there might be a “true” identity independent of the various social identities everybody has, and that this true identity shines through when a subject utilises natural competencies. Thus the main theoretical contribution of this work is to integrate identity and fulfilment, and the link between them consists in natural competencies since they are supposed to express true identity and lead to feelings of fulfilment.

Another important contribution of this work is to conceptualise “natural competencies” as clearly as possible. They are conceptualised as competencies whose utilisation is accompanied by engagement, positive emotion, and experiences of meaning. While the term “competency” is well established in psychology, the term “natural” is a specific qualification that needs explication. The idea of this work is that competencies are “natural” if they are utilised in activities such that the subject experiences true identity, engagement, and meaningfulness. This process leads to feelings of fulfilment and thereby to positive emotions.

The third contribution of this work is to try to investigate these natural competencies empirically. Since concepts like “identity” and “fulfilment” are difficult to measure by, for example, standardised questionnaires, an alternative, qualitative approach is pursued. This approach, Modified Grounded Theory, comes up with a preliminary set of “natural competencies”. They are validated by showing that if subjects are able to utilise them at the workplace as well, they experience more fulfilment. Of course, this is only a preliminary validation. But the attempt to (theoretically and empirically) combine the notion of competencies with the notions of identity and fulfilment is, to my knowledge, new.

Fourth, intrinsic motivation and a congruence in work and personal values may be linked to job-satisfaction and success, and job-success and fulfilment are inextricably linked, highlighting a positive spiral where a sense of fulfilment and personal motivation feeds success and vice versa. However, not much guidance can be found as to how to achieve such congruence in practical terms, how to generate such motivation from within, or how an individual could actively generate this positive spiral for them. This research promotes the idea that a) natural competencies may show up most easily in the context of leisure activities since they

pose less constraints on the subject and enable the chosen activity, and that, consequently, b) natural competencies might be identified from leisure activities and then transferred to the workplace. The idea of looking for most fulfilling leisure activities and trying to utilise them for workplace issues in a systematic way seems to be new too.

While learning through experience is a key subject of modern skill-development theories of the 21st century, much literature tends to focus on learning and gaining experience in the realm of business. The idea that adults could develop their competencies in their leisure time does not seem an important issue. The contribution of the present research is to point out that the field where natural competencies may easily be discovered and developed is an adult's leisure time or non-working life. This is especially important given that (a) despite the abundance of tests, many working individuals still do not know their strengths, and (b) often there are no opportunities in one's current job for developing those competencies which are important for the next step in one's career. So, the present research attempts to highlight that it is important to focus on the right strengths, those that really motivate a person, and are amenable to growth and change – a person's natural competencies.

## **2.7 The practical importance of this research**

### **2.7.1 Why the subject is important in practice**

My discussions with a variety of working people in their 40s indicate that the present research meets with real interest and can be of practical use:

It shows that – maybe under specified conditions – it may be possible to discover one's own natural competencies in a quick and easy way. This may help individuals make the right work-decisions and choose the right career-path, by discovering their natural competencies, thus guiding their career toward success and overall fulfilment.

It can assist young people at the beginning of their career to see what path to take as well as help working adults to choose a new direction for the second half of their

working life, where overall fulfilment is often more important than climbing up the corporate ladder.

It advises the type of leisure activities to pursue and how to pursue them in order to become more successful and satisfied at work. Also, it offers working adults outlets, denied to them elsewhere, for developing those competencies that are required, for them to progress in their career.

It shows individuals how to actively influence their own behaviour in order to interact more beneficially with their environment, thus guiding them towards more success and overall fulfilment.

This research may also be of practical assistance to life-coaches who advise individuals as to what direction to take at any stage in their lives, and can similarly guide those responsible for recruiting staff as to what questions to ask in order to discover the natural competencies of prospective candidates.

The results of this research may also be beneficial to business leaders who have the power to employ people. Such individuals are not only responsible for the successful outcome of the organisation but also for the culture and the well-being of the employees which is the basis of long-term success for an organisation (Turner, Barling, & Zacharator, 2002). The research results might be used to influence corporate culture and the innovation power of the company in a positive way. Rightly positioned individuals will, through their own success and accumulated experience, feed back into the organisation in the long term, so that a double-win effect is achieved, which “brings positive benefits for the organisation and the individual” (Money et al., 2008, p. 33). That is, this research may contribute to the long-term success of companies, resulting from the employment of more efficient and happier employees.

Finally, the research offers a more holistic framework for understanding individual behaviour and its consequences in a way that may be more sensitive to each individual’s unique characteristics.

### 2.7.2 Some quotes by people with whom I discussed the subject

At the end of this section, I would like to add some quotes from several people with whom I discussed the project (the quotes were recorded in German and translated into English).

“To me, the subject is very important because, for example, Mercuri Urval, one of the top international headhunting companies, have based their whole philosophy on people’s actual competencies and not on what they have already done. It seems that this research you are doing speaks out on what I believe is right within human resource management and the question of how to make the best out of it.” Oliver Baer, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2010, Zurich Airport. Formerly responsible for West Switzerland at Mercuri Urval, he now owns his own headhunting company.

“If I had known how easy it is to discover what you should really do in your life to be successful and fulfilled, I would have left out many things and gone directly to the things I really want and am able to do.... A really interesting thought which helps me to think about new directions for my career” Axel Riester, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010, Idaburg in Zurich. Formerly responsible for Marketing and Sales at Forbo, he is now, in the second half of his life, in the process of changing career paths.

“I have always thought that overall fulfilment, or influence and success at work, are achieved through being given a chance at a job, which does not come so often... The view arising from the present research is very different. It offers the possibility of influencing success as well as fulfilment, which is a very new and refreshing idea.” Diego Quintarelli, 11. May 2010, CEO of SonntagsZeitung (Biggest Sunday newspaper for Switzerland).

“Until now, I just did what I wanted to do in my job and was always successful and fulfilled. But the structured way that the researcher describes her results focusing on natural competencies really matches what I did, albeit unconsciously ... It seems as if I was guided from the inside and now, after having read and talked about natural competencies I know why it all worked out so well.” Mitchell Peeters, CEO of Goodyear for Switzerland, Austria and the Nordic Countries of Europe, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2010.

## 2.8 Conclusions and managerial relevance

“Natural competencies” are a construct that is certainly difficult to grasp. But as was argued in the literature review, there are specific indicators of utilisation of natural competencies: emotional pleasure, engagement, and the experience of meaning. People utilising their natural competencies fulfil their personal identities. From a managerial point of view, this is very desirable because if people work according to their natural competencies, they will tend to be more intrinsically motivated, to be neither bored nor frustrated and, in sum, to be more productive. By this they contribute to the knowledge promotion of the firm (Ahonen, Hussi & Schunder-Tatzber, 2007) which comprises the managerial relevance of natural competencies. But natural competencies, being (at least in part) implicit knowledge, are hard to describe. Leisure activity is a field where they may exhibit in a most “natural” form, without much restriction by organisation and structure. So it might be relevant from a managerial point of view to look at leisure activities of employees.

The present chapter reviews the relevant literature, consisting of various subjects in different academic fields, all of which shed light on the connection between natural competencies and fulfilment. The phenomenon that focusing on one’s natural competencies leads to greater work success and satisfaction, hence fulfilment, was discovered by coincidence while interviewing people about their behaviour and activities surrounding art-collecting. While existing literature on fulfilment, skill and competency development, identity, and the relation between working and non-working life explains parts of this phenomenon, I found that further research was needed to clearly illustrate both the theoretical connection between natural competencies and fulfilment. I also found that illustrating this connection between natural competencies and fulfilment would be of practical benefit in guiding individuals (and companies) to greater success and satisfaction. The CF-model can fill a gap, both in theory and practice, that existing research leaves largely untouched.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Overview of chapter 3**

The following chapter outlines the general methodology, the research design and the more particular research methods employed in this research project. It introduces the candidates targeted for research, followed by information on the codification that was used to analyse the data. Subsequently, a detailed research plan is outlined and the process of analysis explained. Finally, the safeguards put in place to ensure the robustness of the research are noted. Tables and lists in the appendix provide further information on the various stages that the codification process underwent as the research evolved and on the research methods and tools presented here, containing practical examples of their application.

#### **3.2 Methodology**

In my methodology, I follow Crotty (1998, p. 216), in thinking that there is no right way to approach the project that one can pick up from the shelf; but rather that borrowing elements from various theories can provide the right mixture for approaching the question at issue. I will endeavour to explain the combination of approaches I follow and illustrate what lies at their centre.

##### **3.2.1 The basic approach**

Basically, natural competencies are at the centre of this research. Earlier, they have been defined as resources for enabling positive emotions by using skills and competencies for performing activities that are inherently interesting and exciting for the subject. These resources may be more cognitively or emotionally oriented, they may be “hard skills” or “soft skills”. The term “natural competencies” is intended to be neutral to this.

In order to diagnose competencies, or skills, psychology has developed an overwhelming number of diagnostic instruments, like tests. So a quite natural approach to the research aims might be to now apply a test battery in order to identify these competencies.



There would be at least three problems with this approach. First, the set of competencies that might hold for a given subject might be very diverse, and it would seem impractical to apply a large set of tests to every person. As long as there is no cue to rule out certain competencies, this would seem like a “brute force” approach. Second, identifying competencies does not mean that they are “natural” competencies in the sense explicated earlier. Accordingly, even if identification of competencies were feasible using extensive testing this would leave the problem of which competencies lead to activities that are associated with positive emotional experiences. Third, this procedure would imply a pre-decision for skills and competencies for which tests are available.

Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2010) is a methodology designed to overcome all three problems. Basically, Grounded Theory tries to develop theoretical concepts inductively, starting from the data. In doing this, it avoids the problem of interpreting phenomena prematurely in the light of some specific theory not designed for the data at hand (Glaser & Strauss, 2010, p. 22-23). This problem does not arise if expectations are derived deductively from some theory, leading to empirically testable hypotheses. However, it arises if phenomena are observed and explained “ex post” by some theoretical concept. In contrast to this, Grounded Theory constructs theoretical concepts from the data. Specifically, when a realm of phenomena is not yet very well defined, it may help to create a theoretical account of the data. Thus Grounded Theory is a systematic approach to theory generation, whereas the tradition of deductive research mainly deals with theory / hypotheses testing. Therefore, Grounded Theory and deductive research are not contradictory; they complement each other.

In the current context, the realm of phenomena is not very well defined either because the concept of natural competencies is deliberately captured in a broad way as they may encompass hard skills, like physical and cognitive skills, but also soft skills and tendencies to emotional reactions. So, being a qualitative, inductive approach, Grounded Theory seems to be sensible. In contrast, data do not emerge on a “tabula rasa” background but, of course, there are concepts and theories around. They might influence interpretation of data even if this is not intended, and even if it

is not consciously pursued. In order to account for this and to make influences of theories explicit, the method of “Modified Grounded Theory” will be pursued.

### **3.2.2 Modified grounded theory**

The interpretative, or as it is often called ‘hermeneutic’, process employed in this research is rooted in ‘modified grounded theory’ (Perry & Jensen, 2001), also called ‘adapted grounded theory’ (Sarker, Lau, & Sahay, 2001). This methodology is based on the ‘pure grounded theory’ approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) but is somewhat modified from its pure form as originally presented by Glaser and Strauss. In its pure form, “grounded theory is the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research”. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1), or the discovery of “latent theory which is hidden within data” (Fendt & Sachs, 2008, p. 431). As Easterby-Smith et al. (2002, p. 79) as well as Crotty (1998, p. 47) add, Glaser and Strauss’ original approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) exists in a number of variant forms and modifications today. According to the modified version put forth by Perry and Jensen (2001), and which is adopted here, theory arises predominantly, but not purely, inductively, that is, out of empirical data. Instead theory construction also employs the deductive approach to some degree, that is, it proceeds with some additional reference to existing theory.

According to Perry and Jensen (2001), it is unlikely that a researcher could genuinely separate the two processes of induction and deduction. Or, as Richards (1983, p. 40) notes, “it is impossible to go theory-free into any study”. Hence Perry and Jensen argue that both inductive and deductive methods are most likely to always be involved simultaneously. Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that social processes are often so complex that the only available approach for academics who research these processes is a “... loosely structured, emergent, inductively “grounded” approach to gathering data.” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 17). This process involves a small amount of prior theory at the beginning of the research to help give the research some structure or direction. Interestingly, contrary to what Strauss puts forth in Glaser and Strauss (1967), later in his life he admits that some pre-suppositions during any empirical research process are inevitable (Strauss, 1987).

At the very beginning of this research, when the first empirical data was being collected, this empirical process was inevitably informed by the literature already read on the subject of personal identity and individual behaviour. The special phenomenon at the heart of this research was discovered while interviewing people and constantly analysing data: whilst collecting empirical data, I noticed a pattern emerging, linking natural competencies, as displayed in people's leisure activities, and success at work. This discovery was not grounded in rigorous and in depth data analysis, but emerged rather naturally from the data gathered. Now, once the discovery was made, and after it became clear that it could not be explained by existing theory on the topic of competencies, I began a process of analysing the data more deeply, in order to generate a theory which explains this phenomenon.

Theory construction was then carried out in a rather inductive way, where the theory arising out of the empirical data was compared to existing deductive methodologies, and already developed theories to test the data against the newly arising theory (Goulding, 2002, p. 170). In that process I brought in some existing research on skills and competencies, working and non-working life, identity and fulfilment. The result is a new theory, which has arisen from and is firmly rooted in the data, but which has been given its structure with some help from existing research in its field. This method allows for a theory that is strongly grounded in the data, a process which, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 12) is more likely to produce a theory that resembles reality, than if it is was constructed from a series of concepts alone.

Interestingly, as Strübing (2002) notes, Glaser and Strauss developed their research in entirely different directions, after their initial joint work of 1969. Glaser started basing his ideas on a rather positivistic-functionalistic background ideology, whereas Strauss promoted the pragmatic 'interactionalistic' approach, which was rooted in social theory and which he then developed further. Strauss, in an interview very shortly before he died, listed the following three elements as basic to any kind of grounded theory (Strauss, 2004), and these also inform the research process applied here:

a) Codification in a theoretical way: Codification is a theoretical activity. It is not simply there to classify the description of a phenomenon but also to build theoretical concepts which are of important explanatory value for the phenomenon under investigation. More specifically, codification means “to ask questions to the material” (Hildenbrand, 2007, p. 36). The questions try to elucidate what the specific conditions, or reasons, of phenomena might be.

→ This has been found to be the case in the present research. The codification of the data allowed for the relevant concepts important for its explanation to arise. For example, “codification” means to ask for the reasons or conditions of certain activities in dealing with art. The possible reasons and conditions might be natural competencies, or they might hint to them. So, following this theoretical codification process, the implications of the data could then be seen more easily and clearly. Thus, codification did not only prove invaluable in retrieving data but also in analysing it, so that important conclusions could be drawn.

b) Codification from the very beginning: The analysis of data is at the core of empirical research. Even during the very initial stages of research, during the pilot-study, the codification and analysis of data is not only aimed at describing what is found but also at looking for any interesting emerging patterns. Data-codification is to be carried out at each stage, until the point of saturation, where further codification fails to deliver new results.

→ Even though the codification of the data evolved as new patterns and questions emerged during my research, it was this process of constant codification from the very start, which helped order and make sense of the data in such a way as to provide the breakthrough insights that led this research in a completely new direction.

c) Comparison between phenomenon and context: The phenomenon at the focus of the research should always be seen in light of the context in which it arises. Phenomenon and context should continually be measured against each other, thus allowing the appropriate theoretical concepts that explain their interrelationship to emerge.

→ It was, indeed, this constant comparison of the discovered phenomenon of natural competencies to the context in which it arose, together with my attempt at understanding how the two are connected, which led to the discovery of the patterns that eventually gave rise to the CF-model.

### **3.2.3 Case Study**

Another method at the heart of the present research is case study, which is defined by Yin (1989) as an empirical enquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used". Eisenhardt, (1989) notes that this approach is "especially appropriate in new topic areas". Case study is closely intertwined with qualitative research because each case requires a thorough analysis. This often precludes the creation of large samples that might be evaluated using sophisticated quantitative methods (von Rosenstiel, 2007, p. 224). So generalisation of results must always be performed with caution. But mostly, the main aim of qualitative case studies is not to generalise the results but to derive theoretically meaningful concepts in the first place. These concepts may then be tested in a separate empirical work which may then include quantitative research.

According to Yin (1989, p. 59) there are three types of case study: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Two of these types are clearly seen in the methodology of this research project, as interviews started in an exploratory manner but, once the central phenomenon to be explained was discovered, these were replaced by an explanatory study of cases (see also Eisenhardt, 1989).

Although the present research process is influenced by Eisenhardt (1989), it is not strictly modelled on the classical process of theory-building on the basis of case study that he puts forth. One reason for this is that the mixed methodological approach of case study, together with modified grounded theory, needed more flexible handling.

Silverman (1994) highlights the heavy hermeneutic element of the case-study method, since understanding and correctly interpreting what people say is crucial to working with data collected at interview. Taking a holistic view on the collected

data is also important, in order to keep an overview on research-progress. These constraints have been kept in mind throughout the research process.

#### **3.2.4 Illustrative writing**

Erikson (1950) presents a method whereby he combines theory with his own thoughts and observation from the field, written down in direct speech. In this narrative-like way, findings are illustrated easily making contextual connections clear. This technique is often used here to flesh out the theoretical model by giving real-life examples. For this reason, care was taken, during focused interviews, to record the data word for word.

### **3.3 Research development**

The model below illustrates the entire research process, showing how inductive and deductive processes worked together. It also shows the point at which, upon discovery of the phenomenon at the heart of the present investigation, more theoretical and empirical research was carried out to illuminate this new discovery.

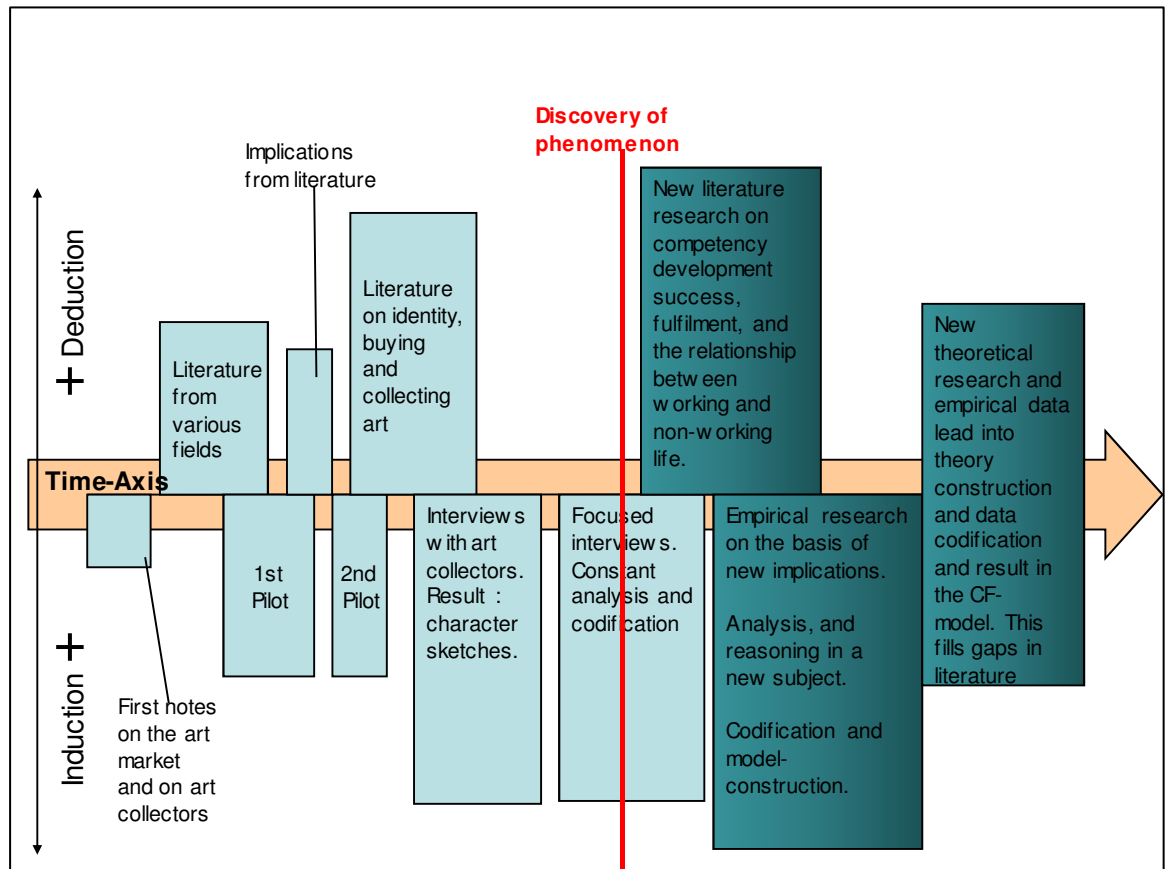


Figure 1: Research Development

Figure 1 illustrates how the present research developed and how inductive and deductive processes, according to Modified Grounded Theory, fed off each other at various stages. Each phase functions as preparation for the next, thus creating a saturation process that paves the way to a final theory, which is stable in the face of new empirical data. The boxes coming off the central time-line in the table above indicate particular engagement in inductive or deductive processes along the line. The height of each particular box stands for how deeply inductive or deductive a single step was in nature. The length of each box indicates the time that it took to complete that particular step in the process. The darker colour in the model is used to highlight the final stages of the research, clearly showing the new research that had to be undertaken following the discovery of the phenomenon. The chosen methodology allowed those research dimensions that helped further the goal of the

research to be incrementally added to the process of continual analysis and those that did not add any value to be progressively excluded. A short explanation of each step in the process follows:

1<sup>st</sup> box: I started by exploring the art world and making notes. This process is described more closely in chapter 3.6.2

2<sup>nd</sup> box: Next, I turned to literature that might explain what I encountered in the art world. The material I read included social networks theory, sociological approaches to art, theory about art in society, and treatises on taste and identity.

3<sup>rd</sup> box: 1<sup>st</sup> pilot - This short study was carried out with the aim of testing my newly acquired theoretical knowledge, arising from the previous stage, in practice. Some test-interviews of people in the art-world were carried out, inspired by my readings.

4<sup>th</sup> box: At the same time, I studied further literature on art and identity.

5<sup>th</sup> box: This led to a second pilot-study, where the interview-questions were much more focused on testing the theories I encountered. An example can be found in appendix 9.3

6<sup>th</sup> box: In analysing the data from the second pilot, I read more literature on identity and art-collecting.

7<sup>th</sup> box: This led me to do many more interviews which resulted in the creation of character sketches for all the collectors that were interviewed. An example of this can be seen in appendix 9.2.3

8<sup>th</sup> box: The readings and codification of the character sketches, alongside thinking about how to best understand the data led me to design and carry out yet more focussed interviews. An example can be seen in appendix 9.2.4

Red line: This indicates the discovery of the phenomenon which formed the focus of the research from that point onward, and which is presented in this dissertation. The new implications of the discovery led me, during the second round of interviews, to take an interest in theoretical research in completely different academic disciplines from those initially pursued. This led to the introduction of further questions relating to success and satisfaction to my interviews, which I went



back to pose to interviewees, with whom I had not previously had a chance to discuss them.

9<sup>th</sup> box: After the discovery of the phenomenon, I read existing research on success and fulfilment, the relationship between working-life and non-working life, and skill and competency development.

10<sup>th</sup> box: My new theoretical research led to further analysis of the data and to a new codification of the whole data-material.

11<sup>th</sup> box: This box represents the culmination of the research process, where theoretical and empirical findings came together, resulting in the new CF-model, which are both of practical and theoretical importance.

Throughout the entire research process, constant reflection and critical thinking were required, as well as strict vigilance in order to be aware of new implications arising from the data and eliminate any bias that might unknowingly influence results. This subject is briefly revisited in chapter 3.10.3.

### **3.4 Detailed research process**

A more thorough analysis of each step in the research process follows below, adapted from Eisenhardt (1989, p. 533) to the needs of this research. The eight steps in the Table functioned as a guideline for structuring the data analysis.

	Step	Activity	Reason
1	Getting Started	Going into the intended field of research (back then the art market); trying to understand what is going on; reading as much as possible about the field; speaking to individuals in the field. Writing down possible research question, reading academic literature. Keeping a diary.	Opening the mind, immersing the self in the field of interest, and getting as much input as possible. Taking notes helps in reflecting over experiences, bringing a certain order to the influx of information. Initial codification helps to find patterns.
2	Selecting cases for a pilot	Defining what deserves further research. Trying 2-3 sample cases → pilots. Trying to learn by experimenting on these first research cases.	Learning through experience. Through a small series of pilot-studies, the researcher learns what works, how to act, which cases could be valid, what does not work and what could be a good possible codification of the data.
3	Crafting different instruments for data collection	Multiple data collection methods are devised to get the best quality of data possible. This is tried out in the pilot as well as in the process of codification.  Decisions are made such as whether to record the interviews, how to approach collectors, how to formulate questions, being more open or closed as a questioner. Also learning to listen and ask clarificatory questions...	More experience at the beginning helps to avoid difficulties later.  By experimenting with different methods, different approaches and other ways to act and react, the researcher achieves a greater understanding of the right procedures. A new level of codification was experienced with help of the NVivo program.
4	Entering the field of research, reading relevant literature and analysing all data through constant codification.	Simultaneously reading literature on identity, possession, distinctiveness in consumption etc. and carrying out interviews, constantly comparing both the theoretical and empirical fields for similarities and differences.	Becoming aware in the field, getting motivated by finding confirmation of theories in the literature, but also by discovering phenomena not yet covered in the literature. New questions arise, which help to narrow down the field of interest, gaining expertise in certain fields of empirical research as well as gaining theoretical knowledge. (This period lasted for about 36 months). Different codification is used, codification process evolves.

5	Discovering a phenomenon that is of great interest	Coming to a point, where empirical investigation brings something up, which has not yet been described in literature, and which opens up a totally new field of research.	The phenomenon discovered fell within totally different research areas to the ones previously pursued, therefore theoretical research took a completely different direction and the central research question changed. Therefore, the codification also changed again.
6	Continuing the research but with a new question in mind and in new theoretical fields. Reading new literature, constantly codifying.	Using these new implications to build a provisional model. All this was done by coding and re-coding the material in different ways and by experimenting and searching for a pattern.	Gaining familiarity with data, and seeing evidence through multiple lenses and from different angles with the help of codification.  Model testing on a provisional basis, rendering the model more robust.
7	Confirmation and adjustment	The theoretical model is used on and confirmed by the cases that remain. All interviews are finally codified and missing or unclear information is corrected by going back to the interviewees with further questions.	This strengthens the theoretical model, confirms its validity and adjusts any weaknesses
8	Reaching synthesis and building the final model	Final model-building and theoretical saturation. Using codified interviews to illustrate and underline the central message and make it clearer by example.	The process ends when new cases or new data do not add more insight.  Background information and examples make the theoretical model become more tangible.

Table 1: Definitive codes and sub-codes used for analysis

### **3.5 Research design**

Figure 2 below presents an overview of the research design of this project. It can be described as follows:

The box at the top represents all the initial ideas and studies carried out, prior to the discovery of the phenomenon which gave rise to the research question. Some details of this initial process can be glimpsed in Figure 1 of section 3.3.

Once the research question was formulated, existing and new empirical and theoretical data were gathered and synthesised to give rise to a theoretical model, the CF-model. This attempts to answer the research question by identifying and explaining the discovered phenomenon.

## The research design

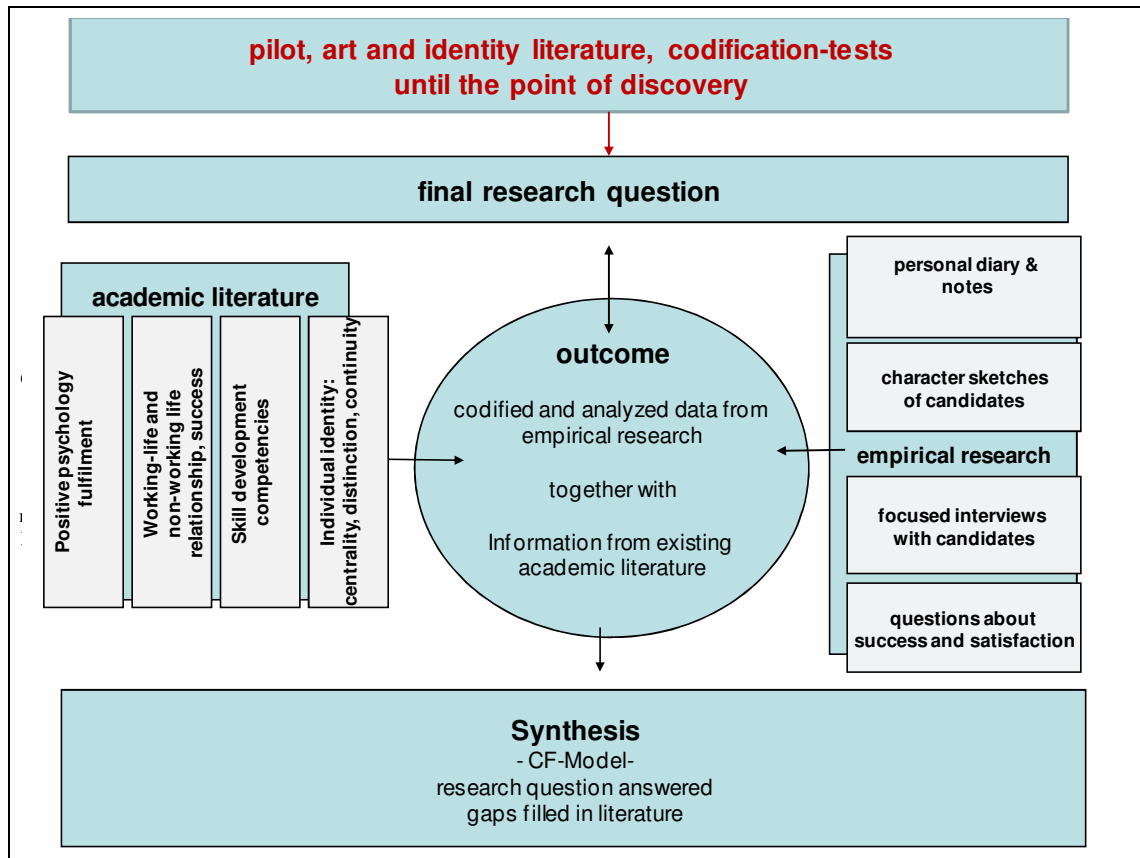


Figure 2: Research Design

### 3.6 Practical tools and methods

The preceding sections 3.3 to 3.5 explained the research process. The following section describes the different tools and methods that were used in empirical research. It explains why each method was chosen, and shows how it was executed, providing, where possible, a practical example.

#### 3.6.1 Rationale of choosing different tools and methods

A frequent criticism of qualitative methods is that they might be too subjective and may lead to spurious results since it is often difficult to control for biases of the researcher (see also section 3.10), and they are conducted in natural settings so there might be influences that can hardly be controlled (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p.

442). In order to reduce these problems, the approach of “triangulation” (Flick, 2007, p. 309f.) has been motivated.

Triangulation means that a research subject is looked at from at least two different perspectives, or angles. There are four different varieties of triangulation (Flick, 2007, p. 310): Data triangulation combines data from different sources like data from different subjects or from the same subjects at different points in time. This tends to rule out spurious source-dependent influences. Investigator triangulation rules out influences from the specific investigator, or researcher. Theory triangulation attempts to approach the research topic from different theoretical perspectives. Finally, method triangulation aims at using different methods in order to reduce method dependency of the results. Altogether, triangulation may be viewed as an attempt to enhance the validity of field research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 461), but this view has been criticised since, for example, different methods might not simply deliver converging evidence (Flick, 2007, p. 311). Therefore, in a more modest formulation, triangulation simply supports a deep and thorough understanding of the research issue (Flick, 2007, p. 311).

In the current context, data triangulation, method triangulation, and theory triangulation were utilised. The only kind of triangulation that was not possible (for practical reasons) was investigator triangulation since this would have required at least a second person performing in-depth interviews with the subjects.

Data triangulation was performed by using different data sources: Information about the world of art and art collectors (“diary of notes”), making explicit assumptions about the subjects before interviewing them, and obtaining in-depth information.

Method triangulation was performed by combining the two major qualitative research techniques (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 446): observation and interview. Observation refers to the person, their style, the art they are collecting, and so on. The interviews are conducted as informal (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 447) albeit focused interviews. That is, there is no specific structure but there may be some guidance by leading questions.

Theory triangulation was performed by looking at the interview and observation results from different theoretical perspectives as introduced in chapter 2: basically,

identity (with related concepts of centrality, continuity, and distinction), and fulfilment. Data triangulation and method triangulation basically operate on the level of the single subject, that is, they are aimed at identifying natural competencies of each single subject. In contrast, theory triangulation takes a cross comparison perspective between subjects in order to create a more coherent theoretical account. Explicitly, perceived differences between the subjects are accounted for by differences with respect to concepts like identity (with centrality, continuity, or distinction), fulfilment, amongst others.

The basic idea of this approach is that these kinds of triangulation should lead to a converging picture with respect to the natural competencies of each subject as they a) might shine through by their art collecting, and they b) might (possibly) be utilised at the workplace, too. If such a convergence is reached, theoretical saturation may be reached, too. Theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 2010, p. 77) means that no more information can be found that may be useful for further developing the theoretical concepts. More specifically, for a given subject, theoretical saturation is reached if the natural competencies of this subject identified, so far, do not change further by additional data regarding this subject.

In the rest of this section, the sources of data triangulation and method triangulation will be explained. The different theoretical perspectives have already been described in chapter 2.

### **3.6.2 Diary of notes from the art world**

To understand the art world sufficiently for the purposes of being a good interviewer, and to come into contact with serious art-collectors, I started going to art events and exhibitions, and tried to secure VIP-invitations to gallery-openings and events in Europe, especially in Zurich and GB, my places of residence and frequent travel. I wanted to know as much as possible about the art world and to meet and get to know as many people as possible who were interested in buying art for themselves. Therefore, I travelled to the most important art-fairs, taking part in openings, social gatherings and other important art events. In order to carry on gaining VIP invitations to such events, I invested not just my time but also some of

my own material resources in art. The following highlights show the depth of my involvement during that time:

The Venice Biennale 2007 (VIP guest and dinner given by the Swiss Embassy, in collaboration with the Swiss Cultural Department, at the Guggenheim-Museum in Venice)

Basel art-fair 2007, 2008 (VIP and Pre-VIP guest)

Nada Art Fair, The Scope, the Print-Art Fair, Brasilia 2007, London, Miami, Kassel, Berlin in 2008 and Zurich every year (attended, often after invitation)

London Frieze 2008 (VIP Program – I stayed in London for a week, visiting many different galleries and museums going to artistic social events and smaller art-fairs)

Royal Academy and Kay Saatchi, 2008 (Invitations to shows where new talented artists are discovered and where unconventional collectors make an appearance)

Every evening, when I returned home or to the hotel-room from one of these events, I sat at the computer to note down everything that took place, the people I met and my thoughts about these experiences. After one year of full-time involvement, I had two binders of material about my experience in the art world in 2007 and 2008. During that time I also read many books about the art-world, contemporary art buying and art collectors and I subscribed to the most important art magazines. This allowed me to strike interesting conversations in art events and at the VIP dinner-table, as well as to be able to ask the right questions in the early stages of my interviews.

This period was followed by the first pilot, where I produced three character sketches of art-collectors in the scene and found that I only needed to focus on a selection of collectors and not on the entire art scene for my research. This allowed my project to become more focussed. My diary-notes then allowed me to narrow down who to select for interview.

This background research in the art-world also eventually helped me understand those interviewees that took part in the final project, through discussing their art-collection with them.

### 3.6.3 Character sketches

A character sketch is a short characterisation of a person. Its main function is to make expectancies and, possibly, prejudices about this person explicit so they can be taken care of when trying to interpret behaviour patterns in terms of natural competencies.

The character sketch also acts as a tool for a cross-comparison of data along certain pre-determined lines, fixed by using a single template for all character sketches.

To produce a character sketch of my interviewees, all possible elements were taken into account to provide a picture that is as good and as authentic as possible.

In the heart of the sketch stood the question of the particular identity, special character or characteristic behaviour of the individual with particular regard to their interests and habits in art-collecting. Interviews lasted between thirty minutes to an hour – occasionally longer – and were structured according to the template below. Collating this information resulted in writing a character sketch of 2000 words. An actual example is appended in 9.2.3. The following table shows the basic structure of the character sketch.



Name of interviewee	(These 9 rows head each character sketch and start each focused interview)
Document name	
Date	
Profession	
Age	
Main place of residence	
Telephone / email	
Character Sketch based on the following documents	
Word count	
Assumptions before the interview; (Assumptions) as well as thoughts after the interview	(separate sheet)
The interview setting : the house, how people are dressed, special behaviour (Observation)	
How he/she started their collection, how it continued, important events in the life (Continuity)	
What does art mean to him/her (Values)	
What is different in his/her collection compared to that of others (Distinction)	
How he/she sees him/herself as an art collector (Identity)	
Special observations	(separate sheet)
Summary of central points after the interview	
Photos and other important elements that help to illustrate the character of the person	

Table 2: Structural basis for the character sketch

Character sketches of each person were produced by performing a short interview (not the focused interview described later) using the structure shown in Table 2. Talks that led into a character sketch were not always planned as such. But when it was felt that the conversation was important for a possible candidate of a character sketch, the interviewee was asked if they agreed to the research and then parts of the discussion were sometimes recorded, or noted down by hand. Socio-demographic data was sometimes used to make the picture of the person more complete. Often a focused interview followed or we continued via Skype or email in order to exchange further information and cover any gaps. Regarding the best communication method I had the following rule: the best working method for each occasion is that which elicits the most personal information from the interviewee.

### 3.6.4 Assumptions before the interview

To avoid bias it is crucial to understand one’s own assumptions and any prejudice regarding a person, especially when the contact between researcher and interviewee is as close as this project required. To become conscious of these thoughts, the decision was made to write them down before the interview and again afterwards. This helped me reflect on the interviewing process and act more consciously. The list below only served as a helpful tool in thinking about these issues, without it being a requirement that each row be filled out. A practical example of this template being used can be found in appendix 9.2.1.

<b>Person-specific:</b>
Where do I know the person
How has our connection evolved since then
How personal is our contact
Why do I think it is an interesting candidate, what is his/her angle
My assumption of how he/she collects art, what he/she collects
<b>Subject-specific: Assumptions regarding identity and art:</b>
Assumed connection of identity to art for this person (distinction, centrality, continuity)
Assumed function of art for this person
Assumption of why I think this person is collecting art
<b>Bias-at-interview-specific:</b>
Does the interviewee want to influence me?
Why?
Does the interviewee want to be somebody else?

Table 3: Structural basis for handling of assumptions

### 3.6.5 Reflections after the interview

The following template functioned as a basic structure for reflecting on the interview and recording thoughts:

What was outstanding?
Outstanding, interesting points
My own assumptions and judgments
Was it the same from beginning to the end – or did the discussion take a different direction?
Connection between identity and art collection for this person
Possible explanation of the connection between identity and art for this person
Possible explanation in regard to the function art has for this person
Possible explanation of why I think this person is collecting art
Bias
Things that were not clear
Things influencing each other
Special circumstances
Did the person tell the truth? If not, why not – advantage of lying
Reflection
Expectations fulfilled? Surprises?
Overall feeling
Possible explanation and summarization of how art is connected with identity for this person
Why is he/she collecting art?
Function of art for the person

Table 4: Structural basis for reflective notes after the interview

### 3.6.6 Observations

Where possible, the interviewee was visited at their own house, and the following checklist was filled out immediately following the interview. An example can be found in appendix 9.2.2.

Basically, observation refers to a) the artwork, b) the person, and c) the surroundings and characteristics of the place where the person lives.

Date, place, duration, circumstances of the <i>interview</i>
My subjective observation in terms of the <i>place</i> itself, the surroundings, the apartment or house
My subjective observation of the <i>interior design</i> of the house in terms of price-range, style, interior-decoration (is interior decoration important and stylish or rather unimportant to the individual?)
My subjective observation in terms of <i>art</i> in the house/around the house. What is dominant at the entrance or the living-room (artist, work piece, technique, price-range, symbolic value of the art itself and in connection with the person) and what is hidden away, e.g. is there art-work in a storage?
My subjective observation of the <i>person</i> , their comments when speaking about the art, or when we are in front of an art-work, argumentation of choice, language, power in the voice, body language, signs of power and self-extension or signs of introversion
My subjective observation of the person's <i>style</i> in terms of clothes, shoes, brands, accessories, mobile phone, hairstyle, watch, jeweller, plastic surgery, general style etc.
My subjective observation of the person in terms of their <i>language</i> , style of speaking (distinguished, simple, argot, many foreign words), the language we talked originally in, and my interpretation
My subjective observation of the person's <i>body-language</i> , eye-contact, posture, voice, reactions to the conversation, and my interpretation of this
My subjective observation, knowledge and assumptions regarding the <i>education</i> of my interviewee both in terms of general education and specifically within the cultural field and the arts.
Information and knowledge regarding the <i>family</i> , the person's background, especially with a focus on identity and art
The social network and <i>surroundings</i> in which the interviewee is living, especially with a focus on identity and art
What, apart from the art that is observed, could lead me in a <i>similar direction</i> , in how I categorize the person?

Table 5: Structural basis of observation

Part of the observation was that photographs of important pieces of art were taken whenever possible and formed part of the character sketch. Where it was not possible to take a photograph, the internet was searched for a similar piece by the same artist. This only helped the researcher to remember what the discussion was about; it turned out to be of minimal assistance to the research itself. To learn about the prices of artworks discussed, since it was not possible or polite to inquire about these directly within Swiss society, membership was taken at [www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com), a very reliable website listing the prices that art-works have sold for.

### **3.6.7 Final focused interview: techniques and questions**

The character sketch was used to understand the characteristic behaviours, so they were a first base for identifying the natural competencies of the individual. The focused interview took up these issues and went on to understand more regarding that person's natural competencies as they manifest in their art-collecting activities (non-working life) as well as in their working life. The interview was free of structure around these topics, to leave as much freedom as possible for the interviewee to focus on the required subject. To keep a certain order, however, the head of the character sketch was used to mark the beginning of the interview.

Techniques were employed at each interview to create as safe and close an environment as possible with the interviewee, in order for them to feel comfortable answering some personal questions. I adopted various NLP and psychological techniques that usually allow the questioner to elicit personal information. These techniques were mostly taken from a hand-book on questioning-technique for psychotherapists by Grochowiak and Heiligttag (2002). A transcript of a focused interview which was recorded can be found in section 9.2.4 of the appendix.



**Helpful points that were observed in carrying out the focused interview**

Question if it is OK to record the interview and information given on how long this interview will last. (This was also done on the telephone)☐
Ice-breaking question regarding our last discussion, or comments on how the researcher perceived the person so far with regard to their art collection, what was interesting and outstanding about them – a compliment or what the researcher thought was very special.☐
(Then normally the candidate took the discussion into the direction the researcher wanted it to go)☐
Focused question about any special behaviour patterns surrounding art, reflected in a special piece of art, a special place to show the art, reasons for preferring a piece, how the interviewee feels, why he acts in that way, what he wishes, etc☐
Question about skills or competencies and the field of art☐
Question about identity, (in terms of values, distinction and continuity) with special reference to the field of art☐
(Much listening, continual note-taking, even when an interview is recorded, talking as little as possible, only to ask ‘why’ and ‘how’ to ensure the smooth flow of data. This had the effect that the candidate felt taken seriously, with talks often lasting for hours and the candidate feeling very good in the end that somebody was taking a real interest in their activities.)☐
(After a <u>some time</u> , when no further information was to be gained, the discussion was moved on to the individual’s working life)☐
As a opening question, the candidate was asked to describe their job, what problems they face every day, what they like to do etc.☐
Questions about any special skills and competencies required in the field of work, whether any parallels could be drawn to those exhibited in the field of collecting art, and whether any similar behaviour was visible in other fields of life. The purpose of this was to find out if there was a congruent use of natural competencies in working and non-working life or whether these fields were completely different.☐
Question about identity, (values, distinction, continuity) in working life if this subject was seen as able to provide more information☐
(Listening, note-taking even with the recorder running, talking as little as possible only to ask ‘why’ and ‘how’)☐

Table 6: Helpful points observed in carrying out the focused interview

The focused interview was, wherever possible, recorded and in all cases notes were taken during the interview. It was seen as crucial that the interviewee felt relaxed and secure enough to discuss very personal issues, feelings, reasons for acting in a certain way as well as fears, life-stories or other very intimate issues.

Interviews were held in English, German, Swiss-German and French, depending on the language that made the interviewee feel most comfortable. Everything was translated and typed in English; if the interviewee said something in a special way or with a certain under-tone, this was mentioned in the notes of the focused interview.

The third part of the interview, focused on the congruence of competencies, and on job-success and overall fulfilment, and allowed the interviewee to judge himself on these matters. Because these questions were not planned from the very beginning but only emerged as the interviews progressed, some of the interviewees had to be questioned regarding these matters during a separate interview on the next possible occasion. In all cases, the following questions were asked, either on a separate occasion, or right at the end of the interview:

Question as to whether the interviewee sees similarities or dissimilarities in their behaviour in their working and non-working life. (Often this was already clear after the focused interview.)
Question as to whether the person would judge him or herself as successful in his/her job.
Question whether the person thinks he/she is satisfied.

Table 7: Final questions about success and satisfaction

### 3.6.8 Summary of practical tools and methods

Method: Art-world Diary

Goal: To better understand the art-world, in order to be able to ask interviewees the right questions and discuss their art with them, so they can thereby reveal aspects of their personal identity.

Method: Character Sketch

Goal: to create a picture of each interviewee's characteristic behaviour-patterns. The character-sketch template, which was used throughout the interviews, provided

a basic structural order allowing similarities and differences between many different kinds of data contained therein to emerge more clearly.

Method: Lists of Pre-Interview Assumptions, Post-Interview Reflections, Subjective Observations

Goal: To retain a greater measure of objectivity in the interview procedure.

Method: Pictures of the art

Goal: To provide a reference for certain discussions revolving around particular pieces of art, or to act as a pictorial reminder of discussions

Method: Note-taking and Recordings

Goal: To record interviews, word-for word where possible, whether carried out face to face, over Skype, email or telephone.

Method: Focused Interview

Goal: To gather data regarding the particular topics at the heart of this research: to determine a person's natural competencies, how these come through in the person's non-working life, whether they are employed in their working life, and finally whether the person judges themselves to be successful and satisfied at work.

### **3.7 The candidates targeted for this research**

As a researcher, I had to remain open and act according to the results of the ongoing research. Yet, and as Eisenhardt (1989) reminds us, it is crucial to define a firm basis on which to sharpen the validity of the research. In practice, this means that a certain representative set of individuals needs to be interviewed, even if some of those individuals are harder to reach. Therefore, in selecting the final set of candidates, I tried to find the right balance between targeting a defined group yet remaining open.

As already stated, I chose my group of candidates from amongst individuals who collect art, as I chose to use this activity because I know many people who see collecting art as their leisure time activity besides working to which I have very good access. Earlier, the opportunities on which to meet people collecting art were mentioned: important art-fairs, taking part in openings, social gatherings and other



important art events. Still, finding people who would really like to speak to me for my dissertation was not easy. Firstly, most Swiss people who spend time and money on that kind of leisure activity would not call themselves ‘collectors’. Secondly, displaying valuable possessions goes against moral sentiment and tradition in Zurich, with its Zwinglian roots, originating with the middle-aged Protestant reformer Zwingli, who advocated that valuables are not to be displayed in church or between individuals. This notion is still very strong in Zurich, and is only, now, changing as some of its residents have lived and travelled abroad, where they adapted to a more extroverted life-style. So, great sensitivity was called for: candidates had to be approached in the right way to open up and talk about their art collection.

### **3.7.1 Definition of an art collector – the subject of interview**

For the purposes of the present research, I have defined an art-collector as an individual who has bought over £5,000 worth of art-works, or owns over three pieces of art or more.

Moreover, the individual must exhibit interest in buying/possessing art in the form of spending time and money engaging in this activity and visiting national or international art fairs, auctions, galleries, events, opening nights, or artist-studios. This distinguishes the art-collector from someone who just visits art museums and exhibitions to look at art.

Finally, since art-collecting had to be a non-working activity, professional art collectors were not taken into account. Having a separate job or career was a necessary condition for being an interviewee.

### **3.7.2 Sampling subjects**

In order to become acquainted with the interview techniques and the situation altogether, pilot interviews with three people were conducted. In the pilot, it emerged that the quality of the interview and the depth of insight it offers are paramount to the outcome of the research. A good personal contact between the researcher and the interviewee makes it possible to have a deeper personal conversation and enables a visit to the interviewee’s house to look at their art collection and surroundings and understand its identity better. It became clear in the

pilot that the more personal the contact, the better the outcome in terms of understanding someone's identity and behaviour by looking and talking about their art.

Based on my contacts to art collecting people as described before, a list of persons was made who met the criteria of an art collector as described. As a result of the pilot, in preparing for the interviews, the subjects were asked whether it would be possible to visit them at home and to look at their art collection, and if they would agree with in-depth interviews. Those subjects who agreed with this were put on a list of "definite candidates" for the interviews. This list contained 30 subjects. Subjects who seemed concerned about this or about whom not enough information was available altogether were put on a list of "potential candidates".

The geographical field of research was not pre-defined, but it transpired that most of the "definite candidates" lived in Switzerland. This is understandable, since Switzerland is my domicile and I consequently know most of the art collectors there, having a closer connection with some of them.

From the list of definite candidates, 20 subjects were randomly chosen for the interviews. This reduction (from 30 to 20) was made in order to be able to deepen the interview process, rather than conducting superficial chats. During the interviews, it turned out for three subjects that it was not possible to continue the interviews with them. They were not able, or willing, to go on with the in-depth interviews. These three subjects were substituted by three subjects from the list of potential candidates, leaving the number of interviews at 20 altogether.

This substitution of interviewees was done with care. Once an interviewee was chosen, I did not allow their location, circumstances and availability to affect my research. In other words, temporary unavailability was never an excuse to go for somebody else. It turned out that some candidates, who were initially difficult to obtain, ultimately provided very valuable insight.

As described, a good personal contact to the interviewee seemed vital for gathering in-depth information. Interviews were, indeed, conducted at depth with some discussions lasting all evening. On the other hand, a good personal contact bears the risk of bias, which was carefully taken care of, as described in section 3.10.

The list of interviewees taking part in this research can be found in section 9.1 of the appendix. In order to protect individual anonymity real names have replaced with nick-names. Issues, which we discussed but which I was later asked not to mention, were left out (and where this is done in the transcripts and final data material presented with this dissertation, it is explicitly stated); similarly, for the purposes of anonymity some names of people or locations are replaced with ‘XXX’.

### **3.8 Codification**

#### **3.8.1 The guiding idea behind codification**

Codification is the process of conveying meaning to a statement or observation (Hildenbrand, 2007, p. 34). Basically, they might be viewed as abductive inferences: Given some interview statements or observations, an explaining hypothesis is created that might have brought about the overt behaviour or utterance. Usually, this hypothesis is stated as a single explanatory concept, like, for example, “being able to learn from others”. So “Coding is analysis” as Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 56), state. As already noted, data-codification was carried out from the very beginning. This, by the foregoing definition, means that analysis was undertaken from the very beginning.

#### **3.8.2 Codification at various stages**

The process of codification, and thus analysis, underwent many changes, before taking its final form. In Grounded Theory, this process usually takes the form of “theoretical sampling”, which denotes the process of looking at (or generating) data, coding and analysing them, and – depending on coding and analysis – deciding on what data to analyse next (Glaser & Strauss, 2010, p. 61). That is, the process of data generation is not necessarily completed in advance but is in part controlled by the interpretive process. Theoretical sampling might lead to changes and re-interpretations of codifications already performed. Such an iterative procedure was necessary, here, too.

An outline of the codification methods used at each stage can be found in the appendix under section 9.3. There, I present my codification of the diary, press-

articles, and pilot-study, how I initially marked interviews with coded comments and how codification developed with the help of the software program NVivo.

### **3.8.3 Final Codification**

Once the research had changed direction, following the discovery of the relationship between natural competencies and fulfilment the spotlight fell on the management of competencies. Subsequently, the final codification of empirical data was adopted and carried out over all 20 cases. The goal of the final codification-system was very explicit and can be defined by the following two directives:

- 1) Find particular quotes in the interview or character sketch that characterise (a) the identity of the individual, (b) their special behaviour-patterns in collecting art and which provide information regarding the individual's natural competencies, (c) the behaviour that is required of them in their working life, (d) the degree of congruence between natural and required competencies, and (e) the individual's perception of personal success and satisfaction.
- 2) It is not the number of times an issue is mentioned that is important, but the intensity with which it is discussed. Therefore, do not count how many times an issue occurs at interview. Instead, discern the importance of an issue, even if it is only mentioned in one brief passing sentence.

To carry out these directives it was important to be able to easily retrieve quotes by interviewees contained within the 20 character sketches, each of them five-pages long, each the result of one, two or several open discussions with the interviewee, as well as one or two focused interviews, lasting from 30 to 90 minutes each. So, in rethinking the codification process, in these final stages, it became clear that the choice to work with the software program NVivo was very important in dealing with this overload of material. I should mention that this software program has not been used for the analysis of the data but only for its codification and easy retrieval.

The next table shows the codification system. There are five main categories: Identity, art collection life, job life, competency, and success / satisfaction. The additional codification of natural competencies was done with sub-codes for each candidate because it was discovered, during the codification and analysis process,

that the overall competency-profile of a candidate always seems to materialise in a combination of activities. Therefore sub-codes, or subcategories, were assigned to these main categories. The subcategories (and then main categories) were derived in an abductive way according to the two directives just mentioned. That is, possible reasons lying in the person that might be responsible for given utterances and observations were stated. With respect to triangulation and convergence of evidence, as described above, the possible reasons were checked against the other data sources (as described in section 3.6). This led to the subcategories (“codes”, see the middle column of the following table). The process stopped when all evidence had been used without generating new theoretical accounts (theoretical saturation).

**Definitive codification used for this research**

MAIN CODES	CODES	DESCRIPTION OF CODES
IDENTITY	These codes describe everything related to a person's identity in connection with art. Identity triggers personal behaviour.	
	CENTRALITY	Issues regarding a person's values
	CONTINUITY	Issues regarding how identity develops over time
	DISTINCTION	Issues about belonging to a group yet at the same time being a distinct individual: showing how you belong but also how you are different
ART COLLECTION LIFE	These codes describe ways the person acts related to art-collecting	
	BEHAVIOUR IN ART-COLLECTION	Issues around a person's behaviour in collecting art
	DESCRIPTION OF ART COLLECTION	What is special in the art-collection: the subject, the way art is collected, etc.
	FUNCTION / REASON TO COLLECT	What the function of the collection is. The reason why the interviewee collects art. Often collectors do not know why they collect art. Therefore this section also handles assumptions about reasons to collect art.
JOB LIFE	The following codes describe everything in connection with behaviour at work	
	BEHAVIOUR AT WORK	Issues around a person's behaviour at work
	REQUIRED COMPETENCY	Describes what competencies/special ways of acting are needed in order to succeed at the chosen job.
	JOB-DESCRIPTION	Describes work, what problems must be tackled, what the daily tasks are.

COMPTENCY	The following codes summarise results regarding the competencies of the individual.	
	NATURAL COMPETENCY	The individual's natural competencies, as per researcher. (This data is divided in sub-codes to allow for more detailed description)
	CONGRUENT COMPETENCY	This is a natural competency that is congruent (the same as) some competency required in order to succeed at the chosen job.
	NON-CONGRUENT COMPETENCY	This is a natural competency that is not congruent (the same as) any competency required in order to succeed at the chosen job.
	INCREASING COMPETENCY	This describes a competency that is refined and sharpened over time.
SUCCESS and SATISFACTION	The following codes summarise results regarding success and satisfaction of the individual	
	NOT SUCCESSFUL	Issues surrounding lack of success for the interviewee
	SUCCESSFUL	Issues surrounding success for the interviewee
	NOT SATISFIED	Issues surrounding lack of satisfaction for the interviewee
	SATISFIED	Issues surrounding satisfaction for the interviewee

Table 8: Definitive codes and sub-codes used for analysis

The natural competencies are one code within this system. The categories (codes) of the table are not mutually exclusive because issues of identity and competency have been inferred in a second step. So, there were two steps, or levels, of coding. First, art collection life, job life, and success / satisfaction were coded. These categories are merely descriptive and stick closely to the material, not much abstraction is needed. Then, issues of identity and of competency were inferred from these results. A natural competency was inferred if:

It was possible to state it as an ability, or capacity, of the subject, that is, something a person may or may not be able to do;

It might explain why the person behaves in a specific way, or exhibits some specific reasoning or valuing;

It may be linked to positive emotions as stated by the subject.

In order to derive the natural competencies, short statements, or concepts, about the respective person were collected first. This can be seen by the following table.

NC_Fritz access to information
NC_Fritz being honest and precise
NC_Fritz being innovative
NC_Fritz buying and selling in a business-like way
NC_Fritz emotional
NC_Fritz fascination
NC_Fritz focused
NC_Fritz going own way
NC_Fritz learning through others
NC_Fritz showing knowledge
NC_Fritz spontaneous quick decisions
NC_Fritz the right eye
NC_Fritz understanding things

Table 9: Example of concepts for Fritz

Next, the “natural competencies” were inferred from this list by a combination of several of these statements to meaningful units that satisfied the three requirements listed above (stated as an ability, explaining behaviour, and explaining positive emotion).

The following table shows some natural competencies in short form and their assignment to the list of concepts.

Natural competencies☐	Concepts☐
<i>Structured, organised, and deliberate way of approaching complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues (like purchasing a piece of art), but leaving room for intuition, and</i>	Innovative, emotional, spontaneous quick decisions, the right eye☑



Natural competencies	Concepts
<i>Not being afraid of taking (controlled) risks, conceding his fascination of depth and substance</i>	Fascination, going own way
<i>Good social competencies, willingness and ability to “network” in order to keep himself informed and not to miss opportunities.</i>	Access to information, honest and precise, learning through others

Table 10: Example of natural competencies for Fritz

As an initial coding step, that is, before triangulation, each natural competency would be marked and extracted from the interview data as follows. This example shows the inference of the natural competency “not being afraid of risks when fascinated by substance and depth” of the subject “Fritz” (abbreviated by “fascination”) from the data of the focused interview.

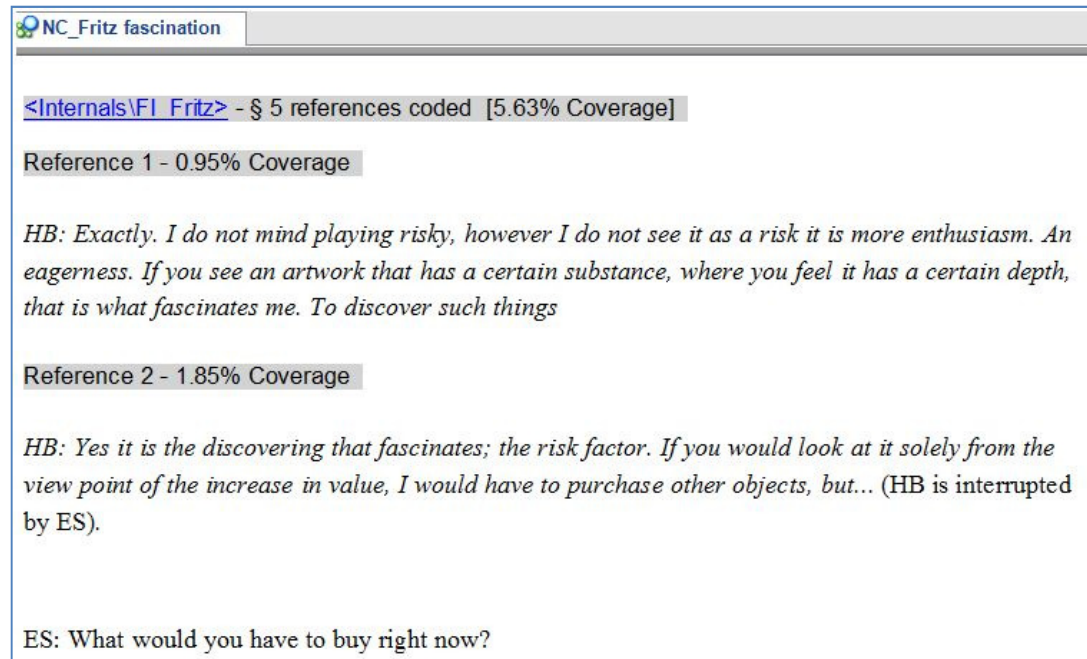


Figure 3: Example of how a natural competency is marked in the data: Fritz ‘fascination’

Fritz says that it is fascinating for him to discover substance and depth. So it is abductively inferred that Fritz has the natural competency of being fascinated by substance and depth. This is considered a natural competency because this feature may give Fritz’ activities direction so that in his activities he might experience emotional pleasure. Of course, this natural competency is only an initial hypothesis that is subsequently checked against the other data sources explained in section 3.6.

In sum, this procedure allowed me to create a natural-competency-profile for each candidate.

### 3.9 The ongoing process of analysis

#### 3.9.1 Within-case analysis

Individual or ‘within-case’ analysis provides preliminary conclusions about each case. This provides an overview of all 20 case-studies carried out. This is the beginning of “data transformation” where information is condensed, clustered, sorted and linked over time (Gherardi & Turner, 1987).

Within-case analysis greatly helped in finding a pattern. Following Carney (1990) and his “ladder of abstraction”, the analysis began by writing down all that was known about a case on the basis of the different kinds of data-collection methods employed, as described above. Starting from activities and behaviour of the interviewee, the role art plays for them, etc, the analysis then proceeded by identifying recurrent themes and deeper patterns, by looking at possibly interesting over-arching subjects, and natural competencies in particular.

Different trials of such structural tables were made with the goal of finding an overall pattern. The example below shows how the relevant information was first simply written down, in order to allow for a good overview of all 20 cases on one sheet:

Person	Character Sketch	Focussed interview	Acting / Behaviour / Competency	Possible outcome
Peter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The brother of an important contemporary artist</li> <li>Finds security by collecting art</li> <li>He believes this stems from the fact that he was (and is) often travelling without a permanent place to stay</li> <li>Also if the art is not directly around him, possessing it gives him the feeling of security because it contains a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peter is looking for a job as an IT programmer for banking software, a job demanding great precision</li> <li>Art is something very different and very free and open</li> <li>He thinks that both aspects need to be present and he would love to have a job that allows him to be able to afford an apartment where he could be surrounded by his art</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The job that earns him his livelihood demands great precision</li> <li>But at the moment he has no regular job, he only helps out a bit in a gallery which is promoting his brother</li> <li>He collects art in a manner opposing his behaviour at work, acting on his feelings</li> <li>He has also a very good network to the art world through his brother</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Success at work</li> <li>→ NO, job in IT, only irregular work in gallery</li> <li>Happy with proper Job</li> <li>→ NO, not really, he</li> </ul>

Table 11: Example table of within-case analysis

Finally a short overview for every case was written, paying special attention to the important elements in this the research.

### 3.9.2 Cross-case analysis

Within-case analysis bears the danger that for each case a specific terminology, denoting specific natural competencies, is created. In order to link these competencies to theory and to create a coherent picture for all cases analysed, it was accompanied by cross-case analysis. In essence, cross case analysis was an integrated step of case analysis, it was not separated from within-case analysis, but for the sake of clarity of exposure, it is described here in a separate step. Since

several theoretical concepts such as identity (with its sub-concepts, centrality, continuity, and distinction) and fulfilment were utilised in this analysis, cross-case analysis may be viewed as an instance of theoretical triangulation, as already noted.

Cross-case analysis is essential to deepening one's understanding within a specific field of interest (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 173). In the same vein, Silverstein (1988) argues that the more general understanding of generic processes occurs during cross-case analysis. Glaser and Strauss (1967; 1970) recommend a "multiple comparison group" which means, that many and very different cases are analysed to better understand the structure and conditions under which the results arise. By comparing the different cases to each other one evaluates similarities or differences between cases in certain over-arching subjects. This allows for the emergence of overall patterns, giving rise to data supporting the central hypothesis of this research and the theoretical model that illustrates it. At the end of this process an overview that places all 20 cases within the same structural pattern was written, as Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 91) advise, illustrating each case and highlighting important points that describe all 20 cases.

The aim of the cross-case analysis was to corroborate the concepts used in within-case analysis. In addition, it helped to build families of subjects that somehow stick together, and which can serve to codify the data found across multiple cases. Specific codes were used as core-points for the cross-case analysis. For example, by looking at the code "Centrality" (see Figure 4 below) we see notes across cases linked through that code (or 'node' in NVivo) and can, thus, compare different cases around the topic represented by that code. By clicking on the live blue link, we can see the relevant quotation in context, in the original text. The percentage figures show 'coverage', namely how often this issue crops up at interview; however, as noted this information was ignored in analysis, since a sensitive yet very important issue might be mentioned only once at interview, yet carry more weight. Therefore, the analysis of the data, in this sense, is purely qualitative.

Tree Nodes		
Name	Sources	References
A_Identity		
Centrality	35	131
Continuity	26	56

Centrality	
Reference 2 - 0.94% Coverage	I think that compared to collecting other things, art is the best because you have something, which you can look at whenever you want."
<Internals\CS_Baruch> - § 2 references coded [3.31% Coverage]	
Reference 1 - 1.32% Coverage	It seems that these people live with all these high quality goods in a normal way as if they use them and not have them to show how rich they are
Reference 2 - 1.99% Coverage	"Looking at art in a museum is one thing but it is important to own the art" he says But not in the sense of possessing to get money out of it but rather to do what he wants with it and look at it whenever he wants to.
<Internals\CS_Bruno> - § 5 references coded [14.57% Coverage]	
Reference 1 - 3.03% Coverage	Mrs. S just slowly shakes her head, so softly that maybe nobody else noticed it. She adds that she was

Figure 4: Cross-case analysis method: "Axel", "Baruch" and "Bruno", code "Centrality"

### 3.10 Performing the coding process

Qualitative research with a high element of subjectivity demands a lot of conscious awareness on the part of the researcher. To ensure a robust research methodology, the following issues were attended to.

#### 3.10.1 Handling bias

The triangulation of data, in the sense of Smith (1975) is an essential factor in ensuring the validity of the data in any data-led research. This requires that different data is collected from a sufficient variety of sources and methods, where congruent results allow for the verification of a hypothesis. Because the data to be analysed here is qualitative, such data are to be employed carefully in research, by checking

non-congruent data when they occur, and by constant objective examination of the data from different angles. This requires a very good, robust, codification system, which is implemented from the very beginning and developed over time, as it was in this research project.

The candidates selected for case-study had to be chosen very carefully and based on theoretical considerations (Strauss, 2004). In particular, there must be enough time to carry out the necessary interviews with each candidate, so that potential unavailability will not bias the result. This is important since the art interests of these candidates meant that some were often unavailable, constantly going to shows, openings, and parties or travelling.

The contextual parameters giving rise to theoretical hypotheses and concepts were constantly cross-checked with the evidence gathered, as to ensure as informed and objective an interpretation as possible.

Care must be taken against the researcher influencing the interviewee, or vice versa. The researcher can influence the interviewee, for instance, by making her opinion on a matter known, thus inducing the interviewee to tell the researcher only what she wants to hear, to avoid being judged. On the other hand, information already collected at various interviews can influence the researcher in her interpretation of the data collected. Researcher and data are in constant dialogue with one another. Therefore, remaining as neutral as possible was important in order to retain objectivity in collecting and interpreting data.

A held-back, neutral opinion about art, for instance, helps the researcher to remain unimportant and un-influencing towards interviewees, when they express their own opinions on the matter. Careful wording is important, as even using the word “collector” (‘Sammler’ in Swiss-German/German) can influence an interview, because few interviewees saw themselves, or liked to speak of themselves as ‘collectors’. The word “identity” also proved difficult, probably because it is psychologically too specific yet also too intellectual, hence, it was avoided.

### 3.10.2 Acting ethically, being critical

The rather subjective nature of the research, especially the construction of a character sketch of the interviewee by the researcher, puts a great deal of responsibility on the researcher to be critical of the data, but also self-critical by means of constant reflexive questioning, outlined below (Cunliffe, 2004). Being critical of the data implies the constant questioning of the information provided by interviewees. Not every bit of information that could fit the research is necessarily true. Moreover, it was important to act ethically and in a correct manner, according to the code of ethics defined by the University.

### 3.10.3 Reflective vigilance and monitoring of assumptions

As Yin states "... that the determination of what is meaningful requires some sense of what the case study is all about" (Yin, 1981, p.61). As an extension of this, meaningfulness also depends on the researcher and on what is judged to be meaningful. The dependence of the research-results on the interpretative function of the researcher, in this kind of research, is very high. So it is important to remain reflective at all times when faced with choices and discoveries and to question assumptions before, during and after an interview.

In the present kind of research, the researcher's interpretation of the data runs the danger of being very subjective, therefore constant reflection was required along with very careful handling of the data and a careful assessment of any pre-existing personal opinions on the matter or candidates involved. As already stated, this was addressed by taking care to write down any assumptions about a given case before the interview and following this with a record of any thoughts immediately after the interview, as outlined in section 3.6. Writing down any assumptions about the candidate before every interview and checking these against the data afterwards was even more important in the present case, given the often personal nature of the contact between researcher and candidate. This practice was used to show how I, as the researcher, handled my own assumptions at the interview and to what extent they influenced my opinion about the candidate.

Strübig (2002) tells about the approach of Glaser, that he recommended that a researcher ought not to read anything about the subject before setting out to conduct

empirical research. In Glaser's view this might create certain prejudices which can adversely influence the research. But one could argue that there is never too much information as long as it is accompanied by an awareness of any potential areas where prejudices could occur. If so, then, again, constant vigilance over one's own assumptions is very important and needs to be done very systematically.

#### **3.10.4 Understanding and retaining information**

For the purposes of this research, it was also crucial for interviewer and interviewee to be able to communicate and understand each other well. A communication-technique described by Grochowiak and Heiligttag (2002) which was practiced here and helped eliminate misunderstandings as much as possible is that of repeating back to one's interlocutor how one has understood the question or the answer given.

Moreover, recorded interviews were coded with NVivo as faithfully to the record as possible, preserving the original tone of the interview, so as to safeguard the way the person says something, any pauses, and other information besides the words.

#### **3.10.5 Keeping boundaries**

On the one hand, as the researcher, I had to be close to the interviewees, in order to elicit valuable personal information that was crucial to the research. On the other, a certain distance had to be kept, in order to retain as much of a reflective and objective stance as possible. In the context of this research, I took care to project myself, the researcher, as interested in art, but without any specific tastes or opinions, beyond an interest in listening to others talk about art. This required restraining any desire to express opinions, judgments or make personal comments. "I'd rather ask questions", was the line I offered, when my opinion was sought. In that way candidates felt like their opinions mattered, being at the heart of the interview, and thereby felt inclined to share more about themselves and their identity.

### **3.11 Summary of chapter 3**

The research methodology for this project is that of modified grounded theory accompanied by case-studies. A within-case perspective and a cross-case perspective are utilised. The within-case perspective is designed as an instance of data and method triangulation as different data sources and methods are used. The



cross-case perspective is designed as an instance of theory triangulation as the results of within-case analysis are interpreted from different theoretical perspectives.

Twenty case-studies were undertaken, first in an explorative and then in an explanatory manner to elucidate natural competencies as they became apparent in the early stages of empirical research. Codification, hence analysis, of the data was carried out from the very beginning, and is what allowed the phenomenon at the heart of this research to emerge.

Many tools and methods were used in the empirical part of this research, besides the codification of material. These included attending art-events and keeping of a diary, creating character sketches, recording interviews and note-taking, setting down guidelines for the recording of assumptions and impressions to maintain objectivity, using illustrative writing, employing images as information-holders, and devising and carrying out focused interviews targeted to shed light on the research-matters at hand.

In cross-case analyses, a combination of focused interviews and literature review resulted in a synthesis of data that gave rise to a model, attempting to explain the phenomenon in question.

## 4 Empirical results

The first part of this chapter constitutes a within-case analysis, discussing the 20 case-studies carried out as part of this research. A uniform structure underpins the discussion of each case, focusing on the subjects at the heart of this research: identity, natural and required competencies, success and satisfaction. The analysis begins by focusing on the candidate's sense of identity, and characteristic behaviour as an art-collector, deriving hypotheses about the candidate's natural competencies from that information. Then it moves onto their job and the competencies required of the candidate at work, and finally to the questions of congruence, and success and satisfaction as judged by the candidate themselves.

The second part of this chapter carries out a cross-case analysis outlining the central themes across all twenty cases, based on the codes "identity" with sub-codes for centrality, continuity, and distinction, "art collection life", "job life", "competency" and "success and satisfaction" / fulfilment. This cross-case comparison brings to light the following main findings:

### 4.1 Within-case analysis

#### 4.1.1 About the within-case analysis

The within-case analysis provides preliminary conclusions about each case. It also provides an overview of all 20 cases and, therefore, constitutes a good beginning at "data transformation" where information is condensed, clustered, sorted and linked (Gherardi & Turner, 1987). The material was first codified as per the codes presented in section 3.8.3 and then a short overview of each case in regard to the central themes of the research was written.

The 20 cases below contain references to the original data material – the character sketches (CS) and the focused interviews (FI) – which can be found on the data disc accompanying this document. In the references, the numbers in brackets refer to lines (as opposed to pages) in the original data material records. (e.g. (CS\_Peter 82-86) means that the relevant quote can be found in Peter's Character Sketch lines 82-86.) Basically, the procedure was to:

hypothesise basic concepts (see table 9 for example) and to derive natural competencies from them using the Character Sketch and the observations;

and then trying to corroborate, to fine-tune or to question and modify these initial hypotheses using the data of the focused interviews.

In practice, this was an iterative process that required several loops of going through the material for each subject. So, this process qualifies as data and method triangulation on the level of each subject, as described in chapter 3.

#### **4.1.2 Case Peter**

Name Peter, male, Age 41

Profession: Originally an IT-consultant for banking software, at the moment he works on an irregular basis at the art-gallery which promotes his brother and where he can use his IT-knowledge.

##### **Identity in connection with art**

Peter is the brother of an important contemporary artist and seems to find a feeling of security through collecting art and being in the art-scene. He feels at home there, enjoying the connection to his brother / family; it is fun and the opposite of what he normally does at work (CS\_Peter 82-86). He thinks that all this comes from the fact that, as a child, he was often travelling, as he is now, often without a permanent place to stay. Even if the art he possesses is not directly around him, possessing it (he has several art-storage places all over the world) gives him the feeling of security and stability (CS\_Peter\_130). He seems to feel at home around art and in the art-scene and has formed quite a good network of people there. As he tells me in the interview, he started to mix with the scene where his brother is famous, basking in his brother's fame, and found that, strangely, these people were also interested in him. (CS\_Peter\_82)

##### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

Peter buys art spontaneously, often without knowing who the artist is (CS\_Peter\_123). He instinctively knows what is good in art, even if he does not possess all the facts, so he trusts his feelings. He has grown up in a creative family and, therefore, thinks he probably feels secure in creative surroundings

(FI\_Peter\_532-609). He says, he needs to be surrounded by art because, for him, all these works are souvenirs of things that have happened (CS\_Peter\_73-75). And because of his closeness to his famous brother, he has created a very good social network in the art-world, penetrating deep within the top players of world-wide contemporary art.

### **Natural competencies**

Peter's natural competencies revolve around being able to act spontaneously, from intuition, being able to understand and connect to others, especially creative individuals. Peter has a good knowledge and understanding of contemporary art as well as a good social network in the art-world, which includes powerful individuals in society and business. He seems very secure in his judgment in connection with art and trusts his inner feelings and spontaneous reactions especially if the issue concerns something creative, he follows his heart rather than his head. He is interested in and understands creative individuals and accepts the way they live. Altogether, Peter's natural competencies may be described as follows:

*Good social competencies (empathy, understanding) with respect to creative individuals.* This competency is inferred because Peter has been able to create a good social network in the art world, and he feels secure and comfortable in creative surroundings. So, being in contact with creative people adds to pleasure and positive emotions.

*Proceduralised knowledge and understanding of complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues, here: contemporary art.* The knowledge is proceduralised because Peter instinctively knows what is good in art, and he trusts his feelings and is secure about them with respect to art.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Collecting art is something very different to the IT-consultancy work that Peter normally does: it is very free and open and, in his view, very creative, whereas his normal job is the opposite: "At my work I am always, typically, working to manage and control. Mainly that's the difference..." (FI\_Peter\_428). As an IT-Consultant

for banking software he needs to be up-to date on what is going on in the IT-scene and he needs to be structured and exact.

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

The competencies required by his job, according to Peter, are: being exact, accuracy, not making mistakes, knowledge of the software, trends and the current systems in IT. This, in part, contradicts his natural competencies because it requires exact and explicit reasoning, whereas a natural competency has to do with intuitive, “felt” understanding of complex issues, that is, proceduralisation that is not subject to explicit verbalisation. So, Peter seems to act in his non-working life very differently to the way he needs to act in his working life. Consequently, he does not see himself as successful (FI\_Peter\_512-521) or satisfied with his work (FI\_Peter\_842).

### **4.1.3 Case Axel**

Name: Axel, male, Age 70

Profession: Ex-owner of a chain of fashion agencies that liaise between fashion labels and material producers. He also owned the licence of an international top brand for Switzerland plus other labels in Switzerland.

### **Identity in connection with art**

Axel lives in an apartment out of the city and seems to have spent much of his savings on contemporary art. He says his only addiction is art and that it could have been something more dangerous; at least art is not killing him (CS\_Axel\_195). The art-imagery he collects is very sexual, brutal and violent. He is mainly interested in socially and politically critical art, erotic, problematic, aggressive and strange absurd things (CS\_Axel\_94). I noted in my diary that he looks quite crazy, with a handbag, an outfit made of expensive men’s and women’s clothes, and a totally shaved head, however, I did not feel uncomfortable but enjoyed the discussion with this special person (CS\_Axel\_44).

He seems like someone who wants to be different and show this to the outside world in quite an extroverted way, even if he sometimes gets criticised

(FI\_Axel\_468-474). He likes to be different from other Swiss collectors and my interpretation is that he wants to be seen as more open-minded.

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

Axel behaves with much experience in collecting art, and trusts his feeling: "...I am certain that gut feeling is the only thing that counts. It's a mixture of your own feelings in a certain moment and your own experiences and decisions ..." (FI\_Axel\_189). Further he says: "I have always been a person who makes decisions on the spot and who is very emotional..." (FI\_Axel\_382). "If something feels bad, I do not touch it and don't think about it for a second longer..." (FI\_Axel\_369-405). He seems to know what he is talking about; he seems to be very sure about certain subjects (art, fashion, and the rules and ways things work in the world) (FI\_Axel\_308-382).

### **Natural competencies**

We could say that Axel's natural competencies lie in being able get to the heart of the matter in an area of interest, and externalise his impressions by acting in a very fast and spontaneous manner, trusting his own instincts and emotional responses, which have been proven and honed over years. As he says: "... I just have secure instincts. Again, I have to underline that the instincts are the only measure right for me. I am not interested in what others think and say" (FI\_Axel 447-455). So, his natural competencies may be described as follows:

*Proceduralised knowledge and understanding of complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues, here: contemporary art.* The knowledge is proceduralised because, similar to Peter, Axel instinctively and spontaneously feels what is good in art, and he trusts his feelings and is secure about them with respect to art.

*Independence of the judgement of others.* Axel does not care too much about what others think, or say, especially if he is secure in following his feelings.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Axel speaks similarly about his job: "... I gained much experience over time and all this gave me a good intuitive sense of what sells well and what does not. I was

always very honest with my clients and sold them only what I thought was also good for them. I very quickly understood a situation and what was going on and so I could also react in the right way when it came to how I treated individuals” (FI\_Axel\_750-755).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

Axel admits: “... the way I approach things in general, I actually use the same techniques as when I purchase art” (FI\_Axel\_230). So, Axel’s spontaneous and intuitive way to approach art seems to mirror his way of reasoning and deciding in his job. And as an owner of fashion agencies, he has the opportunity to act like this. Consequently, he considers himself successful in his job: “So altogether, the intuition, my feeling for fashion and my clients, brought me success over many years....” (FI\_Axel\_754). Regarding satisfaction in life he answers “Oh, yes. It was great” (FI\_Axel\_743).

#### **4.1.4 Case Sandra**

Name: Sandra, female, Age 39

Profession: Medical doctor and housewife/mother

#### **Identity in connection with art**

Sandra is a warm and friendly woman, coming from a family where art was always a big subject (CS\_Sandra\_47-51). She seems to like to be surrounded by art and artists. She likes to help them when they need somebody to assist with a certain event, getting a piece as a souvenir in return. She says that she has access to many artists and is, therefore, often invited to art events, where she often buys something small (CS\_Sandra\_77-78).

She shows me her kitchen: a mixture of paintings of old naive Appenzeller art and contemporary photography. Rather smaller pieces are also there – it’s all rather like a huge pin-board, but containing high quality pieces, even from artists that are showcased all over the world. Sandra tells me the background story. Apparently, she gets most of it for free, and the price itself does not matter, it is the emotional value and the memories and individuals. Her friends, connected with these pieces, are the reason why all this is in her kitchen (CS\_Sandra\_86-95). She thinks that

many good feelings come off that wall and she seems very happy (FI\_Sandra\_179). She remarks, unassumingly that she and her husband are collectors, a remark which is very unusual in Switzerland and which shows a certain pride (CS\_Sandra\_110).

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

For Sandra it is important to own art by individuals she knows and with whom she has a relationship: “I see it as kind of a privilege to know all these artists personally” (FI\_Sandra\_88). So, she possesses more or less pieces by friends or individuals she knows. “That gives the artwork, like, an additional level. Or, it is not only, or always, the artist that comes to my mind – it also might be a situation.” (FI\_Sandra\_99-100)

### **Natural competencies**

Sandra seems to be a person with much social skill, able to live and show her emotions in a very positive way. She is interested in social contact, likes to help and support others, and is happy to get something in return which reminds her of the event – a souvenir. She is proud about what she is doing and does not hesitate to show this outwardly. So her natural competencies may be described as:

*Good social competencies (empathy, understanding), openness to other individuals.* This competency is inferred mainly from Sandra’s character sketch characterising her as a warm, friendly woman who likes to socialise.

*Disposition to help and support others.* This is also viewed as a competency since it serves to explain her behaviour in the context of arts (for example, helping others and receiving little gifts on occasion) and contributes to positive emotions.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

She sees it as an important factor in her medical job to be able to discuss difficult subjects, such as the discovery of a tumour, for instance, which might affect a client (FI\_Sandra\_215-238). She adapts her approach according to the person in front of her, speaking in a different way with a child than she does with a business-man (FI\_Sandra-242). She sees it as important in her job, to “... be able to assess someone’s psychological stability quickly” (FI\_Sandra\_315). She also likes her role



as a mother, likes children (FI\_Sandra\_373-377) and has given up part of her career to focus more on being a good mother.

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

Sandra seems to use her natural competency at work: the ability to understand individuals, help them and want the best for them. She sees herself as successful in her job as a medical doctor as well as satisfied: “I have the two little girls and I am a doctor with a specialisation; I must say, all this fills me up and pursuing both together is probably the best possible thing I could have done... Yes, I think I am successful!” (FI\_Sandra\_597-601).

#### **4.1.5 Case Bruno**

Name: Bruno, male, Age 65

Profession: Former owner of a company in medical treatment equipment. He retired and sold his company a few years ago.

### **Identity in connection with art**

Bruno appears to be someone who acts very carefully, preserving the social norms. Meetings were always carried out in the presence of his wife, and both appear to be very correct, both in dress and behaviour towards each other and others (CS\_Bruno\_71/107-113). Bruno tells me that art was always a part of his life and that he sometimes bought art in the past, but that since he has sold his business, he engages much more with the art-scene, having also discovered art from other continents (CS\_Bruno\_81-86). He likes to interact with the artists. Recently Bruno and his wife got to know an Indian artist who is apparently always drunk and whose behaviour generally opposes the social rules they observe (CS\_Bruno\_98-113). His wife smiles and adds that this was strange but one can do nothing about it (CS\_Bruno\_99-101).

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

It seems that in Bruno’s family it is not normal to show valuables, as is to be expected of Swiss higher social circles. Bruno believes that through art he can discover new things (CS\_Bruno\_115) and admits, when pushed, that he probably has a revolutionary side to his personality (CS\_Bruno 116-117). We could deduce

that his engagement with the art-world immerses him in an environment opposed to that which normally surrounds him. It seems that Bruno would even learn something from these artists: “So I suppose in that sense in being around more unconventional artists I found my escape route from the tight net of social rules. I was able to experience my own country and see it through their eyes” (FI\_Bruno\_590-592).

Regarding his collecting style, Bruno says: “I would never purchase an artwork on the spur of the moment.... (thinking pause)... I research it – find out as much information on the artist, the piece itself the technique used and so on. And only if all this information fits together and satisfies me, only then do I go ahead and purchase the piece” (FI\_Bruno\_216-219). He seems very closed and reflective when it comes to purchasing art “I do not always communicate this with others... not even to my wife...” (FI\_Bruno\_254). He sees buying art as a kind of business and acts precisely as if it was something like a business (FI\_Bruno\_405-415).

### **Natural competencies**

Bruno seems to be very structured, correct and disciplined in his behaviour (FI\_Bruno\_100-107), even if the art he collects represents something in opposition to how he appears in society (FI\_Bruno\_171-187), he collects it in a very organised and disciplined manner: “I like to do things well. If I decide to do something, then I am determined to do it very well and in the correct way” (FI\_Bruno\_203-204). His natural competencies might be described as:

*Structured, organised, and deliberate way of approaching complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues (like purchasing a piece of art).* This competency is inferred from his description of how he approaches and ultimately may purchase a piece of art.

*Independence of the judgment of others.* Bruno trusts his own reasoning process, and obviously this in no way precludes curiosity towards new impressions, as he likes to be in contact with what he perceives unconventional artists, and this is a source of positive emotions. He does not need mainstream judgment for governing his decisions.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

What is important for a CEO of a smaller medical company, according to Bruno, is to understand and follow rules and regulations (FI\_Bruno\_100-107).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

By collecting rebellious art Bruno may, initially, appear to be acting in a way which is non-congruent to his professional requirements, however, the way he approaches art-collecting is the same as the way he must approach his work, namely structured and disciplined. Bruno is satisfied with his job and feels successful as the leader of the company (FI\_Bruno\_641-644).

#### **4.1.6 Case Eva**

Name: Eva, female, Age 45

Profession: Managing Director and partner in a film production company, and freelance account director for an advertising project in consumer goods.

### **Identity in connection with art**

Eva is a cultivated woman and often visits events in connection with the visual arts as well as music, theatre etc. She has broad cultural interests (CS\_Eva\_77-79). Already judging from the way Eva lives one can imagine that this woman can be compatible with many different cultures, circles of people etc. She lives surrounded by things from all corners of the world, which mean different things to her (CS\_Eva\_58-73).

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

She confirms that she possesses many different kinds of art.... (CS\_Eva\_67). Art is something like a souvenir for her, reminding her of a special time-period, culture or moment (CS\_Eva\_88-89), and during the interview she gives many examples. She says she collects only for herself and views art not as an item of monetary value but rather as an item of emotional value (CS\_Eva\_120-121). She remarks that she simply likes a variety of things she finds nice or funny (CS\_Eva\_477). She possesses cheap yet also well-known, expensive art. There is no special style or direction – she has more variety than focus (CS\_Eva\_63-73).

## Natural competencies

Eva seems to have multiple interests and abilities, can handle different things equally well, and possesses a degree of knowledge and understanding in various fields. In art, as well as in how she reads books (FI\_Eva\_583-596) and in her job, she uses her ability to focus on many things at once and is interested in variety, in different social scenes and corners of the world. She seems to know many things without going into great depth. Further, she acts according to her feelings. She can cope very well with spontaneous occurrences and unplanned acts. Security does not seem to be an important need, but she does need a lot of freedom for herself as a person, on which she can function very well. Her natural competencies might be described as follows:

*Large attention span.* Eva seems to be able and willing to focus on and keep track of several things at once. Arts are just one of several of her cultural interests.

*Large versatility, large variety of interests.* This characteristic shows up in the way she collects art pieces. She seems to be spontaneous in this, there does not seem to be a common theme, or topic, of things she likes, or she thinks they are funny.

*Proceduralised, “intuitive” knowledge and understanding of complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues, like art.* Eva simply seems to have an intuition for what she likes. With respect to art, she does not rely on rational evaluation as she collects cheap as well as expensive and very diverse pieces of art.

*High situational flexibility.* Eva copes well with unplanned events or situations; she seems to have a feeling for opportunities.

## Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field

Eva constantly needs to adapt to new circumstances in her job. As a freelancer, she needs to be able to adapt very fast to a new job situation (FI\_Eva\_677-682). She says: “Probably it is the flexibility I have – the ability ... to deal with so many different, and also difficult, people. Then there is the flexibility with respect to my work: I have so many practical abilities – I can do financial statements, movies, speak in a psychological way with people and I could even clean the toilet (she laughs) if this were part of the job...” (FI\_Eva\_831-835). Eva seems to need this

colourful mixture: "... and I am happy to be able to face all these different problems every day. This colourful mixture somehow keeps me alive...." (FI\_Eva\_842-844).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

In her job, as in her art collecting habits, Eva highlights the need for multi-tasking and her ability to be able to get on very well in a free and flexible environment, which does not bind her too much to circumstances but which, by the same token, does not offer her much security. Eva sees herself as successful, as a consultant, as well as satisfied (FI\_Eva\_925-930).

#### **4.1.7 Case Baruch**

Name: Baruch, male, Age 45

Profession: Owner and CEO of a prestigious and well known Fashion House in Zurich

#### **Identity in connection with art**

Baruch is from a rich Jewish family that owns one of the luxury fashion houses in Zurich. He grew up in a very cultured environment and on Sundays the family often went to the Kunsthaus (the biggest art museum in Zurich). He bought his first piece of art about 20 years ago, and has continuously bought art ever since (CS\_Baruch\_72-82). My notes read that "these people", meaning Baruch and his family, live among all these high quality goods and that such expensive goods just seem normal to them (CS\_Baruch\_57-60).

Aesthetic experience seems very important to Baruch and he says that he is very visually orientated (CS\_Baruch\_99). On the other hand there is the meaning of a piece of art; Baruch thinks that art is like philosophy, a good book or poem that says something (CS\_Baruch\_122-124). Baruch tells me that he is more open and extroverted; he admires the American style and likes to show off what he possesses (CS\_Baruch\_124-126).

#### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

He says he is probably not a normal Swiss collector, because he is much more open-minded than other people (CS\_Baruch\_39/40). On the other hand, he has very Swiss qualities, seeming very structured and organised, and asked if he could have the

interview-questions prior to the interview (CS\_Baruch\_41-43). He tells me that he proceeds in collecting art in a very structured and reflective way – no spontaneous buys. He comments that art is something like the third pillar, besides business and family (CS\_Baruch\_143). He sees the art-world as a place to meet people different to those who surround him in everyday life, but also as a training-place. He notes that this was the basis on which he trained his eyes, referring to his ability to discover and understand beauty in general (CS\_Baruch\_78).

Baruch has solid connections to other art-collectors and speaks of his network in the art-world, noting how it helps him to be more sure-footed (CS\_Baruch\_98/99). Through his network he gets unofficial information regarding the artist, their sponsors, their potential etc. (FI\_Baruch\_59-89). Beyond this, he likes art that triggers his feelings (CS\_Baruch\_114-116), noting that the art he buys needs to have a certain connection to the viewer (FI\_Baruch\_136).

### **Natural competencies**

Baruch seems very structured and reflective (CS\_Baruch\_41-43). This is not the stance of someone afraid to make a mistake, but more the stance of the structured, organised, thinking business man. Besides this, he is open and uncomplicated so that people feel immediately at ease and welcome (CS\_Baruch\_49-50). Belonging to various social networks helps him with all kinds of decisions (FI\_Baruch\_86-89). He has the ability to understand and discover visual beauty in art but also in other kinds of design, and he has honed this ability over the years, partly by participating in the art-world. Baruch's natural competencies might be summarised as:

*Structured, organised, and deliberate way of approaching complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues (like purchasing a piece of art).* This competency is inferred from his description of how he approaches and, ultimately, may purchase a piece of art.

*Good social competencies, openness to other individuals.* This competency is inferred from Baruch's ability to engage in networks (here with respect to art) and receive help and information he needs but also contribute to the network.

*Sense for visual beauty and aesthetic experience, “trained eyes”*. This competence is inferred from the way he talks about art, and how pieces of art may receive his attention.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Beauty plays a major role in Baruch’s working life, as he runs a prestigious, famous fashion house (FI\_Baruch\_292). However, quality needs to be right as well, indicated in the facts and figures (FI\_Baruch\_250-259). It is important to Baruch that he has a good supporting network, in the form of both his family and business associates (FI\_Baruch\_618-620). Further, he mentions the value of discipline and of understanding fashion trends in his line of work (FI\_Baruch\_622-624).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

There is a firm congruence between Baruch’s visual sense and eye for quality in the field of art and those same factors as required in Baruch’s fashion business. These competencies are constantly trained in both his professional and leisure activities. Interestingly, as Baruch himself notes, these competencies were first developed in his art activities and then used in business (CS\_Baruch\_98-100). Baruch sees early-bird brand-discovery in art as well as in fashion as crucial to his success in both fields (FI\_Baruch\_388-390). He says that art helps him to be more open-minded and develop greater understanding, which he then uses in the fashion business. He is both, in his view, successful and satisfied (FI\_Baruch\_662-667).

#### **4.1.8 Case Evelyn**

Name: Evelyn, female, Age 63

Profession: Retired art-adviser, mainly working in the 1980s and 1990s in New York’s high-end art-society. Now, back in her home-country, she is mostly collecting art for herself.

#### **Identity in connection with art**

Collecting art seems to be very important to her; something that allows her to remain young and connects her to the world (CS\_Evelyn\_167) – something like an elixir for life (CS\_Evelyn\_183-186).

Evelyn likes to be surrounded by art and wants to always be able to look at it (CS\_Evelyn\_154-156). She likes to talk about her successes during her New York days, usually revolving around the discovery of a piece by a relatively unknown artist who later became very famous and expensive (CS\_Evelyn\_219-221). She sees her abilities as confirmed by her past success and she now seems to live off and talk much about her past achievements (CS\_Evelyn\_236).

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

She likes to be in the spotlight, pointing out that she bought Damien Hirst 15 years ago (CS\_Evelyn\_91). This confirms to her that she has a good ‘art-nose’, knowing what will be unconventional in future. Her apartment is filled with a great number of art works by top-level international contemporary artists, and it seems not to disturb her that nothing really fits together (CS\_Evelyn\_118-124). What matters to her is possessing a representative range.

She believes that, after all these years, she has the eye for what will be important later, (CS\_Evelyn\_146) and her collection shows that she is, indeed, right. At times, she seems arrogant about her knowledge and achievements and this is, no doubt, due to the fact that she lived in New York and has adapted the American style of speaking about one’s own success (FI\_Evelyn\_277-278). She frequently remarks in our discussion how her view is sought after by others, giving her an important standing in the art-world (FI\_Evelyn\_290).

Her motivation for collecting art is that art keeps her flexible, alive and youthful. Being watchful for new and innovative art pushes her to constantly think afresh, try to understand and accept what is new, and stay young. As she puts it “art keeps me young and fresh” (CS\_Evelyn\_162-165).

### **Natural competencies**

Evelyn has a very experienced eye, being able to perceive good art and future trends. More than 30 years in the New York art-scene makes her one of the experts, very self-confident, someone who knows how the game works and wants to shine. She puts her knowledge on display and knows how to project the right image in the art-scene (FI\_Evelyn\_394-401). She is also quite headstrong, uncompromising, and not easily influenced by the opinions of others. One point that is very interesting is



that she is able to handle an art-purchase by looking at the price, the facts and the figures including the perceived value of the piece, as well as using her instinct and intuition to understand the artist and their work.

*Flexible approach of structured, organised, and deliberate way as well as “intuitive” way of approaching complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues (like purchasing a piece of art).* She seems to be able to follow her intuitions as well as to deliberately plan purchasing art with much knowledge.

*Solid and profound knowledge about arts.* This competence is mainly inferred from Evelyn’s thorough experience in the New York art scene.

*Sense for visual beauty and aesthetic experience, “experienced eye”.* This competence, too, is inferred from Evelyn’s thorough experience in the New York art scene.

*Independence of the judgment of others.* Especially in “art issues”, Evelyn trusts her own reasoning processes, intuition, and “art nose”.

*Good social competencies, willingness and ability to “network”.* Because she is very knowledgeable, she may not just take, but give too, within the context of networks.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Besides her knowledge of the facts, which is solid (CS\_Evelyn\_197), Evelyn follows her instincts when a decision is required where the facts do not clearly point one way or the other (CS\_Evelyn\_185-187). Finances are important, and compared to other people in the art world, she knows from her job as art-adviser how to work with budgets (FI\_Evelyn\_253-256). Besides that, her good social network in the art-scene and personal acquaintance with the important players in the art-world shows that she is still very good at networking with the right people (FI\_Evelyn\_510-513). According to her the exact factors of success for being a good art-adviser are: having and following a plan and a budget, being able to see and understand art with the heart, knowing the right people and being able to make them trust you (FI\_Evelyn\_508-517).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

Being an expert in art, having a good social network, and access to rich art-collectors matches the required competencies of the perfect art-adviser. Evelyn feels that as an art-consultant she was very successful. Conversely, she seems less sure about her levels of satisfaction. From what she says, and given her uncompromising character, one may surmise that sometimes the contact with her clients annoyed her. Therefore, it was probably more the interest in the art itself which provided satisfaction than the whole job as an art-consultant (FI\_Evelyn\_516-527).

#### **4.1.9 Case Gregor**

Name: Gregor, male, Age 39

Profession: Medical Doctor working in a hospital as a specialized surgeon in Zurich

#### **Identity in connection with art**

Gregor grew up surrounded by art. His father had many art-pieces by Swiss artists, alongside pieces from ancient Greece, Rome and African countries (CS\_Gregor\_68-70). Later, when Gregor first had disposable income after university, he bought art from his friends, just as his father and grandfather did before him (CS\_Gregor\_99-100).

Nearly all of Gregor's art works are by his friends. The personal connection to the artist is very important to him (CS\_Gregor\_108-111). Also, the pieces need to be big – not just quality but scale is important (CS\_Gregor\_96-101 and 116-118). It is all done for his own pleasure, however, rather than to show it off to others (FI\_Gregor\_217-226).

Gregor only ever buys originals. He does not like prints or any art that exists in multiple exemplars. He enjoys reaffirming his ability of discovering good artists early on in their careers before they become known, and he always researches art-prices. It says he likes to confirm his 'good nose' in regard to art. Overall he seems very proud of his art-related activities, even if, overall, he is quite nonchalant. Compared to other Swiss collectors, he and his wife are some of the few who straightforwardly presented themselves to me as collectors.

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

Gregor likes to help artists who are still unknown and is happy to see them become famous (CS\_Gregor\_68-70). However, he continues: “I only possess art that I have, in some way, a personal connection with” (FI\_Gregor\_100). In contrast he also sees art as a nice item, decorating a room and acting as an extended interior design element (CS\_Gregor\_91). All his artworks are Swiss. He sees parallels between himself and his father’s and grandfather’s collecting style and speaks of them with great respect: “I think both had a very wide spectrum of collecting and a good nose as to what would be the trend in the future” (FI\_Gregor\_102-104).

He has a good, long-term social network in the art-world, within which he regularly meets with friends to exchanges ideas (FI\_Gregor\_257-260).

### **Natural competencies**

Gregor seems quite proud of what he has achieved in art-collection as well as in life. This is visible in art-collecting behaviour, where he loves to share his enthusiasm. He loves large pieces of art of good quality, and is proud of the fact that he is following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, namely the older generations before him. He maintains a good network of friends in the art-scene and meets up with them to exchange information. His natural competencies seem to involve an understanding and employment of traditional knowledge and strategies, the ability to connect with people and exchange ideas, and to trust him to go forward in a thought-through manner. Altogether, Gregor’s natural competencies might be characterised in the following way:

*Good social competencies, openness to other individuals* in “networks”. This competency is inferred from Gregor’s engagement in networks (here with respect to art) and to receive help and advice with respect to art issues.

*Structured, organised, and deliberate way of approaching complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues (like purchasing a piece of art), but leaving room for intuition, and emphasising tradition and quality.* This competency is inferred from his description of how he approaches and, ultimately, may purchase a piece of art.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

According to Gregor, for success at work: “a deep knowledge of your field is essential. [...] ... You need to work with the right people and then take a chance to progress step for step ... Others need to respect you and for that a serious image is very helpful....” (FI\_Gregor\_475-478). Further, Gregor arguably profits from following in the footsteps of his father who was already known as a doctor in the hospital where Gregor now works (GI\_Gregor\_487-488). We could interpret this as showing that, once again, Gregor is adopting traditional family strategies that have worked in the past, investing in the same resources and network of people that his family did centuries ago.

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

There seems to be a congruence between natural and required competencies for Gregor, where following family tradition, taking pride in your work, being informed yet intuitive, and having a good network of people matters. He feels successful as a surgeon and satisfied with what he is doing professionally (Gregor\_FI\_465-490).

#### **4.1.10 Case Fritz**

Name: Fritz, male, Age 59

Profession: Owner and CEO of an engineering company in Switzerland, employing around 25 people and specialising in tri-biological coating for machined surfaces. The company makes things such as tables for the Swiss Railway SBB.

### **Identity in connection with art**

Fritz did not grow up surrounded by art, but became fascinated by contemporary art through his brother’s involvement when he was in his 20s (CS\_Fritz\_123-134).

Fritz remained a fascinated enthusiast of art ever since, and he jokingly comments that if his wife knew what he bought, yet again, she would surely walk out on him (CS\_Fritz\_57-59).

What is important for Fritz is to live in a visionary way. He is interested in new things (CS\_Fritz\_156-157), noting that the freshness inherent in discovering new things makes him feel well and satisfied (CS\_Fritz\_160-162). So, he is urged to

constantly change and think in new ways, discovering innovative ways of seeing the world (CS\_Fritz\_150).

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

Fritz confirms in many discussions that it is the discovery of an art-work that fascinates him; he calls it the risk factor (CS\_Fritz\_197). He sees art as something, an item, where he can show to himself and others that he is an innovator (CS\_Fritz\_167-168). Fritz believes it is not always easy to get the art-work he wants and that bigger collectors have much more power. Before buying a piece of art, he first exchanges information about the artist with other collectors or influential people in the art world (CS\_Fritz\_174-177). He hunts for upcoming pieces by using his network as a source of information as to which might be the best pieces of art to buy at the moment (CS\_Fritz\_209-214). He only buys contemporary art, where he can gather information, detect future trends and take a risk, and leaves out things he does not understand (FI\_Fritz\_221). He enjoys the spotlight, and to show his ability to discover new artists who later become famous (CS\_Fritz\_238-242). When an artist becomes mainstream Fritz is no longer interested (FI\_Fritz\_249-254).

### **Natural competencies**

Fritz is an innovator, can take risks and has great style. He is also people-oriented: he likes to speak to other people, relating his latest discovery to them, and generally having an audience to whom to exhibit how innovative and cutting edge he is. He is very honest and very respectful towards others, and promotes only the things that he loves and which have real meaning for him. Altogether, his natural competencies might be described as follows:

*Structured, organised, and deliberate way of approaching complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues (like purchasing a piece of art), but leaving room for intuition, and emphasising the new and future trends, being an innovator.*

This competency is inferred from his description of how he approaches and ultimately may purchase a piece of art.

*Not being afraid of taking (controlled) risks when fascinated by substance and depth, thus conceding his fascination (in controlled ways, not being overwhelmed of them).*

*Good social competencies, willingness and ability to “network” in order to keep himself informed and not to miss opportunities.*

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Fritz sees his job as CEO of his engineering company as requiring him not only to lead and be people-oriented, but also to constantly be watchful for new trends and technological innovations in this field. He wants to be on the cutting-edge, prepared to take a risk, providing his company with a fresh image every day (CS\_Fritz\_153-155). Notably, Fritz’s competency in living on the cutting edge is indirectly also developed through Fritz’s art-collecting activities (FI\_Fritz\_147-152). On the other hand, he says that having your finger on the pulse is not enough, and that it is equally important to be able to sell these new ideas to clients (FI\_Fritz\_629-643).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

Some of Fritz’s natural competencies are congruent to the required ones at work, such as being people-oriented, innovative and product-focussed in connection with new developments in technology. However, competencies revolving around marketing and sales seem to be lacking. So, there is no complete congruence between required and natural competencies, even if some required competencies – such as innovation – are very strong in Fritz. Accordingly, Fritz does not judge himself as being very successful as a CEO, because he does not see himself as being very good at sales. But he is very satisfied with his work and the life-style that it affords him overall (FI\_Fritz\_697-718).

#### **4.1.11 Case Hans-Heiri**

Name: Hans-Heiri, male, Age 48

Profession: Owner of an IT company employing 12 people

#### **Identity in connection with art**

Hans-Heiri seems to have firm values, living according to an ethical code and reflecting upon life. By buying art he communicates to the artist that what the artist

does is important to him (CS\_Hans-Heiri\_156-158). He likes to assist and coach others. He tells me in conversation that people in a helping role have a certain power over others, which they need to handle ethically (CS\_Hans-Heiri\_174-178).

Hans-Heiri is not very extraverted but he has some characteristic, almost eccentric qualities. For instance, he only wears the colour orange. This is due to very personal reasons which he did not wish to discuss. Overall, it seems that he is very thoughtful, concerned with what is of real value and set apart from any shadier elements of the business world.

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

Hans-Heiri possesses all the art-works of a certain artist who painted Hans-Heiri's ex-girlfriend. He notes that the art he possesses is very personal (CS\_Hans-Heiri\_93) and that he only possesses art from artists he knows personally. He, therefore, knows a lot about the life of each artist represented in his collection (CS\_Hans-Heiri\_107-110). He adds that the cost of the art is not important; what is more important is who made it (CS\_Hans-Heiri\_98). For Hans-Heiri the artist's life is as important as the art itself (CS\_Hans-Heiri\_118-123).

Hans-Heiri sees himself as someone who helps and supports artists. He notes that it is important for an artist that their work sells, and sometimes Hans-Heiri buys it to help them (CS\_Hans-Heiri\_118). Probably, due to the fact that he studied architecture, the room and particular location of an art-work in the house is very important to him. In a philosophical way he tells me that, for him, the set-up of a room is also art... and a flat has a meaning (CS\_Hans-Heiri\_137). Hans-Heiri takes a long time to reflect and decide whether he wants to buy a piece of art (CS\_Hans-Heiri-104-106). He appears to view art in a wider context and is able to talk and philosophise about art at length (FI\_Hans-Heiri\_243-278).

### **Natural competencies**

Hans-Heiri likes to be of help to others. It seems that helping others gives him power over those that he helps, which he seems to enjoy. But he takes the ethical implications of this very seriously and he also seems to love other people and be genuinely interested in them and their life-stories (FI\_Hans-Heiri\_169-170).

He sees things in a Buddhist philosophical framework, where material things are of less importance, and he loves to discuss philosophical matters (FI\_Hans-Heiri\_266-268). He is very giving and points out that ethical behaviour in business and in life, and social responsibility towards his surroundings, form a very important basis for his behaviour in society. In sum, his natural competencies might be viewed as follows:

*Disposition to help and support others.* This seems to be underpinned by a value system and an ethical code.

*Independence of the judgement of others.* This is inferred from his strict living according to an ethical code and what might be called an eccentric characteristic.

*Structured, thoughtful, and meaningful way of approaching complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues (like purchasing a piece of art).* This competency is inferred from his inclination to place purchasing a piece of art into a wider, philosophical context.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Offering assistance is also important in his profession, as his company offers help with IT systems. He enjoys this element in his job: “How else would I want to pass the time I have in my life, than with mutual interaction? That way I also get to know myself better too. If you do good for others you somehow also do good for yourself” (FI\_Hans-Heiri\_338-340). He sees his job as something like having a family, only less tiring than actual children. (FI\_Hans-Heiri\_409-413). As CEO, he takes company values very seriously and considers helping his employees to develop in the right career-direction to be a very important task; the very basis for his business success.

He remarks that, in IT-support and management, people must want to achieve a certain power over others, through their expertise, to be successful in what they do (FI\_Hans-Heiri\_608-613). He explains this by noting that besides being an expert who others need to consult in business, an IT-expert is able to effect change in the world through a single click of the mouse (minimum effort, maximum returns). Hence, , social responsibility and moral integrity are important in this job.



### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

Some of Hans-Heiri's natural competencies are not congruent to those required by his job. Hans-Heiri seems to not always enjoy what he is doing, sometimes pondering missed opportunities. One could say that he enjoys being of service to clients and employees alike, and responsibly handling the kind of power that goes with his specialisation and with being in charge of your own company more than he does dealing with IT-problems themselves. As he says, he is not fully satisfied with his choices (FI\_Hans-Heiri\_530-532). However, he considers himself a successful CEO, despite occasionally when the company barely covers its costs (FI\_Hans-Heiri\_678-682). He is not feeling very satisfied overall, however, because he thinks that the effort he puts in does not always reflect the outcome, and he would like a healthier work-life balance (FI\_Hans-Heiri\_666-673).

#### **4.1.12 Case Isa**

Name: Isa, female, Age 35

Profession: PhD student and teaching assistant in Philosophy at a university in Scotland; previously worked in the film and TV industry having studied Fine Art in London.

#### **Identity in connection with art**

Isa was born in a wealthy, educated and cultured Greek family. Her parents created and ran a series of businesses for 20 years, but have since lost everything (CS\_Isa\_71-77). She learnt to understand and take an interest in art and culture from an early age, and liked not only engaging in artistic activities, but also discussing things and searching for a deeper meaning (CS\_Isa\_191). When she was younger she went to art-college and remains a highly artistic person today, when, besides her studies in philosophy she collects art together with her boyfriend Mark. It was he who initiated this activity, but they share and enjoy it together. She says, of their respective roles, that she is the person who thinks more about the message in the art-work, whereas her boyfriend looks more at the history, development, and investment potential of the artist and his work (FI\_Isa\_154-157). "I would never ever buy something without talking about it with Mark" (FI\_Isa\_112). She does not feel the

need to show any of this to others, she adds, in order to add value to her own image; it is simply where she comes from (CS\_Isa\_193).

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

With her sensitivity to art and a cultured background she can usually judge quickly how important a certain artwork could be and she can understand the piece of work in a holistic way (FI\_Isa\_518). For her, art is seen as a medium that can transport more than words. The message in the art is very important to her and she is ‘in charge of that’, as she humorously puts it, within the shared competencies in art-collection between her and her boyfriend. “Yes, I am like a checkpoint” she says with a smile (FI\_Isa\_57). She adopts a stance of waiting to see what her partner brings to her attention and then selecting what she thinks are the best pieces from that.

### **Natural competencies**

Isa has several competencies. One of them is that of sharing her own best competencies with another person who has totally different abilities in order, together with this person, to bring about the best result (CS\_Isa\_48-51). She has a deep understanding of cultural issues and views life very philosophically. She is able to analyse a situation in order to find its underlying operative laws, and then explain these in a very convincing manner (as often seen in the interview with her, e.g. IF\_Isa\_370). She is sure about her intuitive feelings, when it comes to evaluating an art-work, and trusts it, even if she admits that it is often difficult to balance it with her rational thought and put it in words, which she feels she must (IF\_Isa\_517). However, even if her judgment is emotional at first, it is ultimately quite well considered, having undergone analysis. “I like...I like fine-tuning. So, that is my favourite thing. ...” In that way she acts in different fields (IF\_Isa\_227). Isa acts in a very thoughtful way and lets her thought go deeply into something. She looks out for the deeper messages in culture, whether art, text or music, and is able to make intellectually difficult connections, and is interested in elucidating the laws underlying human nature in real-life-situations. In sum, her natural competencies might be described in the following way:

*Sense for understanding of cultural issues, high sensitivity.* This competence is inferred from her cultural background and holistic understanding of art work.

*Flexible approach of analytic and deliberate way as well as “intuitive” way of approaching art as a complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issue, and integrating both an analytic and an intuitive approach.* She seems to be able to follow her intuitions as well as to deliberately plan purchasing art, which must bear a deeper meaning for her.

*Willingness and ability to deeply think about, and analyse, a complex issue, trying to extract rules and regulations, deeper meanings, and messages.* This also follows from her deep discussions with her boyfriend, Mark, about art issues and related philosophical issues.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Isa is now finishing her doctorate studies, while also teaching at university, and comments: “It would be easy for a little while to have a job as an academic. There, money is not important. There, the most important thing is communication, writing, and inspiring other people with ideas as well as having discussions” (FI\_Isa\_747).

The competencies an academic job in philosophy requires according to Isa are: to be able to work analytically and in depth, as required by your academic field, to be interested in the big questions, and to want to perceive and communicate ideas to other people (IF\_Isa\_747-751). She is very good at delving deeply into something and understanding it, and in giving a reason for, or explanation of, a certain phenomenon (FI\_Isa\_194-202).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

The required competencies of Isa’s current post and desired job fit very well with the way she behaves in her joint art-collecting activity and both positively feed into each-other. She judges herself in her every-day job as successful, so far, (IF\_Isa\_923) as well as satisfied (IF\_Isa\_926).

#### **4.1.13 Case Gian**

Name: Gian, male, Age 66

Profession: Gian was an architect, mainly involved with projects for various governments all over the world. Besides this, he had positions in important architecture-related institutions; for instance, he was the chairman of SCA, the main Swiss architecture cooperative of influence. He is now retired both from architecture and as president of the board of SCA.

#### **Identity in connection with art**

Gian grew up surrounded by art and culture and tells me that he was always around artists because his parents were fascinated by art (CS\_Gian\_90). He later initiated art exhibitions and other art-related events as a means to promote his architecture office. During the interviews he appears to have a philosophical view of how things work, what rules he has discerned in his trade and believes to be operative. For instance he says that through the combination and flow of rooms and spaces, an architect can create particular vibrations that can be felt by the observer, mostly unconsciously of course. For example, he can induce the visitor to pause, linger, and contemplate (FI\_Gian\_371-375). Gian seems thoughtful, an intellectual, and sure about his words.

#### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

Gian reveals that he uses pieces of art to underline a statement or feeling – to complete what he cannot fully create through architecture alone. With the help of art he renders his architectural creations more impressive and transforms “architecture into art and art into architecture” (CS\_Gian\_103). Deciding to purchase an artwork also means finding a good space for it. And once a space is chosen the piece is not moved thereafter (CS\_Gian\_136). Gian seems to love perfection; he thinks that real art is free and without any pressure because only then can real inspiration come through (CS\_Gian\_119). He also seems to love the idea of leaving behind a creation, something with strong roots, and wants to build something outstanding for later generations. (CS\_Gian\_151-152) This desire matches his achievements so far, as two of his architectural designs have received prestigious design awards. He also has a great selection of Etruscan art in his collection.

## **Natural competencies**

Gian exhibits philosophical leanings and refined levels of aesthetic sense and understanding within different fields. He presents clearly shaped opinions and has a great interest in questions of architecture, design and art. As an architect, he seems to understand how to finish his own creations with the help of chosen artworks in order to make his work even more impressive and appealing to the visitor. He is a good leader, and politically correct. In keeping with his love of spaces, he maintains a certain distance from the interviewer. Altogether, Gian's natural competencies might be stated like this:

*Sense for aesthetic experience and perfection, "experienced eye".* This competence is inferred from Gian's thoughts concerning the interrelation of art and architecture.

*Ability to clearly express deep thoughts,* being sure about his words.

## **Behaviour in business, success factors in the working-field**

When I ask Gian how he behaves in his working life, he automatically talked about how he behaves around art. He clearly sees activities surrounding art as a useful part of his job, contributing to his success. We can surmise that the creative aspect of his job is, therefore, most important, as is his ability to use different tools to bring about the desired result. Gian must be able to communicate certain concepts or resonance through his creations, and show that he possesses the understanding and confidence necessary to excel in his work. Even after some discussion, however, he never describes his job in much detail, which I assume to be down to the fact that he wants to maintain his distance.

## **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

Gian's aesthetic sense, cultural understanding and philosophical outlook are exhibited both in his manner of buying art and in his own architectural creations, allowing the two to blend into one endeavour. He sees his ability to use art to enhance his architectural creations as an important element of his success: "It is difficult to say what the factors of success are but, probably, one important ability is knowing how aesthetic trends can be transformed into architecture...." (FI\_Gian\_549-551). We could say that by understanding and employing

contemporary art in his creations, he taps into the *Zeitgeist* and allows it to come through in his architecture. He sees himself as successful (FI\_Gian\_551-560), as well as satisfied (FI\_Gian\_564-566).

#### **4.1.14 Case Joe**

Name: Joe, male, Age 45

Profession: Joe is an engineer who has recently become the CEO of a technological company employing 60 people (CS\_Joe\_60). Prior to this, he was unemployed for a long period of time, having been made redundant by his old company, specialising in parking systems.

#### **Identity in connection with art**

Joe has no art background. And even though he has a high profile job, elements of his private life remain very student-like: he still goes clubbing, is a member of the student fitness-club, and shares his apartment with a 23 year-old student (CS\_Joe\_72-73). He says that this is all in order to save money.

Also, he likes to show that he is quite different from others, by driving a cheap Honda cabriolet and a bike from the 1970s, which he found after years of research. He feels that this old Honda really fits his personality as it does not cost much but is stylish. He says that he likes to possess art as an item with which to impress others. It adds value, making him appear more attractive and showing his character (CS\_Joe\_93-94).

At the moment, his life is in a process of change, and much is changing with respect to his job. He says he has been interested in art for a long time but has only recently – since he became CEO – begun buying art. He believes that he can now get closer to his feelings and that the art he now buys reflects this transition and the awakening of feelings (CS\_Joe\_112-113). He notes that his life seems to have become more emotionally involved, compared to the way it was before, when he measured everything quantitatively and judged people by what they did in life – an engineer-like approach.

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

Joe considers shape and colour, rather than symbolic meaning, as the most important elements in a piece (CS\_Joe\_87). He even went as far as to make one of the art-works in his apartment himself because he could not find the right piece for that space (CS\_Joe\_86-91).

He thinks that others could not distinguish good from bad art and so that a high investment in art would not pay off, whereas cheaper investments do (CS\_Joe\_158-161). On the other hand his art-collecting habits now seem to express his more emotionally involved life-style. He says that with the help of art he can now show a part of his personality, which was hidden before and which is more in touch with his emotions (CS\_Joe\_121-122). Joe (who was single at the time) also seems to see art as something that increases his attractiveness towards women (CS\_Joe\_182).

### **Natural competencies**

Joe displays the patience to search for a long time for the right thing. As he comments: “If you cannot find what you want, and you know exactly what it is you want, then you do it yourself. Full stop” (FI\_Joe\_200-202). He can search long and hard for the precise thing he desires, whether this is a bike, an artwork or a job, and does not compromise (CS\_Joe\_78). Usually he knows exactly what he wants. He is very financially prudent and only invests money in something if he thinks it will ultimately pay off (FI\_Joe\_904-909). If he does not understand something he does not invest in it (FI\_Joe\_953-954). Altogether, Joe’s natural competencies might be described as follows:

*Approaching complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues (such as art) with a rational, “instrumentalistic” view (“What is it good for?”). This might be inferred from the fact that Joe offers a variety of external reasons (impressing others, showing personality, making worthwhile investments).*

*Exhibiting persistence and perseveration, not giving up or making compromises in getting what he wants, and courageously taking advantage if opportunity arises.*

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Speaking about good engineers, he says that it is proper engineer-behaviour to produce things yourself if you cannot find them in the market (FI\_Joe\_197-203). In his new role as CEO, he must know exactly what he wants and have the courage to make his own decisions. He also needs to have good financial sense, and he sees this as key to success (FI\_Joe\_231-323). He also notes: “I prefer to shine through what I do, through my work” (FI\_Joe\_962-968). It is important to be able to make quick decisions, and where that is not possible, to at least be able to make the right decision (FI\_Joe\_1124-1130). He understands that for his current role as CEO, it is also important for him to be able to communicate well, which he did not need to do as an engineer.

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

Joe’s natural competencies and required competencies seem to be congruent, and especially so since he has become CEO, where he can also employ his financial acumen, his ability to know exactly what he wants and not compromise until he gets it, and be able to relate to people from a place where he is more in touch with himself. As a CEO, and through collecting art, he seems to be developing his capacity for a higher emotional involvement with life (FI\_Joe\_566). He now sees himself as successful and satisfied in his new role (FI\_Joe\_1108-1114).

#### **4.1.15 Case Miriam**

Name: Miriam, female, Age 38

Profession: Antiques and art–consultant

#### **Identity in connection with art**

The first impression one gets is one of great riches, as Miriam lives in a big villa in the very best address in Switzerland, looks smart and has an art-agency which lets her travel to places all over the world, ranging from London to Miami, to meet collectors. However, when one looks closer, the reality is less glamorous, as Miriam works for a rich family, being in charge of their art-collection, and the small apartment above the garage in their villa is part of her salary. Paradoxically, she



thinks of herself as rather uncomplicated and down to earth (CS\_Miriam\_67) and her parents live in a small apartment in a Swiss mountain-village.

Miriam studied art history, and took charge of the family's art-collection. She made her career in the art-world through working for Christies and later founding her own art-consultancy company with the help of her ex-boyfriend, an important business man. Without his support, her agency seems to be currently going through a rough patch (CS\_Miriam\_131-140). It seems as if she is trying to project an idealised image to the world, trying to live the life-style of her clients (CS\_Miriam\_146-158). Her knowledge about art gives her some power over her clients and helps her achieve her aims. Being able to play with appearances to this degree requires strategy, cleverness and good taste (CS\_Miriam\_170-173). In that context, she notes that having an original art-work is not as important as obtaining a particular image, in reproduction if need be, that projects a certain look. She thereby gives a new meaning to the concept of 'art-installation'.

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

The art she does possess constitutes a very small but nice selection of pieces. It looks beautiful and expensive at first glance, but a closer look reveals that not all of the art on the wall is original: the collection also contains copies, nicely framed invitations to events, and pictures with minor defects that clients wanted to throw away (CS\_Miriam\_105-115). Some framed pieces are just big prints of invitations to private views: "I mean, the originals are much bigger, probably two by two meters, but if you don't know that, you are impressed ..." (FI\_Miriam\_81-83), she reveals. For Miriam, good style is a mix of different epochs, different kinds of techniques, and different cultures – a very nice selection of pieces showing good style and taste (FI\_Miriam\_95-97).

### **Natural competencies**

Miriam is an expert in how to project the ideal image of a rich, successful and stylish woman to the world, by using various tricks that allow her to make a great impression with very little money (FI\_Miriam\_184-198). For that, she uses other people's help (such as her previous boyfriend, who comes from a powerful family) and her good connections in the art-world (FI\_Miriam\_212-236). She selects these

people very carefully on the basis of how helpful they will be to her as a high society art-consultant (FI\_Miriam\_244-248). She understands people, especially her potential clients, intuitively senses what they want to see and hear and how to give it to them (FI\_Miriam\_294-297). Miriam's natural competencies may be summarised thus:

Ability to configure resources in order to make the best of them, at least, as far as perception by others' is concerned.

*Good social competencies, willingness and ability to “network”* in order to make the best out of given resources.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

As well as being able to understand people and give them what they want, a good art-adviser needs to have a good international network, and considerable financial resources to be able to follow the crowd of art-interested individuals all over the world and be where potential clients might also be. The more a consultant mixes with those crowds, at dinners, parties and VIP events, the more experience they get, the more of the right people they meet and the more confident they become in their judgments, inspiring trust in others. In addition, an art-consultant needs to be ahead of the art-trends and know what they are talking about (FI\_Miriam\_517-522).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

Miriam's natural competencies are not fully congruent to those required by her job. The problem is that Miriam does not have sufficient financial resources of her own to travel and mingle with the elite where art-consulting would be really profitable. When asked if satisfied, she answers yes, but complains that her job, which involves much travelling, is often very tiring (FI\_Miriam\_511-533), because, as she works alone, she must work seven days a week in order to travel, attend dinners, parties and events with a smile on her lips, yet also attend to all the paperwork at home. She judges herself as more or less successful although she has the feeling that she is working hard just to be able to pay for all these expensive events without having much else in her life.

#### **4.1.16 Case Mark**

Name: Mark, male, Age 36

Profession: Fund-manager for a large insurance company. He is the boyfriend of Isa and they collect art together.

##### **Identity in connection with art**

He comes from a middle-class family and it appears that one of his big life goals is to make a lot of money, which can allow him the freedom to focus on reading, writing and collecting art. In my notes I find that he always wanted to become rich and, therefore, works very hard at his job, but also purchases artwork for himself whenever possible (CS\_Mark\_46-50). Being surrounded by things of value, and the romantic ideal of beauty, would be his ideal way to live (CS\_Mark\_145-146). Mark seems intent on becoming somebody in society but is quite private about how he does this and, therefore does not engage extensively with the social and art-collecting scene (CS\_Mark\_159).

##### **Special acting in art collection**

Mark was quite secretive about his current activities in the field of art, possibly due to fear that somebody could steal his ideas. He never spoke about his success-stories and showed me only parts of his collection. He handles his collection like a secret business and explains "... the real secrets need to be kept for yourself. You see I have researched the art-scene, especially street art, and I have six or seven important artists I am focusing on and know a lot about. ... I would like to profit from them by selling the works later, when they become more well-known...." (FI\_Mark\_141-145) Mark seems to act in an intuitive yet rational manner, treating art as a good investment.

##### **Natural competencies**

Mark focuses on specific kinds of art, researches these very carefully, gaining knowledge and making use of the expertise of those around him. Besides wanting to be surrounded by beauty and culture, he also wants to become rich and therefore sees art as an investment, very much like he would do in picking the right stocks.

Therefore, his ability to analyse carefully but also take risks is displayed in his art-collecting habits.

His natural competencies are his expertise on topics and his ability to fully research a topic and make a judgment, but also his ability to buy strategically, take risks, and invest cleverly in areas as yet unknown, but of great potential gain. Altogether, Mark's natural competencies might be described as follows:

*Structured, organised, and goal oriented way of approaching complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues (like purchasing a piece of art).* Mark seems to treat art mainly as an investment.

*Not being afraid of taking (controlled) risks* if it might be worthwhile to take them.

*Good social competencies, willingness and ability to "network"* in order to support processes of decision making.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Analysis and research are important aspects of Mark's job, as well as having the ability to judge whether a particular stock will make a good investment, or where a particular company is heading. The ability to have the courage of your convictions and take strategic, calculated risks is also very important.

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

Mark seems to employ his natural competencies of strategic thought and in-depth research, along with being able to judge whether something off the beaten track is a good investment and taking a risk also at work, in picking stocks and researching companies: "The question of what to buy is often similar to how I analyse markets for my job" (FI\_Mark\_222-223). "I need to use the skills that I have perfected in my profession to ensure that I purchase and invest in the right art and vice versa" (FI\_Mark\_398-400). Mark sees himself as successful and overall satisfied, as long as he is permitted to follow his own judgment at work (FI\_Mark\_453-476).

#### **4.1.17 Case Sarah**

Name: Sarah, female, Age 45

Profession: Owner of an advertising agency

##### **Identity in connection with art**

Sarah is a very beautiful, stylish lady who lives in a 1960 house of beautiful architecture. She owns a small but trendy advertising company, which focuses on fashion-brands and collects art with her boyfriend. The colour of her dress mismatches that of her shoes – this is intended, she tells me, in order to project an image of being way ahead in the trends. It is a cutting edge look, breaking the preconceptions of the general public (CS\_Sarah\_63-73). She says that art is part of her life; that she likes it and will always be surrounded by it (CS\_Sarah\_99). Surprisingly, she also tells me that she did not grow up in an artistic environment but that her parents always thought what she did was impressive (FI\_Sarah\_282). She became interested in art at school, and, from there on, it became part of her life, something which will never change (CS\_Sarah\_101).

##### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

She owns a big collection of contemporary art, with a focus on photography. Because she often works with artists, she sometimes gets paid in art-works. This means that, over the years, she has built a good collection, which is now mostly in storage (FI\_Sarah\_581-586). She thinks that an overload of art-works on the walls would look bad, therefore, the number of pieces inside the house is rather sparse compared to what I would have expected (CS\_Sarah\_67).

##### **Natural competencies**

During the discussions it becomes clear that aesthetics are important to her, but also focusing on big brands or names in art, fashion and design. She is a first mover in terms of fashion and creative trends and has great self-confidence, seeming very sure about herself, her opinion and what she does. Given her international network in the art-scene, connected to people with much power and money, (FI\_Sarah\_435-448) I am led to believe that she is quite a special, important person. She appears quite distant and gives others the feeling that she is unreachable adding to this air of

importance. She somehow gives the impression that even climbing the highest mountain would present no problems and that she would do it with elegance.

She is proud of what she is doing and always looks on the bright side of life. She has great knowledge of the contemporary international art-scene, is trained in conceptual thought and has the ability to act as a link between artists and advertising business clients. All this seems to give her an important place in both big business- and international art-circles. With respect to natural competencies, Sarah might be characterised as follows:

*Proceduralised, “intuitive” knowledge and understanding of creative trends.* Sarah seems to have a “first mover” feeling for trends in fashion and design.

*Good social competencies, willingness and ability to “network”* as being part of the art scene.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

About her job she says: “I see myself as a facilitator. I understand what an artist means ...the normal accountant would be totally lost and confused. ... I understand both languages...” (FI\_Sarah\_415-424). In her job in advertising, she naturally uses her ability to think in a conceptual way (FI\_Sarah\_392-401). Her artistic connections also appear to be important for her job as the owner of an advertising company, often offering a good basis on which to acquire new clients, since her international arts network must include important or powerful business people. She considers the following competencies to be necessary for her job: “Probably feeling the trends which come in very fine waves.... having a good network.... and understanding your job as a transmitter from the creative realm to the clients and convincing them with good creative communication....” (FI\_Sarah\_663).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

Sarah’s natural competencies are very congruent to those required by her job. She sees herself as very successful in her job and feels that she has the life she always dreamed of, hence she is satisfied (FI\_Sarah\_667-675). This is also something that clearly came across throughout the interview.

#### **4.1.18 Case Patrick**

Name: Patrick, male, Age 45

Profession: An engineer employed by an energy company in Scotland, he is also a part-time university lecturer and on the management-board of a charity organisation that produces art-prints.

#### **Identity in connection with art**

Patrick is a friendly person who likes to talk and engage with his surroundings, including all kinds of culture. He also works for a charity organisation and invites artists to live with the family if they are in town. (CS\_Patrick\_88). He likes to show that he has a good cultural background, and talks about the influence of architecture in our times, about the local art-scene in the 1980s, etc. He likes to display his distinctive personal qualities of being able to understand art and to think creatively in a way that makes him stand out from the crowd (CS\_Patrick\_114-117). He also reveals that he originally wanted to engage in an artistic study but his parents wanted him to do something more practical instead. Therefore, he trained in a ‘normal job’ as he calls it and developed photography as a hobby, alongside collecting photographic lenses (CS\_Patrick\_68-72).

#### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

Patrick seems to be very interested in prints and how they are produced. He says that, as an engineer, he was very fascinated in the printing technology – especially by the fact that different technologies make the same photograph look different (CS\_Patrick\_78). He lets me know that “all this technological stuff is, for him, like a fetish. It is probably not important to the world but, for him, all this is very interesting and important. (CS\_Patrick\_90). And even if he sometimes cannot find people who share his fascination, he says that he likes to speak about technology and wants to speak about it with the person who has used it, which, in the case of art, is the artist (CS\_Patrick\_112).

#### **Natural competencies**

It might appear at first as if Patrick is just interested in the technical aspects of art. But delving deeply into the technical aspects of art and appreciating the whole

technical process behind an art-work allows Patrick to understand that work from a unique point of view, seeing how process and content fit together (FI\_Patrick\_595-603). His natural competencies might be stated as follows:

*Ability to be fascinated by subtleties that are not mainstream* (here: details of printing technology).

*Good social competencies (empathy, friendliness) with respect to creative individuals.* He even may invite them to live with the family.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Patrick's job is to evaluate the risks of big engineering projects for generating energy from natural resources (FI\_Patrick\_239-243). He, therefore, needs a good overview of technical processes but also seeks to understand the conceptual issues of a project on which he is working (FI\_Patrick\_547-550).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

After many discussions, Patrick agrees that his natural competence lies in understanding and appreciating technical processes from various angles. He has proved his interest over the years and judges himself to be good at doing this, both in his job and in choosing art (prints) for his collection (FI\_Patrick\_647-651). He judges himself as being successful in his job as an engineer and satisfied with the position he occupies today (FI\_Patrick\_652-661).

#### **4.1.19 Case Richard**

Name: Richard, male, Age 45

Profession: Owner of a small architectural firm, part of which takes on projects for smaller companies and designs private houses, the other part specialising in corporate identity, corporate design, and corporate architecture.

#### **Identity in connection with art**

Like others, Richard started to buy art immediately following his studies, when he started earning his own money. (CS\_Richard\_67). It is rather the connection to the artist than the actual art-work that matters to him. He says that it is very important to know the person behind the artwork, in order to be able to have a certain connection



to the work itself (CS\_Richard\_73). So, the bond with the creator is crucial for Richard and this bond is set by the exchange that takes place upon purchasing the work (CS\_Richard\_86).

Although some of Richard's art hangs in the big shop-window of his architectural studio, where many people are able to see it, he does not purchase art mainly to project an image to the outside world, but rather for the interesting discussions between him and his friends that can be inspired by a piece (CS\_Richard\_99).

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

For Richard, art also decorates a room (CS\_Richard\_77) and is a treat for the eyes (CS\_Richard\_79). So, we might say that, for Richard, it is more important that the art produces a certain atmosphere in a space, rather than just communicating a particular message. The need to form a bond with the artist also dictates Richard's art-collecting behaviour (CS\_Richard\_110). He says: "I only purchase art directly from the artist and only if I know the artist somehow personally" (FI\_Richard\_70). So, establishing personal contact seems to constitute the core reason why Richard buys art: "I collect art based on the bonds I can build with the artists" (FI\_Richard\_642).

### **Natural competencies**

Richard's main natural competency seems to be his nurturing personality: "That gives you a certain sense of satisfaction.... Especially when you see the artist growing..." (FI\_Richard\_302-305) He enjoys forming deep and trusting personal relationships with others. Through a purchase of art, for instance, Richard forms a personal bond which is important. Richard's competency of building and supporting personal contacts seems to have been developed and honed over years. Richard's love of good design and his understanding of beauty are also important competencies and what brought him to architecture. He seems to do things out of joy rather than with the aim of fame and professional achievement. Richard's natural competencies may be summarised as:

*Disposition to help, nurture, and support others.* Personal bonds to the artists are important for him.

*Good social competencies (empathy, understanding) with respect to creative individuals.* These competencies also influence Richard's way of collecting art as he establishes deep personal contact to artists he buys from.

*Sense for and understanding of visual beauty and good design.*

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

Richard makes business decisions in a holistic way: "In the end however, the gut feeling has to be right" (FI\_Richard\_535). Even when it comes to bigger sums of money, he seems to really trust his intuition and adds that deciding in that way has always helped him so far to quickly come to the right decision (FI\_Richard\_553-555). He sees the importance of having a good professional network of people in order to succeed, but notes that "very successful architects put their whole life-power into their job... you need to have this certain gene in your blood to be really successful" (FI\_Richard\_709-711).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

The success factors, which Richard describes as being his work-requirements, and how Richard acts are not congruent. On one hand, he enjoys the contact with his clients and is possibly good at networking. On the other hand, he does not seem to have the single-minded focus that a really successful architect needs: "...I have a family; I have also other hobbies and interests, so other things in my life" (FI\_Richard\_715). He does not see himself as very successful. On the other hand, he feels satisfied with his choices (FI\_Richard\_719-725), probably because what he does, he does out of joy (FI\_Richard\_739-747), (FI\_Richard\_908-910).

#### **4.1.20 Case Urs**

Name: Urs, male, Age 63

Profession: Urs is an entrepreneur and business man. He has founded many different businesses, some very successful, within different fields ranging from the electronics industry and the mobile phone market, to retail and luxury goods.

### **Identity in connection with art**

Urs is 100% an entrepreneur. He likes to lead and hates compromising, he loves to come into contact with others but is also a private person, rather held back, very quiet and secretive about himself. He says that if somebody wants to deliberate about an artwork or an artist, they can go to a museum – the art that he owns belongs to him and this is the difference (CS\_Urs\_455-457). Art has been in his life for as long as he can remember. He started to buy art when he was living in Bern in his 20s. He sees the value of collecting art especially “... in the contact and the discussions I can have with those people; the debates I have with the artists, the gallery owners or other collectors – that is important for me. Maybe even more important than the artwork itself” (FI\_Urs\_477-479). Urs often mentions that he likes exchanges with other people, so that he can understand things from different points of view (FI\_Urs\_115).

### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

There was a huge area mainly of sculptures by artists he knows well through mixing in the same circles: “Like a separate family, another clique if you like. But already back then, I was always looking for other arenas or other scenes that I found interesting and... which I wanted to integrate myself into and know more about ...” (FI\_Urs\_112-120). We can deduce that Urs’ art-collecting behaviour is guided less by the art itself and more by the enriching experience of getting to know the many people connected to it.

### **Natural competencies**

Urs has much experience that blends into a gut reaction, allowing him to act as a situation requires: “I presume that there, in your gut instincts, lies the combination of all the influences you have experienced over time, all the situations you have lived through. They mix and then make you react in a certain way” (FI\_Urs\_700-702). Urs loves to see and understand different points of view, which has led him to many experiences and made him very open-minded. In that way he yearns to establish and maintain contact with very different people in a variety of fields, and sustains a social network through his great social competence and his ability to

listen to others and understand their point of view. His natural competencies might be characterised thus:

*Good social competencies (empathy, understanding) with respect to learn about different points of view; open minded.* This competency is inferred because Urs likes to talk to the artists very much, this might be even more important to him than the pieces of art themselves.

*Flexible, “intuitive” approach to complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues.*

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

As Urs runs a variety of retail enterprises, he must understand and feel the needs of the market and have innovative ideas as to how to differentiate himself from his competitors in each of them. He must also understand different aspects of the market, and see the world from different points of view, as befits each business, and follow his gut-reaction in the decision-making process (FI\_Urs\_648-659).

The factors that must be present for an entrepreneur to succeed, as Urs sees them, are as follows: “Ahm... there must be a fire... a fire to do things, to also be ready to take the risk... you must have different [e.g. innovative] views and new ideas and sense which subject of interest is important at the moment.... yes, probably that's it...” (FI\_Urs\_726-730).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

With regard to the relationship between art and business Urs says: “... Thanks to my exposure to art and the connections I was lucky to make in the arts-scene, with various artists, I feel that I see things differently. I approach situations more openly than others. I feel the vibes ... I understand people better or maybe I’m just more open, more relaxed with other people’s points of view. ... It certainly has an influence on the whole life. And I think I have profited greatly from my exposure to the arts scene” (FI\_Urs\_570-580). On whether having connections in the art-scene, besides those he has in the business-world, has helped him to become the successful entrepreneur he is today, he answers: “Yes, sure. But also vice versa.... my business-thinking...helped me probably, say, in the creative world in the South of

France, not to totally lose myself ... in decadence I mean. So both parts, or let's say, all these different kinds of worlds and what I learned in them, in a way, pushed me somehow upwards, to be successful or, say, fulfilled in all these different roles in life..." (FI\_Urs\_712-718). What we see here is a case where Urs' natural competencies are developed to such a degree that the positive experiences they bring in both his working and non-working life feed into each other, further increasing his competencies in all fields. He feels successful (FI\_Urs\_582-586) as well as satisfied in his working life (FI\_Urs\_715-718).

#### **4.1.21 Case Ian**

Name: Ian, male, Age 45

Profession: A graphic designer, he owns his own advertising agency.

##### **Identity in connection with art**

Ian has been surrounded by art since his childhood (CS\_Ian\_66). Later he went to art-college and became a graphic designer, thus continuing his development in an artistic environment. He does not see art in commercial terms, however, but as something that has much to do with creativity, which cannot itself be bought. What is important for Ian is the aesthetic aspect of art (CS\_Ian\_100) as well as getting to know the artist, i.e. forming a relationship with the creator (CS\_Ian\_88-93).

##### **Special behaviour in collecting art**

Ian likes to be in touch with artists, to go to private views and drink with friends. He thinks that all this belongs to an artistic life-style and wants to be part of it. This whole unconventional lifestyle is very important to Ian as it probably represents the way he imagines an artist's life to be (CS\_Ian\_88-91). Ian acts emotionally when buying a piece of art, buying spontaneously and often very quickly (CS\_Ian\_94-100). He instructs me to note that his purchases are always an emotional act and never planned (CS\_Ian\_104). He involves his family-life with his artistic activities with the result that his children's paintings are hanging next to framed artists, making his loft in Lutry, which dates from the Middle Ages, look colourful and unique. He tells me that he also takes his children to all art-events so that they can get a taste of real life.

He only draws the line with his children when it comes to sexual items: any sexual art he and his wife possess is now stored in a cupboard (CS\_Ian\_117-121).

### **Natural competencies**

Ian seems able to act from his feelings without obstructing his behaviour with rigid rules and limitations. He seems very creative and without boundaries. He spontaneously acts in ways he thinks are good at the time and admits that money is, therefore, often a problem for the entire family (CS\_Ian\_111). He mixes all aspects of his life, having a deep dislike for boundaries and limits, with the result that professional relationships often become personal (CS\_Ian\_117). He regards the people he works with as part of the family and his creative and trusting approach to life makes him good to be around. His natural competencies seem to be:

the ability to act spontaneously to *complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues,*

*Good social competencies (empathy, understanding),* forming emotional bonds with others, and

a sense of not getting restricted too much by boundaries, thus allowing for different aspects of his life to blend without setting rigid boundaries. When the right decisions are made this leads to a powerful creative positive outcome that spreads through all aspects of his life.

### **Behaviour in business, success factors in the work-field**

On whether he also blurs boundaries in his job he says: “my entire life is like that. I think it is because of my job that it is like that but, yes, it’s the same in my job life.” (FI\_Ian\_55/78) With his biggest clients he maintains a business- as well as a private relationship and, in that case, it seems be working (FI\_Ian\_96-99). Other diffused relationships did not survive because things ultimately became too personal (FI\_Ian\_140-145). Ian sees “talent, a good network with the right people and business instinct” as the most important factors in order to succeed in his line of work (FI\_Ian\_477).

### **Congruence of competencies, self-judged job-success/satisfaction in life**

He judges himself as having talent, “I hope so; it also means being creative, having artistic understanding, feeling the trends....” (FI\_Ian\_486-487). He maintains a social network and likes the people in his social circle but notes that he is not really a tough business person, adding that being nice to others and yet tough at the same time is very difficult (FI\_Ian\_486-490). After some thought, he judges himself as creatively successful but maybe less so as a businessman. However, the creative nature of his job provides him with lots of satisfaction, despite occasional financial difficulties (FI\_Ian\_494-509).

#### **4.1.22 Overview of within-case analysis**

A striking outcome of the within-case analysis is that each of the 20 cases exhibits a variety of different natural competencies. Often it was not just one competency which made a candidate special, but the combination of natural competencies that was discovered. Analysing and codifying these competencies with the help of NVivo allowed for a unique natural-competency-profile to be created for each candidate, which could then be compared to the competencies required to succeed at their chosen job.

As described earlier, the natural competencies were derived from more basic concepts that showed up directly in the focused interviews, observations, and character sketches. Thus the natural competencies are derived from these more basic concepts. An overview of all basic concepts can be seen in the Appendix, Chapter 9.4.

Even where individual competency similarities were found between candidates, candidates never exhibited the same combination of competencies. Therefore, it is always the combination or profile of competencies which makes a candidate unique, since no individual has exactly the same overall-competency profile as any other. This is an important point, because it emphasises the benefits and viability of treating individuals as unique, rather than categorising them, when trying to determine what they are good at. The following table summarises the results of the within-case analysis.

Table summarising results of the within-case analysis

Case	Identity in connection with art	Special behaviour in collecting art	Natural competency	Behaviour in business, required competencies	Levels of success and satisfaction
Peter	Feels safe and at home when surrounded by art. Brother of famous artist	Emotional ties are more important than price; he listens to his intuition; and feels at ease around artists, understanding them	<i>Good social competencies (empathy, understanding: He understands creative people and moves easily around the artists' networks). Proceduralised knowledge and understanding of complex issues</i>	IT-Programmer: needs to be up to date with latest software, and act with attention to detail and accuracy	Not Congruent Not Successful Not Satisfied
Axel	Art and beauty are his life, he likes to possess art	Acts intuitively first and reads about a piece later. Has a very good eye that has been trained over many years	<i>Proceduralised knowledge and understanding of complex issues (Trusts his instincts, has something like a sixth sense regarding latest trends). Independent of judgement of others</i>	Agent in the Fashion Business: Needs to know newest trends, trusting his instincts.	Congruent Successful Satisfied



<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Sandra</b></p>	<p>Very people oriented; loves to possess art by friends (they are often famous)</p>	<p>Art acts as a little souvenir. She possesses smaller things and hangs them all up in her kitchen.</p>	<p><i>Good social competencies (empathy, understanding), openness to other individuals (very people oriented, caring, able to make contacts and relate to others from the heart). Disposition to help and support others</i></p>	<p>Medical Doctor: Besides knowing her craft, she needs to care for her patients and be able to communicate well with them about any illness</p>	<p>Congruent Successful Satisfied</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Bruno</b></p>	<p>Correct and laid-back, observing all the social rules; expresses his revolutionary side through art</p>	<p>He likes to collect in a thoughtful, analytical way. He collects rather shocking or politically and socially satirical pieces</p>	<p><i>Structured, organised, and deliberate way of approaching complex issues (acts with thought and exactitude, serious-minded, has a sense of social responsibility), Independence of the judgement of others</i></p>	<p>CEO/owner of a small Medical Company: he needs to know all the rules and regulations, pay attention to detail and be responsible and serious in his dealings with the outside world</p>	<p>Congruent Successful Satisfied</p>

Eva	<p>Self-image: someone who understands art/culture in general. Artworks are souvenirs of her travels</p>	<p>She buys what she loves and the art acts like a souvenir, which reminds her of the places she has travelled to.</p>	<p>Large versatility and variety of interests, Open-minded and free, high situational flexibility, large attention span (able to do many things at once), Proceduralised, “intuitive” knowledge and understanding of complex issues</p>	<p>Film/Advertising Consultant: Flexibility, a love of freedom and an ability to understand a carry out a great many tasks are essential</p>	<p>Congruent Successful Satisfaction</p>
Baruch	<p>Open to the world, yet thoughtful, strategic, part of an international network</p>	<p>He act very strategically, deliberating long before purchasing an item and in a businesslike way</p>	<p><i>Sense for visual beauty and aesthetic experience, “trained eyes” / aesthetic appreciation and sensitivity to trends; Structured, organised, and deliberate way of approaching complex issues (strategic thinking) Good social competencies, openness to other individuals (has built up a huge network of contacts),</i></p>	<p>Owner / CEO of Big Fashion House: he needs to have this business head on at all times and acts strategically, but also understand beauty and the aesthetic trends</p>	<p>Congruent Successful Satisfaction</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Evelyn</p>	<p>Art is the elixir of youth. Proud of having discovered artists who later became big and famous</p>	<p>Has a very good eye for art, built over the last 30 years. She knows much about art and moves in important art-circles, where she is known.</p>	<p><i>Flexible approach of structured, organised, and deliberate way as well as "intuitive" way of approaching complex</i> (She is able to judge good art). <i>Solid and profound knowledge about arts</i> (knows the facts and figures about a piece, has business sense, <i>independence of the judgement of others</i> (not easily influenced by others. <i>Sense for visual beauty and aesthetic experience, "experienced eye"</i>.</p>	<p>Retired Art-Consultant: Good art-network, the ability to judge the quality of a piece and its investment potential. Sensitivity to clients' desires and needs.</p>	<p>Not Congruent Successful Not Satisfied</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Gregor</p>	<p>Proud of having a 'good nose' and likes to get to know local artists, just like his father and grandfather before him</p>	<p>He collects art by Swiss artists he knows, likes big contemporary pieces and only originals. Exchanges ideas with important people in the art-scene.</p>	<p><i>Good social competencies, openness to other individuals</i> (forms bonds). <i>Structured, organised, and deliberate way of approaching complex</i> (uses the same effective strategies and networks as family generations before him)</p>	<p>Surgeon: As very specialized surgeon, he is using his family network, name and intelligence to do work he is proud of.</p>	<p>Congruent Successful Satisfied</p>

<p><b>Fritz</b></p>	<p>Perceived and projected image of the innovator</p>	<p>Likes to discover new artists and exchange ideas about what's new with friends in the art-network</p>	<p><i>Not being afraid of taking (controlled) risks when fascinated by substance and depth (fascinated by the new, innovative, good). Good social competencies, willingness and ability to "network" and gather information about latest trends. Structured, organised, and deliberate way of approaching complex issues.</i></p>	<p>Owens Bio-engineering Company: He must know the latest trends, be innovative but also advertise and sell company services.</p>	<p>Not Congruent Not Successful Satisfied</p>
<p><b>Hans-Heiri</b></p>	<p>Likes to help and coach others in an ethical way, he likes to understand others and reflect about life and society.</p>	<p>Understands artists and likes to help and support them in their activities</p>	<p><i>Disposition to help and support others (Likes to help others and to handle power responsibly and ethically). Independence of the judgement of others. Structured, thoughtful, and meaningful way of approaching complex issues, Concerned with a philosophical view of the world and an ethical approach to life.</i></p>	<p>Owens IT-company: Understanding IT/software. Desire to be of help and to maximise efficiency; ethical handling of social power</p>	<p>Not congruent Not successful Not satisfied</p>

Isa	Cultured upbringing; understands needs and loves art.	Art is a medium which can transport a message. Collaborates with boyfriend in art-collection	<i>Understands how to cooperate with others.</i> Flexible approach: analytic and deliberate way as well as “intuitive” way of approaching art as a complex <i>issue</i> . Willingness and ability to deeply think about, and analyse, a complex issue, trying to extract rules and regulations, deeper meanings, and messages ( <i>able to analyse, “fine-tune” and perceive the meaning behind something</i> ). Sense for understanding cultural issues, high sensitivity.	Academic/Philosophy: To communicate, discuss and inspire others and be able to analyse and think in depth	Congruent Successful Satisfied
Gian	Art is intricately woven with his life and architectural creations; used as a creative tool.	Art is connected to architecture and is seen in light of the space it will fit in. Also it has to do with leaving behind something valuable for later generations.	<i>Sense for aesthetic experience and perfection, “experienced eye”.</i> (Understands how to make his architecture even more appealing through the use of art.) <i>Ability to clearly express deep thoughts</i> (inspires respect by being distant and authoritative)	Architect/Own Boss: An award-winning architect, he creates amazing spaces and structures.	Congruent Success Satisfied

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Joe</b></p>	<p>Art enhances his outer image and allows him to access his feelings</p>	<p>Shape and colour are important; he knows what he wants and does not compromise. He acts very cost-consciously and assumes that others do not know that his art is cheap hoping they see him as a cultured person.</p>	<p><i>Approaching complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues with a rational, “instrumentalistic” view. Exhibiting persistence and perseverance (Knows what he wants; is patient and does not compromise until he finds it; cost-conscious)</i></p>	<p>Engineering/CEO: It is important to be able to produce what he has in mind, know what he wants and be able to make decisions and communicate them to others. Further he needs to be financially aware.</p>	<p>Congruent Successful Satisfied</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Miriam</b></p>	<p>Her art expertise allows her to live in style and mingle with high society and riches</p>	<p>Her collection is meant to look tasteful and expensive. She sometimes buys and carefully frames copies to achieve that look.</p>	<p>Ability to configure resources so to make the best out of them (She has good taste and understanding of art as well as how to project the expected image to others – that of a well situated and cultured woman). Good social competencies, willingness and ability to “network” .</p>	<p>Art-Advisor: She needs a good understanding of art and public image, a good network, but also enough financial resources to be able to be where the rich are.</p>	<p>Not congruent Successful Not satisfied</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mark</b></p>	<p>Loves beauty, culture; wants to be a rich man of letters and an arts-sponsor. Investing in art serves these aims.</p>	<p>He focuses on a particular, less well-known field of art which he researches very well before he invests.</p>	<p><i>Not being afraid of taking risks. Structured, organised, and goal oriented way of approaching complex tasks</i> (analyses carefully; invests in his view undervalued things). <i>Good social competencies, willingness and ability to “network”</i></p>	<p>Fund-Manager: He must analyse carefully and act strategically by taking calculated risks and choosing stocks that will rise.</p>	<p>Congruent Successful Satisfied</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sarah</b></p>	<p>Art is part of her everyday life and is important to her sense of identity.</p>	<p>Collects mainly contemporary photography, which is what she studied. Big network connections to important people in the arts all over the world</p>	<p><i>Proceduralised, “intuitive” knowledge and understanding of creative trends</i> (understands creative industries), <i>Good social competencies, willingness and ability to “network”</i> (has powerful art and business network and gets on with different people)</p>	<p>Advertising/Own Boss: It is important to get on with different people, understanding the world of arts and business and to be creative and understand creative industries.</p>	<p>Congruent Successful Satisfied</p>

Patrick	He loves art, engaging in cultural activities, being surrounded by artists and helping them	Interest in art-prints and their different technical processes	<i>Ability to be fascinated by subtleties that are not mainstream</i> (Interested in technical processes). <i>Good social competencies (empathy, friendliness) with respect to creative individuals.</i>	Engineer for Big Projects: Technical understanding required, yet also having an overview of processes and conceptual issues	Congruent Successful Satisfied
Richard	Art is a means of forming bonds to the artists	Buying art is an exchange that builds a bond with the artist. Art also decorates a room	<i>Disposition to help, nurture, and support others. Good social competencies (empathy, understanding) with respect to creative individuals</i> (Able to form deep and trusting personal relationships). <i>Sense for and understanding of visual beauty and good design</i> (Loves design and beauty but overall it is important that all this is fun, rather than business-like.)	Architect/Own Boss: Aesthetic sense, relationships and networks are important for architects but so is a professional business-minded attitude, which he lacks.	Not Congruent Not Successful Satisfied



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Urs</b></p>	<p>Art broadens horizons and brings him in contact with all sorts of people opening his mind.</p>	<p>He buys from artists in his various social circles and seeks to experience the world</p>	<p><i>Good social competencies (empathy, understanding) with respect to learn about different points of view; open minded. (Sees and understands different points of view; has much experience and is very open-minded.) Ability to listen and understand others. Flexible, “intuitive” approach to complex, (partly) ill-defined and non-transparent issues.</i></p>	<p>Entrepreneur/ Own Boss: Understanding different market trends, but also people from all walks of life; big thinking and new ideas</p>	<p>Congruent Successful Satisfied</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ian</b></p>	<p>A creative person, art connects him to the artistic lifestyle.</p>	<p>Forms a bond with the artist and mingles in the art-scene. No boundaries between family life and art-scene</p>	<p>Ability to act spontaneously to <i>complex</i> issues (Creative; spontaneous). Sense of not getting restricted too much by boundaries, thus allowing for different aspects of his life to blend without setting rigid boundaries (dislikes limitations and boundaries). <i>Good social competencies (empathy, understanding) (gets emotionally involved and mixes all aspects of his life)</i></p>	<p>Advertising/Own Boss: Creativity is important as is a good contact with clients and a good network. God business sense also important</p>	<p>Not Congruent Not Successful Satisfied</p>

Table 12: Within-case analysis overview

## **4.2 Cross case analysis**

### **4.2.1 About the cross-case analysis**

The cross-case analysis compares all 20 candidates with respect to the core subject-codes of identity, art-collecting-life, job-life, natural and required competencies, and success and satisfaction, as per section 3.8.3. This can allow the implications of the research for these core areas to arise. These results are analysed in more depth in chapter 5.

The cross-case analysis, essentially, was part of the within-case analysis as specific issues such as competencies required for the job were analysed for each individual (see the case analyses in section 4.1). But the cross-case comparison adds specific information to this because comparing different codifications helps to decide whether codification proceeds in a consistent manner across different cases. This is called the method of permanent comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 2010, p. 115f.). The cross-case analysis was the last step in generating the results described in section 4.1. It was integrated into this process. In this section, examples of this cross-case analysis are described.

### **4.2.2 Cross-Case analysis on the central code of “identity”**

The main-code “identity” contains three sub-codes: “centrality”, “continuity” and “distinction”, which are analysed below.

#### **4.2.2.1 Centrality**

The candidates’ particular art-collections and behaviour around art seem to reflect their individual values, and most candidates felt passionately about making sure I understood that. For instance, Ian telephoned three months after our second interview wanting to make sure that I know that he thinks that the art-market today is not what it was 20 years ago, having less to do with creativity today than it did in the past (CS\_Ian\_100-103). Ian need not have worried however, as people’s values always came through in the interview:

It was clear that Hans-Heiri, for instance, the owner of the IT-company, wants to help others and never hurt them. This comes through here, where he discusses a piece he bought in support of an artist, Chantal:

*Researcher: "I see. So you would have kept the art, because Chantal is important to you?"*

*Hans-Heiri: "Yes. In that case I would have kept the art anyway. I would have tried to find a different spot for it. I made Chantal so happy through that purchase; I would not want to destroy that." (FI\_Hans-Heiri\_136-139)*

Joe, the CEO of the engineering company, on the other hand, values and admires cultured individuals and good taste and wants to project this image outwardly:

*Joe: "I have...how should I say...ehm...I find people who actually expose themselves to art in general very interesting. And I think that art is a topic, which is truly worth investing time in. People who know the scene well generally impress me."*

*Researcher: "Yes."*

*Joe: "And if you enter an apartment in which art is well displayed, given of course that that person has a halfway good taste, then it gives the apartment a good overall feel. It is just something nice." (FI\_Jo\_278-286)*

What is moreover interesting is that individuals like to display their best or most valued personal attributes through their art-collections. For instance, Evelyn, the retired art-adviser, uses her collection to display her past successes in the international art-market; Fritz, the bio-engineering boss, uses it to display that he has his finger on the pulse; and Sandra, the doctor, uses it to emphasise her caring qualities.

Others use it to display attributes they value and aspire to, and wish to project outwardly, even if they do not yet possess them. Miriam, the art-adviser who lives with a rich family, aspires to riches and high society through her own collection; Joe, the CEO, aspires to and projects the image of the cultured tasteful man; and Ian aspires to an artist's life-style, away from pedestrian day-to-day life.

#### 4.2.2.2 Continuity

Candidates' participation in art-collecting activities has evolved over time, reflecting changes in their circumstances.

Many candidates, for instance, started their collections when they earned their first money, with Gregor and Richard stating this explicitly (CS\_Gregor\_99-100; CS\_Richard\_66). Some started because of friends and social surrounding in the early stages of their adult life. When Axel, for instance, was about 25, he and his wife to be were invited to a friend's house that collected art. This impressed him so much that he decided to start collecting too (CS\_Axel\_127-129). Gregor started collecting while working as an assistant and living in a student community. He had saved some money and wanted to buy something from his artist-friends. It was not a special occasion – he just liked the art and knew the artist (CS\_Gregor\_79-82).

Many candidates grew up surrounded by art, in various ways. For instance, Sandra's family bought a lot of naïve art from the mountains, or "Appenzeller Malerei" (CS\_Sandra\_71-73). On the other hand, Baruch regularly visited the major art-museums with his family throughout his childhood:

*Researcher: "So where did you learn how to understand art? I mean, someone must have taught you how to approach an artwork, how to let it touch you".*

*Baruch: "I am not sure really. Art was always around me, from my childhood on...." (FI\_Baruch\_180-183)*

One candidate, Joe, gained an interest in art at a time of change. Joe started to collect art in his 40s, just as I began my interviews. At that time, he went through a very big change, leaving behind his engineer-persona to become a CEO – a post which needs many new qualities such as emotional intelligence and which he started to develop by changing many things in his life, and by gaining an interest in art (FI\_Joe and CS\_Joe). Because there are no other cases like Joe here, I am not able to take this as a pattern. On the other hand, Joe clearly reports that he started to collect on purpose, when his life changed, so it is important to mention his case.

Interestingly, events such as marriage or the birth of a child did not appear to have as major an effect on candidates' collecting habits as did their social surroundings, profession, and family background.

#### 4.2.2.3 Distinction

A candidate's personal sense of identity – especially what distinguishes and sets them apart from others – comes through strongly in the interviews. Some candidates use their cultured life-styles and art-expertise itself to impress others and set themselves apart. More importantly, however, when a candidate discusses their involvement with art they reveal personal information about themselves and often explicitly mention particular choices and attitudes that distinguish them from the norm. Here are some examples.

Sandra talks openly about her choice to work part-time to care for her children, setting herself apart from exclusively career-driven women:

*Sandra: "... I mean, for a long time I worked like most men, concentrating on what my rational sense, what my brain told me. Always running about. Always looking out for ways to advance my career."*

*Researcher: „Yes? „*

*Sandra: "Until I became pregnant. Up until then I was drilled like everyone else, and acted like everyone else. It was not easy, this change at this moment, to give up such a career..." (Sandra\_FI\_391-398)*

Axel, on the other hand, talks about his peculiar obsession with art, whereby he is unable to resist a purchase. He even uses the word "dangerous" in connection with leaving the house, which inevitably leads him to visit galleries, something he considers to be slightly crazy and abnormal. He thinks that he has a peculiar addiction to art and takes comfort in the fact that this addiction will, at least, not kill him ... (Axel\_CS\_190-196).

Fritz shows me his latest acquisitions and tells me how, unlike others, he likes to look to the future, and belongs to a circle of forward-looking individuals who look for the newest trends in art.

*Fritz: "... What I do, I am actually more of an outsider. I do not see things with the same eyes as those who are already blinded. My eyes are more open."*

*Researcher: "Ok. Meaning you are the person who constantly strives to search for innovations and also finds them in the field of your work."*

*Fritz: "Yes."*

*Researcher: "And do people look up to you?"*

*Fritz: "There are even copy cats or people who follow my lead." (FI\_Fritz\_285-295)*

And Evelyn sets herself apart from others on the basis of her past successes and through her expertise in art-buying which, unlike others, will carry her through more difficult times (the interview was just before the recession, so before the art-bubble burst):

*Evelyn: "...and I feel often not as respected as I have been for so long in the business but now with the recession, most will change and then we see who is laughing in the end... the real eye and the good feel cannot be purchased and especially in times where everything in the art-market is so overheated, looking carefully and sorting the good from the bad is crucial. You know, I also overcame the last crisis and it [the crisis] is helpful and cleans-up..." (FI\_Evelyn\_367-392)*

Finally, Ian seeks to set himself apart, through his connection with art, by appearing more eccentric, artistic and creative and less 'square':

*Ian: "...you know, sometimes I would love to be a little more eccentric, but then I have to control myself and be more serious. With a family, you cannot act out of the norm all the time. You cannot just do as you wish and please to do in that moment. You have to be serious from time to time. You know in French we say "quadré." (French for square, meaning in this context normal, like everyone else). For sure, that calms down everyone, makes life a little easier. Things are less messy afterwards."(Ian\_FI\_327-332)*

### 4.2.3 Cross-Case analysis on the central code of “art-collection-life”

The main-code “art collection life” contains three sub-codes: “behaviour in art-collection”, “description of art-collection” and “function/reason to collect”. These help to elucidate a candidate’s natural competencies and are analysed below.

#### 4.2.3.1 Behaviour in art-collection

Research reveals that each candidate behaves very differently in how they collect art. Given that candidates are free to behave in any way they like when they collect art just for themselves, differences between candidates are important as they reveal each candidate’s particular natural competencies.

While many factors combine to make up a candidate’s entire approach to art-collecting, there are clear differences between candidates in how they collect. For instance, Axel reports that he relies on his gut-reactions:

*Axel: “But if I go to a fair or an exhibit then I rely totally on my gut feelings. I do not do any research in advance or you know, read up on the artists or similar.”*

*Researcher: „, ”Yes”.*

*Axel: ”If I do that, it is only after I have made the purchase. However, for me information on the artist doesn’t play a significant role. I am very spontaneous. I see something and ask for its price and if I can afford it in some way or another then I buy it. It’s as simple as that. Often I do not even know the artists name”.*  
(FI\_Axel\_127-135)

Baruch, on the other hand, collects in a planned, organised, strategic manner, carrying out considerable research before he invests, to ensure quality:

*Baruch:”... The quality has to be there too. And for that I do my research regarding facts and figures before purchasing a piece of art”“ (FI\_Baruch\_280-281)*

Finally, Peter acts spontaneously and randomly, as he moves through his various artistic circles. Comparing his art-collecting habits with his normal IT-work, he notes:

*Peter: "...whereas something such as...uhm...collecting is perhaps more random and you're, perhaps doing things more spontaneously. Uhm, and so there is quite, perhaps a big difference that way." (FI\_Peter\_453-455)*

Every collector acts in specific, unique ways. Rather than categorising these, or listing all of them here, it is more interesting to look at them as unique candidate-finger-prints that can show us the natural competencies of each candidate.

#### **4.2.3.2 Description of art-collection**

Under this code, I collated all my impressions from visiting candidates' homes, being shown pictures, or being given descriptions of the art they possess and how it is kept. Each collection I came across during my research had its own signature, again reflecting the different characters of the candidates.

For example, Gregor showed me his contemporary art-pieces, most of them photographs of internationally renowned Swiss artists. A big Olaf Breunings (Zurich/New York photographer) is hanging next to trendy expensive furniture from the 1950s (CS\_Gregor\_ 67-68). Gregor invests up to CHF 8,000 in a piece, yet his Andro Wekua is valued around CHF 100,000 today. He likes big pieces and likes to hang them up and display them (CS\_Gregor\_97-100). This collection reflects his sense of strategy and pride, both in his work and in following firmly established family traditions.

On the other hand, Peter focuses mainly on surf motives, which he buys from all over the world. He possesses pieces worth over £1m alongside works worth under £1. It is what is on the canvas that counts, and this reflects his interest in art and artists, his love of mingling with creative circles and his 'surfing' on the wave of his brother's fame (CS\_Peter\_77-79).

Then we have Mark, the fund-manager, who focuses mainly on street-art and keeps a portfolio of such works, much like he does with his stocks, alongside a database cataloguing artists, artworks and prices (CS\_Mark\_65-67).

In this way, each collection reflects the particular lifestyle and underlying competencies of each candidate.



#### 4.2.3.3 Function / Reason to collect

Candidates reported very different reasons for collecting art. Again, differences in this respect are important because they reveal what intrinsically motivates each candidate, hence what lies behind their particular competencies.

For Eva, the art she collects acts like a souvenir of the great variety of places she has visited and, generally, of what lies out there, beyond her day-to-day Zurich life. This reflects her broad view of life and flexibility, which are necessary to work in the film-industry:

*Eva: "I have to like it, and it has to act as a reminder."*

While art also serves to keep Urs' horizons open, it has a very different function for him: it is source of knowledge. It allows him to come into contact with many different types of people and so come to know different world-views. This reflects Urs' abilities to relate and understand people from all walks of life, which, in turn, was very important to his success as an entrepreneur:

*Urs: "... this Bern art scene... like a separate family, another clique if you like. But already back then, I was always looking for other arenas or other scenes that I found interesting and..."*

*Researcher: "Which you found fascinating, yes".*

*Urs: "...which I wanted to integrate myself into and know more about it. Each clique or each circle of people has a different level and different topics of discussion, different interests".*

*Researcher: "Yes."*

*Urs: "And one of the scenes, which I found myself in, was the one with many artists. But there were not only painters. There were also writers, musicians and many others like me who were not directly related to the fine arts in any way, but liked the interaction with those people." (FI\_Urs\_109-126)*

Finally, for Isa, the academic, art functions as a means of communication, carrying a certain message, not unlike a good book or a poem. She thinks that good art needs to communicate strongly and clearly to the perceiver (CS\_Ira\_187-190). This clearly reflects her analytical and communicative competencies.

#### 4.2.4 Cross-Case analysis on the central code of “job-life”

The main-code “job-life” contains the three sub-codes of “behaviour at work”, “required competencies at work” and “job-description”. These codes reveal the competencies required by each candidate at work and whether they are congruent to their natural competencies. The relevant codes are analysed below.

##### 4.2.4.1 Behaviour at work

The cases show a broad pattern of work-related behaviour, reflecting the variety of professions across them, but also individual candidate peculiarities. I focused on what seems to stand out in a candidate’s mind about the way they act at work.

Ian reports that he likes to mix his working- and personal life:

*Ian: “I am not able to maintain the personal distance needed. I cannot go to work in the morning, then go home in the evening and it is finished, like a cut between personal life and working life.”*

Sarah, the advertising-agent, builds a bridge between business-clients and creative individuals in her job:

*Researcher: “How exactly is your daily work influenced by art and the studies you did originally?”*

*Sarah: “Well, we are a creative agency, which means most of the people working here come from more or less artistic, or let’s say, creative backgrounds. On the other hand the clients’ mind sets are often very bland....very straight forward structured thinking... they call it logical thinking... you know what I mean... When working together with these people and on the other hand our creative people are working on the concepts we developed, I a) see all this in a conceptual overall context and b) am able to change sides...”*

When Richard, the architect, describes his criteria of hiring someone to work with him, he notes that his connection to other architects in his company and his ability to work well with them is more important than what these architects have achieved:

*Richard: “I think it just has to click. If someone turns up with a great CV, for me that does not suffice alone to be able to decide that I want to work with that*

*person. The chemistry must be there. I need to feel connected with that person in some way.” (FI\_Richard\_458-460)*

Mark, the fund-manager, who uses a similar approach in collecting art, as he does in his job, reports:

*Mark: “Well, yes... (thinking pause). I suppose at work I do the same. Yes, it is the same with ... I mean every investment also in the stock market. I research the market, get certain impressions of certain stock in a very specific field, and then convey these impressions to my team to advise them on the right values to buy or sell... The difference with art is that I buy it myself.”*

On the other hand the IT-consultant Peter’s behaviour at work is directly opposed to his art-collecting behaviour:

*Peter: “At my...at my work I am always typically working to...to manage and control. I need to be very exact and planned. Mainly that’s the difference...”*

While the work-behaviour of some interviewees matches their art-collecting behaviour, that of others does not. Where a candidate behaves at work as would be required in order to succeed, such differences between working and non-working behaviour are reflected in the value the code “congruent competency” takes for each candidate. (See sub-section 4.2.5.3 and table 13 in section 4.2.6)

#### **4.2.4.2 Required competencies at work**

Under this code, I collected information about what is required for candidates to succeed in their chosen professions, at least according to their own perceptions. This, then, allowed me to compare these requirements to their natural competencies for signs of congruence. Again, the variety of professions involved gave rise to a variety of required competencies for each candidate.

So Fritz, the owner of the bio-engineering company reports that while being innovative is important, there are further requirements for success in his line of work:

*Fritz: “Yes, from that point of view yes. I like being a step ahead of others. This totally satisfies me and gives me access to my gut feelings; it is my style; however I*

*also see it as a weakness. You see my main weak spot is marketing. I cannot promote things well.”*

*Researcher: “Ok.”*

*Fritz: “There is my problem. I cannot sell an idea. I am no sales person. So the quicker a copy cat turns up the harder it is for me on the market as I am not good at selling my ideas.” (FI\_Fritz\_308-315)*

Isa, the woman who is writing her PhD while tutoring at university, outlines the requirements of an academic post as follows:

*Isa: “It would be easy for a little while to have a job as an academic. There, money is not important. There the most important thing is communication, writing, and inspiring other people with your ideas.” (FI\_Isa\_756-757)*

Finally, here is Gian, the award-winning architect, describing the requirements for success kin to his chosen profession:

*Gian: “.... I also understand how to feel subtle vibes or new directions within our culture. There are not often big changes but they [the vibes] are constant.... I probably was good at knowing, how aesthetic trends could be transformed into architecture and ... yes... together with art this seemed to appeal to the people so that they felt very special and attracted to the architecture I did.... probably it was important to be able to do this for my job...” (FI\_Gian\_543-547)*

#### **4.2.4.3 Job-description**

Under this code I simply noted the description of each interviewee’s job, as given. Similarities and differences between cases are reflected more clearly under the codes “behaviour at work” and “required competencies at work”, which elucidate that description for each case.

#### **4.2.5 Cross-case analysis on the central code of “competency”**

The main code “competency” contains three sub-codes: “natural competency”, “increasing competency” and “congruent competency”. These are discussed below.

#### **4.2.5.1 Natural competency**

Although there were occasional similarities between some candidates with respect to particular competencies, overall candidate-competencies varied considerably.

For example, while both Eva and Urs are open-minded and seek to broaden their horizons, their overall competencies are very different: Urs seems more interested in people, while Eva is interested in variety of experience. Urs has thus gained mastery in understanding people and being able to relate to individuals from all walks of life, and this has helped him greatly in assessing people and situations accurately in business. Eva, on the other hand, has learned a variety of skills and developed a love of freedom and flexibility, which serves her very well in her work in the adventurous film and TV industry.

Similarly, Sandra and Richard both seem very people-oriented. However, while for Sandra this competency is combined with that of caring for others, for Richard it fosters his connection to creativity and to creative individuals.

Each candidate's overall competency-profile is thus considered unique to that candidate. It was not the purpose of this research to categorise or compare candidates to each other with respect to their natural competencies. Instead, after the competencies of each candidate were determined, the aim was to compare these to the competencies required for that candidate to succeed at work. This comparative information is analysed across all cases, against the backdrop of whether a candidate reports feeling successful and satisfied at work. The results can be seen in table 13, "Cross-case analysis summary".

#### **4.2.5.2 Increasing competency**

Some candidates note that they continue to sharpen some of their natural competencies in their non-working life. However, as table 13 shows, it is congruence, rather than increase, or further development, of competencies that matters for fulfilment. Presumably then, for such an increase to have any effect on success and satisfaction, the right competencies, namely those that are congruent with those required at work, must be developed.

#### **4.2.5.3 Congruent competency**

A congruent competency is a natural competency (or set of competencies) which is identical to those required at work. Once the particular natural and required competencies for each candidate were established, these were compared for congruence. The results of this comparison, across all cases, are summarised in table 13.

#### **4.2.6 Cross-case analysis on the main code “success and satisfaction”**

This main-code is divided into four sub-codes: “successful”, “satisfied”, “not successful” and “not-satisfied”, which were simply used to classify candidates.

Candidates were asked to rate themselves on the scale of how successful and satisfied they felt at their chosen job. Their responses were then compared with results regarding each candidate on the matter of competency congruence. The results of this comparison, which support the CF-model, are laid out in the table below, where we can see a direct connection between Congruent Natural Competencies (Column 4) and Overall Fulfilment (Column 8). This means that when natural competencies are congruent to those required at work, the candidate experiences greater degrees of overall fulfilment, defined as success and satisfaction at work, in 100% of the cases. Where there is no congruence, the candidate reports being either not successful or not satisfied (or both) at work, hence not overall fulfilled. The correlation is indeed perfect: There are 13 cases where congruent competencies and overall fulfilment are combined, and in 7 cases, incongruent competencies and lack of fulfilment are combined. But there are no cases whatsoever of high congruence and low fulfilment, and of low congruency and high fulfilment.

On the other hand, increasing competencies do not have a direct influence on fulfilment, because the fact that a particular competency is being trained outside one’s working environment does not, by itself, mean that it is congruent to the competencies required at work.

**Overview on competency and success/satisfaction**

Case	Natural competencies employed at work	No other competencies required in working life	Congruent competency	Increasing competency	Success	Satisfaction	Overall Fulfillment (Combination of Col 6 and 7)
Col. 1	Col. 2	Col. 3	Col. 4	Col. 5	Col. 6	Col. 7	Col. 8
Peter	No	Yes	Not congruent	No	No	No	No
Axel	Yes	No	Congruent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sandra	Yes	No	Congruent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bruno	Yes	No	Congruent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Eva	Yes	No	Congruent	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Baruch	Yes	No	Congruent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Evelyn	Yes	Yes	Not congruent	Yes	Yes	No	No
Gregor	Yes	No	Congruent	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fritz	Yes	Yes	Not congruent	Yes	No	Yes	No
Hans-H.	No	Yes	Not congruent	No	No	No	No
Isa	Yes	No	Congruent	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gian	Yes	No	Congruent	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Joe	Yes	No	Congruent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Miriam	Yes	Yes	Not congruent	Yes	Yes	No	No
Mark	Yes	No	Congruent	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sarah	Yes	No	Congruent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Patrick	Yes	No	Congruent	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Richard	Yes	Yes	Not congruent	No	No	Yes	No
Urs	Yes	No	Congruent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ian	Yes	Yes	Not congruent	No	No	Yes	No

Table 13: Cross-case analysis summary: competencies and overall fulfillment

#### **4.2.7 Cross-Case analysis: Final Remarks**

As described earlier, cross-case analysis served to corroborate the results of within-case analysis. Cross-case analysis was carried out on the basis of five central themes: identity, art-collection life, job-life, competency, and success and satisfaction. Each of these themes involves a number of sub-themes which were codified and used to analyse all data.

The themes “identity”, “art-collection life” and “job-life” were used to collate information that reveals candidates’ natural and required competencies as well as related information regarding their values and their working and non-working lives. The themes “competency” and “success and satisfaction”, on the other hand, codified this data to allow the features central to this research, to arise – namely the relevance of congruence between natural and required competencies to success and satisfaction experienced by the candidate. The result of this comparison has been outlined in table 13. I close this chapter with a brief summary of findings for each core theme, as depicted in the following table.



**Findings of each core theme**

CODE	Sub-Code	Findings
IDENTITY	Centrality	People do use art to display those qualities that they value. These may be qualities they actually possess, or qualities they wish to possess and project to the outside world.
	Continuity	Some of the interviewees were brought up around art, others discovered it later in life through their social surroundings. Many candidates started to collect when they earned their first salary. One candidate started collecting art in his forties, during a life-transition.
	Distinction	Discussing their art-collections allowed candidates to reveal what they consider distinctive about themselves. How individuals collect seems to reflect their distinctive personalities.
ART-COLLECTION-LIFE	Behaviour in art-collection	How a candidate goes about collecting art is unique to each candidate, like a finger-print. Some are instinctive, others emotional or analytical, others yet seek to connect with the artist.
	Description of art-collection	Each art-collection is unique to the candidate and clearly reflects their identity, values and natural competencies, all of which become especially apparent when talking to the candidate about it.
	Function/Reason to collect	Each candidate has different reasons for collecting art. Even where some candidate-behaviours tended toward similarity, the reasons behind their behaviour showed that there were key differences in their overall competencies and values.
JOB-LIFE	Behaviour at work	Each candidate behaved differently in their job. Even candidates of the same profession reported different behaviours at work.
	Required competency at work	Job-requirements vary according to each candidate's profession, but also according to how the interviewee perceives the goal of their job.
	Job-description	Each interviewee was asked to describe their job. Interviewees come from a variety of sectors such as the business-sector, the creative industries, and the medical and academic fields.

COMPETENCE	Natural competency	All candidates showed natural competencies. These were individually defined per each candidate.
	Increasing competency	A note was made whenever a candidate continually sharpened some natural competency in their non-working life. However as it turned out, congruence, rather than continual training, is crucial for fulfilment, so these notes became less important for the final results.
	Congruent competency	If a candidate's natural competencies completely matched those required at work, the candidate was marked as having congruent competencies.
	Non-congruent competency	Where some required competency did not match any natural competency the candidate was marked as having non-congruent competencies.
SUCCESS AND SATISFACTION	Successful/ Not successful Satisfied/ Not satisfied	Some candidates judge themselves as successful, others do not and this was thus marked.  Some candidates judge themselves as satisfied with their professional choices others do not, and this was also marked.  This revealed that all and only candidates who thought they were both successful and satisfied had congruent competencies.

Table 14: Core-theme overview

### **4.3 Summary of chapter 4**

This chapter presents the results of the empirical research.

Part one presents a within-case analysis of each of the 20 case-studies, discussing each candidate's sense of identity, art-collecting behaviour, natural competencies, working life and levels of success and satisfaction. This gives an initial indication between the relationship between a candidate's natural and required competencies and their professional success and satisfaction, hence their overall fulfilment. This analysis ends with a table giving an overview of each candidate.

Part two presents a cross-case analysis revolving around the central themes of identity, art-collecting, work, competencies, success and satisfaction. This culminates in a table which clearly highlights the connection between congruent competencies and overall fulfilment. The cross-case analysis closes with a short table summarising outcomes for each core-theme.

This concludes the presentation of the findings of the empirical research. These findings are discussed in more depth and compared to the existing research in the field, in the next chapter.

## 5 Discussion

This chapter presents the Competencies-Fulfilment-model, or CF-model and explains how it drops out of the empirical results presented in chapter 4. It then discusses the implications of the empirical research in more depth, highlighting their meaning with respect to the topics from the literature presented in chapter 2. In particular, the chapter aims to show how these results are original, how they might contribute to research and why they might be valuable in practice.

The chapter begins by presenting and explaining the CF-model. Content and structure of the ensuing discussion follows that of chapter 2: It begins by debating the subject of identity, then moves on to fulfilment and the relationship between one's working and non-working life, and, lastly, sections on skill-development and the establishment of competencies. A summary is included at the end of each discussion stating the results of this research, and how the CF-model might help bridge gaps in the existing research. Chapter 5 then closes with a summary of key points.

Structure and content of the following sections follow the structure of chapter 2 on the second level but not in detail. This is because the defining sections and basic theoretical relations described in chapter 2 are, of course, not repeated here but related to the results of the empirical research.

### 5.1 Competency-Fulfilment-Model

The present empirical study suggests that those individuals who experience and utilise their natural competencies, and choose employment where the required competencies are congruent with their own competencies, experience greater fulfilment in life. As Seligman (2002) – and Aristotle, two thousand years earlier (Wikipedia, 2009) – advise us, fulfilment – or “eudemonia” – can only result from identifying, enhancing and living in accordance with what is best for oneself – or simply: being true to one's inner “daemon”. The question is how an individual can understand the needs of their inner self.

One answer to this question is provided by the CF-model: Success and satisfaction at work, hence overall fulfilment in life is linked to the phenomenon of congruent

competencies. One must look at the way one behaves in one's non-working life – while engaging in one's really favoured activities, expressing personal identity – and use this knowledge to choose a job that employs those very competencies. Moreover, one can also look to one's non-working life as an area in which to develop any additional competencies, as required by one's job, in order to achieve success and satisfaction at work.

The CF-model is shown below:

## The CF-model

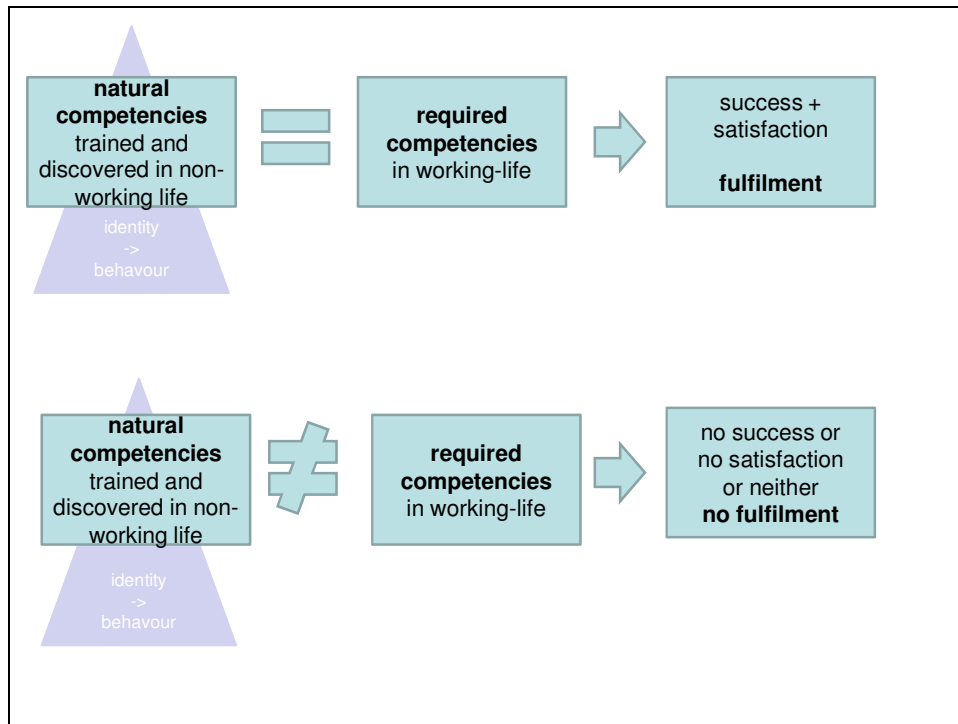


Figure 5: CF-Model

The model shows that natural competencies need to be congruent with required competencies for an individual to be successful and satisfied; thus, fulfilled.

First, the model suggests that natural competencies emerge from personal identity of a subject, as described at length earlier, enabling behaviour and activities that ultimately lead to fulfilment. Second, the model states that natural competencies can both be discovered and actively trained in one's non-working life. Third, it tells us that, where one's natural competencies are congruent ("=") with the competencies required at one's work, this leads to success and satisfaction, hence greater levels of overall fulfilment. Where there is no congruence ("≠") either success or satisfaction (or both) is lacking, and so the subject is not overall fulfilled.

In what follows, this model is placed in the greater context of existing research on identity, fulfilment, working and non-working life, and competency-development.

## 5.2 Identity theory: meaning and originality of results

Burke & Reitzes (1981) state that how a person sees himself forms the basis of their behaviour. This has been found to be the case in practice, and very strongly so. After many interviews and discussions, 20 of which resulted in the in-depth case studies presented here, my research has shown that a mere thirty minute discussion with an individual about the way they go about collecting art, and with reference to their most cherished pieces of art, can shed an incredible amount of light on their deepest interest, motivations and their overall identity.

Taking a cue from Albert & Whetten (1985), we can divide the study of a person's identity into three main elements: those of centrality, distinction and continuity. The following sections discuss the results of the present study with reference to these subjects. What is particularly interesting is that candidates were able to reveal their identity more readily by showcasing and discussing their art.

### 5.2.1 Identity and distinction

As Craib (1998) points out, one way in which we can determine a person's identity is by looking at how they see themselves as distinct from others, while at the same time highlighting certain characteristics they share with particular social groups. As we saw in sub-section 4.2.2.3, which presents the empirical results of the present study with regard to identity as distinction, art can also serve as a medium in which to express one's own individual distinctness, while at the same time allowing one to express where, in society, they feel they belong. Moreover, it is sometimes particularly important to a person's sense of identity to belong to particular social groups. For some of the candidates partaking in this study, this was achieved through belonging to particular art-related groups.

For example, art-adviser Miriam's multifaceted collection shows that she has many interests, as well as the knowledge and understanding to venture into traditional as well as modern art. This allows her to differentiate herself from those art-collectors who can only understand one genre and associate herself with people of wider knowledge:

*Researcher: "...I realised then that your collection is quite broad. You do not collect just a certain period but you have a mix. You have some contemporary*

*pieces, then some Roman sculptures; I think I also recall a Baroque style oil painting....”*

*Miriam: “Yes, I do have quite a mix in styles that is true; however I find the mix quite elegant. It is a signal of style and taste... the more you know, the more different time periods you are able to judge....” (FI\_Miriam\_60-66)*

On the other hand, Sarah, the owner of the unconventional advertising-agency mainly collects modern and contemporary photography. She shows her distinctness by being a collector who is always on the cutting edge, ahead of others. But thereby, she also shows that she belongs to the trendier elements of society, the unconventional and happening international art and fashion scenes:

*“The art I collect is modern. Often not known at the time I buy it... A lot of photography” (FI\_Sarah\_568).*

*“...And then I have some works from Sylvie... [this is the famous artist Sylvie Fleurie]”(FI\_Sarah\_576).*

*“...I have so many connections. The network I have built in the arts scene over the years is very large and very international. The other day Vivienne Westwood called up and we met for drinks, just like that...(thinking pause) And in London last week I met with the Ex-CEO of Chanel who is now doing Brand X [name withheld for data protection purposes]..... Gosh some of my best friends in the scene I have known for fifteen years or more...” (FI\_Sarah\_435-442).*

Further, Gregor, the surgeon, proudly mentions the particular artists he possesses works by, and the art-circles he moves around, wanting to show that he is proud of his patronage of the arts and that he truly belongs with the traditional professional art-collectors.

*“I am proud that I supported artists like Olaf Breunings or Andro Wekua whilst they were still young and unknown. Already back then I realised what great work they were doing. It just takes a little time for wider society to catch up and understand such advanced minds. Nowadays they are stars in the global arts scene and that I kind of discovered them makes me proud.” (Gregor\_FI\_143-147)*



*“Yes, you know we are a small group of people, you know Mirko Meier-Zölch., Peter von Klabsburg, Pjotr Saga and the Knaus-brothers,... [real names withheld for privacy protection purposes. The names Gregor mentions here are big, rich and influential Swiss family names, whose influence reaches right back over the centuries, and who were already important in the time of Gregor’s Grandfather, a famous military general who saved Switzerland from war.] They would be the first ones I would tell about a new discovery and discuss the art with. Their opinion is important to me, I mean, they are professionals.” (Gregor\_FI\_257-260)*

Finally, on a curious note, it was discovered that Fritz and Axel, who collect many of the same artists are actually friends, showing how one’s choice of art can bring one closer to a specific group of people with the same interests.

So, art-collecting can definitely serve as a medium through which to express one’s distinctiveness and show what social group one belongs to. Extrapolating from Goffman (1959), Schroeder (2005), Schau & Gilly (2003), Holt (1998) and others, we can say that art also functions as a medium, just like clothes do. In the world of art-collection, individual collectors can show which particular groups within society in general, and art in particular, they identify with, but also how they are unique and distinct from other collectors. Through their unique collection they show to others who they are, what they are interested in and how they see themselves. Hence art can take over the function of other tangible assets such as clothes or cars, where the artist acts as the brand, communicating signals for others to read, which reveal to which particular social or art-collecting group this particular individual belongs.

The above examples also illustrate how particular styles of art-collecting serve to showcase distinct identities. For instance, Peter, the IT-programmer and brother of a famous artist, seems obsessed with surf-images, and seeks them out whether they cost £1 or £1 million (CS\_Peter 75-78). Social distinction seemed to be an issue for some of the applicants. For some of them, the need to find common ground with others and celebrate similarities through collecting art was very pronounced, whereas others used art to differentiate themselves, or set themselves apart from others. In this sense, candidates could be divided into two categories. One group wanted to accentuate their distinctness and impress the researcher with their

specialist knowledge about art, setting them apart from the common individual. The other group focused on artists that the researcher knew, emphasising those aspects of their collection that brought them closer to their interviewer, making the latter feel at ease. The need to impress their distinctness upon their interviewer was more pronounced with Axel, Baruch, Fritz, Hans-Heiri, Gian, Miriam, Mark and Sarah. On the other hand, Peter, Sandra, Bruno, Eva, Evelyn, Gregor, Isa, Joe, Patrick, Richard, Urs and Ian gave the distinct sense of trying to focus on similarities, seeking common ground between themselves and their interviewer.

### 5.2.2 Identity and centrality

Goffman (1959)'s dramaturgical model suggests that being on 'life's stage', so to speak, and showing one's identity to the outside world with the help of language, clothes or gestures reveals one's core values. A candidate's art-collection and general behaviour around art-collecting fits that model, as we saw in 4.2.2.1. Upon analysing the 20 cases it became clear in every case that a discussion with a candidate about their art-works and behaviour surrounding art-collecting shed insight on that candidate's particular values.

Returning to our advertising-agency owner, Sarah, who loves fashion and is always ahead of the crowd, we find that the art she possesses confirms how highly she values being a pioneer and living in style and fashion. For instance she owns work by Sylvie Fleurie, who uses fashion imagery in her work and by Terry Richardson, who did photography of the fashion campaign for Gucci in 2002:

*Sarah: "... all my friends are from the world of art, but what also interests me is fashion..."*

*Researcher: "Aha"*

*Sarah: "And...uhm (thinking pause)...., although art is certainly the larger part, but fashion is also fascinating..." (FI\_Sarah\_146-152)*

*Sarah: "... The art I collect is modern. Often not known at the time I buy it... A lot of photography. I have a lovely piece from Ugo Rodinone hanging in the agency but really you have to be careful not to overload. Most of the works I have purchased are stored ..."*

*Researcher: “Ah really?”*

*Sarah: “Sad isn’t it...But I am not such a fan of the classical painting art form, but one that just fits into the whole, compliments the feeling of the room...And then I have some works by Sylvie .... a friend of mine... I mean Sylvie Fleurie. Gosh I wish I would have bought more when I was younger....” (FI\_Sarah\_572-579)*

For Axel, on the other hand, shocking or provocative images are an important theme. By talking to him about this, I find that he values depth and honesty in all his dealings (CS\_Axel\_98-109). All this is in keeping with existing literature on the subject, for example, by Schau and Gilly (2003), who note that buying something as valuable as art, one symbolically transports one’s inner values to the outside world.

There is further reason to think that elements in candidates’ behaviour around their art, besides their chosen art-works, may also reveal some of their core values. For instance, Urs informed me about the art he owns during the interview, but did not invite me to see his collection. This attitude shows that Urs values his privacy and the keeping of proper boundaries. I did not want to insist on viewing the art because I felt that I would be intruding into Urs’ private space and possibly crossing a line regarding proper behaviour. Instead I satisfied myself by noting down the names he gave me and searching for images by those artists on the internet (CI\_Urs\_54-61). In my notes I also read that Urs has lists of what he possesses and that he has houses in Ascona, Bern, and Zurich filled with art, including pieces by famous artists from the 1970s Swiss art-scene. This might also point to someone who values order, has a certain national pride and traditional values.

Finally, as Ullrich (2009) argues, and Schau and Gilly (2003) and Ogilvie (1987) indirectly imply, art is sometimes used by public personages to project a desired, idealised image to the world. Although I did not interview such personages, echoes of this were also observed in some of my own case-studies, where candidates project an image that they aspire to through their collection, whether or not they possess the relevant qualities.

For instance, Fritz, the owner of the bio-engineering company, admits to using art in order to project outwards the image of the innovator. He invites over other collectors, or anyone who may be interested, and shows them his newest purchases.

His self-image seems enhanced in showing others that he possesses such art-works, as if possessing them adds value to his own image. In my notes, I see that Fritz invited me to his Art-Christmas party in his loft, where it seemed to amuse him, to show all of his guests, in the greatest detail, all his new purchases and artistic discoveries. Doing this seemed to give him much pleasure, especially when people appeared to be impressed by how innovative Fritz was (CS\_Fritz\_86-89).

However, since the image Fritz projects outwardly does actually match his true identity and values, this case differs from cases of blatant public image manipulation, whereby a false image is presented to the world. Nonetheless, it constitutes an instance of someone who uses their art-collection to project a particular image to the world.

Some candidates project images which are slightly further from the truth, but to which they still aspire. Miriam, the art-advisor for the rich family in Zurich might be taken to project an image of riches and high society herself through her own collection and life-style. Joe, the engineer-turned-CEO, appears to be projecting the image of the cultured man, while he is just being awakened to these higher sensibilities within himself. And Ian, the graphic designer and owner of an advertising agency, seems to project himself as a purely creative and artistic individual, leaving out the more mundane aspects of his life.

On the other hand, one might find subtler elements of image manipulation through art revealed by this study. Gian, the architect, and Sarah, with her advertising agency, might constitute examples through incorporating art into their work and thereby presenting a more refined professional image to the world, which is a cut above others in their field.

*“I think we are an agency that also works with art - this has become kind of trendy - but I think if any odd agency wants to work together with an artist then the arts scene would react quite sceptically, as they also want to know that there is a true interest from the side of the agency. I, of course, know how I have to deal with artists so that it all works out, I mean it also has to work for the brand too, for which we work...” (FI\_Sarah\_105-109)*

*“As an architect, you can try to lift others onto the same ideas, try to push others to think in a similar fashion. However, you cannot always manage that alone with a structure, with a building. You can underline certain ideas with the volume that you create as an architect. If you know an artist, of whom you feel, maybe... You cannot always judge things in advance. Then you try to take on the artist, do things together, and create something as a whole that underlines the progressive ideas of that artist.” (FI\_Gian\_101-112)*

Since art is such a great medium through which to project personal identity, it is natural, as Mandel (Mandel, 2003) notes, to wonder whether collectors might become more vulnerable to criticism through revealing their art-collection, and so their innermost values, to others. I have found no evidence of this in the present study. All candidates talked about their experiences with art in the best possible way.

Overall, the research might reveal much about their values and how they want to be seen. In that way, art-possession also are, as Bauman (2001) refers to consumption goods, “an expression of the most inner me”.

### **5.2.3 Identity and continuity**

Erikson (1959) introduces the concept of personal identity as something which is in a constant state of becoming as an individual gathers life-experience. Marcia (1966), Kroger (2000) and Jones & McEwen (2000) further develop this theme.

It would be natural to suppose that the behaviour of art-collectors would also adjust accordingly as they moved through different stages of identity formation. While each individual collector, no doubt, went on their own journey of identity formation, which must have been reflected in their choice of art, no overall patterns of changes in behaviour at different stages of life emerged in this empirical study, nor were such patterns actively sought for. Some collectors were surrounded by art from an early age, others came into contact with it later in their lives. And in most cases, candidates started collecting when they made their first money, as we saw in 4.2.2.2, rather than due to some special occasion.

One notable exception is Joe, the person who became a CEO. He started collecting art just before he undertook his CEO job. He saw the activity as some kind of training-ground for his emotional competence and notes that art helped him make it through this challenging period of professional and personal change (FI\_Joe\_397-407):

*Researcher: "... So back then, you mentioned that you wanted to change your apartment form the current very functional kind of state to a more emotionally related apartment."*

*Joe: "Yes."*

*Researcher: "And to achieve that you wanted to use art."*

*Joe: "Wow, the intelligent things I said last time!"*

*Researcher: "Yes, you mentioned this last time."*

*Joe: "That's good."*

*Researcher: "Which means, you changed or wanted to change from a functional man to a more emotional man. Is this in any way related with your job? ..."*

*Joe: "... that I now think that emotions are what count in life." (FI\_Joe\_471-493)*

Joe's example shows a clear correlation between deeper changes in a person's sense of identity and new patterns of behaviour around art-collecting. However, this is but one case, and further research would have to be done to study this topic at more depth.

#### **5.2.4 Originality of results: Summary**

This study illustrates the relevance of art, alongside that person's other important possessions, such as their clothes, car, house, etc, as an indicator of a person's identity, distinctness, and core values. The artworks on an art-collector's walls might say quite a lot about that person's identity, and a short conversation about them can be surprisingly revealing about their collector's innermost self.

In particular, a person's art-collection and method of collecting art might help to reveal their sense of being a distinct individual, which is expressed in how they set themselves apart from others through their collections, as well as and what social

groups they choose to show they thereby belong to. Moreover, it might reveal their core values, those qualities they admire in others and aspire to in themselves, irrespective of whether or not they already possess those qualities.

The many distinct peculiarities of the various collectors interviewed here – their different ways of collecting art and varying genre interests – indicate that collecting art is not merely a sign of belonging to a certain social background, but reveals behaviour particular to each collector, which is informative as to that person's distinct personality and values. Indeed, art has become much more mainstream and accessible today, with the advent of the internet, and so being interested in art, per se, is not such a mark of higher cultural and social status as it was only a decade ago.

Furthermore, with the help of the CF-model, the connection between a person's identity and their levels of fulfilment in life can be easily elucidated, if we remember that a person's identity and values inform their behaviour and habits, and so, eventually filter down to their natural competencies and how they put these to use. And as the CF-model suggests, knowledge and correct employment of one's own natural competencies is crucial to fulfilment.

### **5.3 Fulfilment: meaning and originality of results**

#### **5.3.1 Influences on fulfilment**

As argued in chapter 2 (see also Vella-Brodrick et al., 2008), the three most important components of subjective well-being and fulfilment are the experiences of pleasure, engagement and meaning. The last two elements are seen by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as the most important factors for long-lasting overall fulfilment, and need to be developed in a way that suits the nature of the individual.

The candidates participating in this research who appear to exhibit perfectly congruent competencies also seem to engage with life more fully gaining greater pleasure and meaning from all their activities.

For instance, Patrick, the engineer, speaks with great enthusiasm about his love of processes:

*“...all this technological stuff is like a fetish for me. It is probably not important to the world but, for me, all this is very interesting and important.” (FI\_Patrick\_90-92)*

Patrick finds engagement and meaning both in his working life and in his art-collecting activities by understanding all he can about different technical processes. Patrick’s competencies are congruent, allowing him to derive pleasure both from his work and his leisure activities.

As argued earlier, there are certain views with respect to fulfilment that are not consistent with the CF model: Viewing fulfilment as being predominantly caused by stable character traits, by external events, or by a social comparison perspective. These alternative views will be explored with respect to the empirical results, showing that the present research corroborates the CF model view.

### **5.3.2 Character traits influencing fulfilment**

It was considered very important to this project, as per Money et al. (2008) to understand people’s lives and factors associated with satisfaction, so every effort was made, as per Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), to study and understand the strengths of the candidates taking part in this research. Authors, such as Lykken and Tellegen (1996), Brickman et al. (1978) or Costa and McCrae (1980), see personal fulfilment as something caused by relatively stable character traits, and many authors have tried to find the character strengths that might be associated with fulfilment. Baron (2000), Snyder (2002), Taylor et al. (2000), Emmons and Hill (2001), McCullough, (2000), and Park et al. (2004) have all come up with their own list of character strengths, or dispositions, that show a robust correlation to fulfilment.

However, lists of pre-defined strengths, which in effect are traits, might not be so fruitful. What the authors listed have in common is that they tend to perceive these strengths as relatively stable traits that may not be changed easily. While this work, of course, does not set out to deny traits, the perspective is different: It does not look at what people are, but what they do. Discussions with candidates partaking in this research suggest that there are some individual competencies that might be



associated with specific activities, presumably leading to more control over their chances at fulfilment in life.

It might also be possible to consciously set out to develop competencies. One candidate set out to do this in their non-working life, as well as, wherever possible, in their working life. This is the example of Joe, the engineer who became a CEO. He underwent great change, moving away from his thoroughgoing rationalistic, materialistic ways to a more imaginative and emotionally involved way of thinking. This move arguably offers him an essential skill in order to succeed in his new role as CEO, where he needs to be able to relate to and inspire others. As he puts it, he is becoming...

*“...something else – I do not know what – which is more emotionally oriented than what I was before” (FI\_Joe\_107-109) “...the art adds value to my personality” (FI\_Joe\_147).*

Joe now thinks that the important things in life, such as love, emotions and art, are not really comprehensible or understandable and tries to give this qualitative aspect in life more room to grow. He believes that his engineer’s soul is changing and that, while until now he only had empty walls in his house, he now wants to add some colour in his life, which he does with the help of art in his apartment (JL\_CS\_105-111).

Saying that natural competencies can be developed means that an entrepreneur might work on certain of their own natural propensities, or skills – namely those which will help them in their working life – and train them to the degree that they subconsciously proceduralise (Anderson, 1990, p. 18f.) behaviours which make them uniquely able to handle certain activities and situations. For instance, Urs probably had the potential within him of being able to mingle with very different social circles. However, it was the fact that he developed that potential, by becoming interested in other people, learning to understand and train his social skills, and subsequently taking advantage of them in his work – a process, moreover that he enjoyed very much – that gave him the success and satisfaction he enjoyed in his working life.

Thus, a result of this study is that it might be important to understand that people may have unique, individual competencies, which are amenable to development by activity. Thus individuals should not be classified simply according to relatively stable traits (i.e., “character strengths”), but the addition of a natural competency profile can show in what way an individual can actively develop and employ further aspects of themselves to find fulfilment. This additional layer of competencies, moreover, provides a more sensitive picture, a unique and individual profile for each person.

Even though the candidates in this research who consider themselves fulfilled do not appear to have consciously chosen to follow this path, only realising that they acted in the right way during the interview, this research shows in an original way, through highlighting the example of these candidates, that individuals could influence fulfilment.

For example, Baruch, the owner of the luxury fashion house, notes:

*“Through the collection of art I have discovered that I can develop myself – develop my character, get to know myself better and also get to know my surroundings better. I can broaden my mind, broaden my views through art.” (FI\_Baruch\_571-573)*

*“...in general, I would say that the art helps me especially socially. Just because it makes me so much more open, so much more approachable and understanding. I guess it also has effects on how I treat staff, or approach clients.... I am not sure; I have never really thought about this in detail.” (FI\_Baruch\_598-601)*

Similarly, I talked at length about building competencies with Urs, the entrepreneur, being able to handle different surroundings, and about the competencies required and employed in business. During the focused interview (FI\_Urs\_686-710), Urs remarks that he has met a lot of very different people with varying views in the art scene and that this has made him become very open-minded and liberal and increased his understanding on many subjects. He has also learnt not to deliberate for too long but to use his instinct, which he trusts highly. These competencies allowed him to do well in his businesses, which in turn provided a further basis from which to make the right choices in life:

*Researcher: “Great. So overall, would you say that collecting art and being interested in other worlds besides the business-world helped you to become the successful entrepreneur you are now?”*

*Urs: “Yes, sure. But also vice versa.... my business-thinking, say, probably helped me in this creative world in South-France not to totally loose myself ... in decadence I mean. So both parts or, let’s say, all these different kind of worlds and what I learned in them in a way pushed me somehow upwards to be successful or, say, fulfilled in all these different roles in life... (FI\_Urs\_712-718)*

Finally, let us look at Fritz, the owner of the innovative bio-engineering company, who reports himself as satisfied, but not successful, hence has not quite achieved overall fulfilment as defined here. He notes that, through art, he is urged to remain open to new opinions and attitudes towards the world (CS\_Fritz\_142-143), Fritz believes that new and upcoming artists somehow keep him fresh and young and that his interest in art has allowed him to be open to new innovative processes and fresh opinions in life and at work (CS\_Fritz\_146-152). While innovation and open-mindedness are important in Fritz’ line of work, his lack of marketing and sales competencies seems to hold him back. This suggests that the path to fulfilment for Fritz is either to learn such skills and develop them into competencies, or to delegate, or move into a line of work that does not require marketing competencies.

The right action toward greater fulfilment, according to the CF-model is:

Know about the positive effects on your own happiness of utilising your natural competencies, and design your working life such that the competencies required are congruent to your natural competencies.

Know how to understand and discover your own natural competencies, particularly as they are displayed in your much-loved non-working life activities.

Develop your natural competencies in your non-working life.

### **5.3.3 Events influencing fulfilment**

There has been a longstanding tradition in psychology that external events have a strong positive or negative influence on long-term satisfaction and fulfilment. Behaviourism (Graham, 2000), for example, has been promoting this tradition.

Living beings have been conceptualised mainly as organisms that react to “stimuli” or events coming from outside. Even contemporary authors, for example, Lucas et al. (2003), Wengle (1986), Wortman and Silver (1987), and Clark et al. (2004), show that certain external events can have a strong positive or negative influence on long-term satisfaction and fulfilment. Later, this concept changed somewhat as the relevance of inner processes like cognition, valuing, motivation, and emotion came into play. Still, there was not much research about inner strengths that may be an important source of fulfilment and that might be subject to change and progress, and development. Research was more interested in distress and disease than in well-being (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003, p. 9). In line with this relatively new strand of thought, this research also attempts to lend support to the idea that one’s actions, such as developing one’s natural competencies and matching them to those required in one’s working life, can also positively influence fulfilment, as already outlined in section 5.3.1.

#### **5.3.4 Attitude or relative point of view influencing fulfilment**

Finally, there has also been some tradition in viewing the level of fulfilment an individual experiences as depending on their relative point of view or perception of themselves relative to their peers (Brickman et al. (1978), Schneider (1975), Easterlin (1973), Cameron et al. (1973). This perspective strongly relates to social identity (Craib, 1998, p. 44f.), and it places great importance on an individual’s relative social position for that individual’s happiness. Andrews and Withey (1976) note, in particular, that what is most important to an individual’s fulfilment is how they assess their current status and situation compared to others who, in their own view, would have had the same start in life (see also Brickman, 1975; Diener & Seligman, 2004, p. 10f.). Indeed, as has been shown earlier, social distinction seems to be an issue of some of the subjects participating in this research. However, it is not the only one, as even those subjects interested in some sense of social distinction exhibited a true and deep interest in art collection.

In contrast to these views seeing fulfilment as determined by the perception of external aspects (‘outside-in’ view), the CF-model stands in line with an alternative approach to fulfilment, from ‘inside-out’. Whereas the thought that one has done

better compared to someone else might bring some short-lived sense of pleasure and confirmation, the CF-model helps an individual to actively work on their own success and satisfaction over a longer period of time, and offers an active route to longer-lasting fulfilment, irrespective of what others are doing.

An interesting case to consider in this context is that of Joe, who recently became a CEO. As this happened, he started to actively alter his self-perception and attitudes toward his social sphere, projecting himself differently:

*Joe: "In whatever society you are, you are probably evaluated, or accepted by others, because of the picture, the idea, the emotions you show off."*

*Researcher: "Yes. Absolutely."*

*Joe: "And because of this..., just take the topic of the appropriate car (laughs). I am no longer indifferent to what picture I exude with the car I drive. On the contrary. I now think about what I want to say or express, with the type of car I drive". (FI\_Joe\_413-420)*

### **5.3.5 Originality of results: Summary**

This research shows that by discovering their natural competencies and by seeking to achieve greater congruence between natural and required competencies individuals can take an active role in achieving greater fulfilment in life. It shows that, by discovering, developing and employing their natural competencies in their daily work, individuals can engage with life more fully and derive pleasure and meaning from their work, thus taking an active role in finding fulfilment. If they succeed in this, they tend to be more creative and more motivated; therefore the issue also has a managerial dimension. From a management point of view, enhanced creativity of employees might improve the firm's innovation power.

Positive psychology tends to place great emphasis on character strengths, which it sees as unchangeable, when it comes to fulfilment. The present research aims to shift that focus to the development and correct employment of natural competencies, which, being more amenable to training and development, might provide a more fruitful route through which the individual can actively pursue fulfilment in life.

## 5.4 Working and non-working life: meaning and originality of results

### 5.4.1 Impact of working life and non-working life on overall fulfilment

While it is increasingly recognised over the past 25 five years that an individual's working life has an impact on their overall fulfilment, authors such as Near et al. (1980), Hart (1999), Money et al. (2008), and Seligman et al. (2005) do elucidate sufficiently clearly the connection between work and fulfilment in life. Non-working life, of course, has also impact on fulfilment. Markus (1977) and Barnett and Hyde (2001) see having different roles in one's working and non-working life as beneficial in terms of fulfilment. For, as Markus (1977) explains, energy produced in one field can be deployed towards the other. The present research confirms that the candidates who channel the energy and skills acquired in their non-working life into their working life and vice versa seem more fulfilled:

An illustrative example is that of Urs, who notes that by mingling with people in the art-world he felt exposed to very different dynamics, views and values, which fascinated him (FI\_Urs\_604-605). He admits that he used everything that he learned in business in his encounters with the art-world and vice versa (FI\_Urs\_715-718).

Next, for the luxury-fashion house owner, Baruch, collecting art is something like the third pillar alongside business and family. He claims that the art-world widens his horizons, expands his social circle and generally offers him a fresh outlook in life (CS\_Baruch\_143-146). In accordance with Baruch's highly developed aesthetic sense, which is also required for success in his professional life, he notes that art in itself invigorates him...

*"...mostly though the appearance of the art work, its beauty, its ... energy."*  
(FI\_Baruch\_222)

In contrast, Bruno, the retired owner of a medical company, found, through art-collecting, a release from the strict rules of correctness that he had to follow in his work, and which were passed down by his family, and able to express a more unconventional side of his personality (CS\_Bruno\_152-154):

*"Yes, now that I think of it, I always found an escape route from normal daily life somewhere. I always found some way to escape, some place to breathe freely."*  
(FI\_573-574)

Similarly, the surgeon, Gregor, enjoys immersing himself in a different world through art-collecting, a feeling he knows well from his family who collected art before him. He enjoys, besides possessing medical expertise, to share his artistic knowledge with prominent gallerists and curators (CS\_Gregor\_84-86).

This research thus suggests that occupying more than one role in life and fully engaging in different activities on a regular basis, may lead to greater fulfilment than confining oneself to a single role or field of action. This is what the CF-model says as it highlights, in particular, the benefit of discovering, training and developing one's competencies in one's non-working life and using them to find greater success and satisfaction in one's working life.

A related question is whether it is the "spill over" or the compensation approach, according to Banner and Himelfarb (1985), and as discussed in chapter 2, which is more likely to lead to fulfilment.

The present empirical research suggests that this distinction might not be important in practice. As long as the leisure activity engaged in allows for the development of those competencies which are both natural and required by the individual to succeed at work, it does not matter whether the particular leisure activity is similar or different in nature to the individual's job. It might be very different on a superficial level but very similar in that similar competencies (i.e., the natural competencies) are utilised in both kinds of activities. So what matters is that the natural competencies thereby developed be congruent to those required at work. An IT-consultant, for example, could benefit by engaging in some form of creative activity, such as painting, in his spare time, as long as this allowed him to hone his existing competencies of precision and attention to detail – and of creativity, which might be an important part of programming too (Rist, 1986, p. 30f.) It is the employment of the relevant competencies that matters, not the activity itself.

An example of this in practice can be found in Urs, the entrepreneur. Urs trained his competencies in his non-working life, learning to understand all kinds of people and

social circles. This led him to great success and satisfaction in his business-life, but also fed back into his non-working activities, and has led him to an overall sense of fulfilment in life:

*Researcher: "Great. So overall, would you say that collecting art and being interested in other worlds besides the business-world helped you to become the successful entrepreneur you are now?"*

*Urs: "Yes, sure. But also vice versa.... my business-thinking or say, helped me probably in the creative world in South-France not to totally loose myself ... in decadence I mean. So both parts or let's say all these different kind of worlds and what I learned in them in a way pushed me somehow up to be successful or say, satisfied in all these different roles in life..." (FI\_Urs\_712-718)*

Peter, on the other hand, is developing totally different competencies in his non-working life than those required from him to succeed at work. As a result, he is not very fulfilled in life.

*Peter: "...uhm... exactitude and control, control (Peter clears his throat) Excuse me!...and control a lot of... uhm...control a lot of things. You know working at a high level of... uhm...of...uhm...performance and...and, uhm...in an environment that is perhaps a critical system."*

*Researcher: "Yeh."*

*Peter: "Whereas something such as...uhm... collecting is perhaps more random and you're perhaps doing things more spontaneously. Uhm...and so there is quite perhaps a big difference that way." (FI\_Peter\_447-455)*

The CF-model illustrates that it is not whether an individual's leisure activities match or oppose those in which they engage on a daily basis at work, but rather how they carry out those activities, namely whether they use them to discover and train their natural competencies outside their working hours and whether they, then, make sure that the competencies required of them at work are congruent to their own natural competencies.



Finally, the results of the study shed some light on the question of the relevance of values and competencies for fulfilment. Dawis and Lofquist (1984), for example, conjecture that the more one's working life is in congruence with one's individual values, the greater one's sense of fulfilment. The question is whether it is congruence in values or congruence in competencies which is more important for overall fulfilment, and whether there is a distinction to be made here.

The empirical results indicate that a distinction can be made: a candidate can be fulfilled if their natural competencies are congruent to those required at work, even when their working- and non-working life-values seem to be considerably different on a superficial level, and vice versa.

The first eventuality is most clearly illustrated by the case of Bruno, the former owner of a company specialising in medical supplies. An important value in Bruno's working life is strict correctness and great respect for conventions, rules and regulations (FI\_Bruno\_199-206). On the other hand, Bruno is attracted to art-collecting for its unconventional element:

*"... many of the artists to which I am drawn are outcasts in society to some extent. All of them have trouble fitting in. They are all fighting against our social structures... [Thinking pause] But I do not. I feel very comfortable in this world. I have never stood out in an odd way. That is very important to me too. I do not like to draw unwanted attention to myself..." (FI\_Bruno\_293-297)*

We see, here, that on the one hand Bruno values art and artists who are unconventional, revolutionary, stand out or are outcasts. On the other hand Bruno is someone for whom it is very important to respect convention and not to draw attention to him and this is also what is required of him at work. One may say that his values are somewhat divided, or at least more complex than what they appear to be at work. Strictly, we have a discrepancy between Bruno's more complex personal values, and the simpler values of his work-place. Nonetheless, Bruno judges himself as successful and satisfied, so overall fulfilled, in accordance with the fact that his natural competencies are congruent, for he collects art in a structured, organised and methodical way, much like he must behave at work. The activity of art collection leaves room for this type of behaviour, and getting in

contact with unconventional people does not seem to contradict this. Getting in contact with unconventional people refers to the social contact and to the spectre of art-related impressions and experiences Bruno is able to make. It does not, in any way, preclude a deliberate and methodological way of approaching and collecting art. So, it seems that an absolutely exact match between personal and work values is not required for fulfilment, as long one's competencies are congruent.

Conversely, even when a candidate's personal values strictly match those of his work, the candidate might still fail to find fulfilment. This phenomenon is most easily seen in candidates who have their own business, and thereby transfer their own personal values into their field of work. This is the case with Richard, the architect whose competencies revolve around building trusting relationships with others. For Richard, human contact is very important, so, being the boss, he also places great importance in this in his field of work:

*"I think it just has to click. If someone turns up with a great CV, for me that does not suffice alone to be able to decide that I want to work with that person. The chemistry must be there. I need to feel connected with that person in some way."*  
(FI\_Richard\_458-460)

Similarly, when it comes to art-collecting he states that it is more or less the artist behind the work, who is important (CS\_Richard\_284-285). Richard is satisfied with his work (FI\_Richard\_721) but does not consider himself successful, hence does not count as overall fulfilled. In the context of this research, the reason for this might be that his natural and required competencies do not match, as he seems to like the obsessive dedication to a project that he perceives success in the field of architecture to require.

While an overall congruence between work and individual values is certainly more likely to lead to fulfilment, the gathered empirical data suggest that it is congruence in competencies rather than values that provides a clearer picture, guiding an individual toward fulfilment, defined as the combination of both success and satisfaction at work, as the CF-model suggests. Values are important, though, because they closely relate to the conveyance of meaning which (as has been described earlier) in turn is vital for the experience of natural competencies.

#### 5.4.2 Fulfilment and job-success

Work by Diener and Biswas-Diener (2002), Cropanzano and Wright (1999), Frederickson (2001) and others indicate that there is a positive spiral which can be generated as success and fulfilment feed off each other generating greater levels of success and satisfaction, hence, greater fulfilment. However, this only works when an individual is already in such a positive spiral. The question is what to do to enter such a beneficial state in the first place.

The results of the current empirical research indicate that some individuals simply live satisfied, successful lives. These individuals have somehow managed to get this positive spiral going in their lives and can henceforth maintain it without great effort.

Urs, the entrepreneur, is a striking example, as is Sandra, the medical doctor, who seems generally happy, and who judges herself as successful and satisfied at work and with her role as a mother to two small girls. It certainly seems to an outsider as if everything worked out in her life without much effort and as if positive things just came to her.

But what if an individual is not so lucky, for example as in the case of the IT-consultant Peter, who has not had a regular job as a software-consultant for a few years, is constantly yearning after art-works he cannot afford, and who seems generally quite unhappy?

The CF-model could provide an answer as to how to move forward from this unhappy state and enter a more positive spiral. By following this model, Peter could lead his career towards those areas where his natural competencies lie, which involve a greater degree of spontaneity and intuitive initiative than his chosen job allows for. By observing how he acts in his non-work activities, Peter could take his life in a more satisfying and successful direction. In this way, he could leave the negative spiral in which he currently finds himself and move into a positive spiral of success and satisfaction.

It is, of course, very difficult to step out of a negative spiral of failure and dissatisfaction and jump into its positive counterpart of fulfilment and success, and the first step is the hardest. However, active steps must be taken and conscious

decisions made to affect any kind of change. The CF-model instructs individuals to focus on the leisure activities that they enjoy, allowing them to see what they are good at and to experience some initial satisfaction. This may lead to a more positive attitude arising from deep within the individual, which can slowly infect other areas of their life. The CF-model can also be of concrete assistance in helping the individual to see what truly gives them a sense of meaning and pleasure in life, and choose a job that can support a positive spiral of success and fulfilment.

A problem might be for some individuals to identify what truly gives them a sense of meaning and pleasure in life. This is not expected to be straightforward because, as described earlier, it may be difficult to put natural competencies into words, and they might even be unconscious, at least in part. Various techniques might be used for trying to identify natural competencies, though these have not been within the focus of this work. An example is the “good things in life” exercise (Seligman, Parks & Steen, 2006, p. 280), where subjects might record for a given time span three good things per day, and why they happened to them. This, in turn, might lead to identification of specific patterns of action associated with positive emotions.

The problem, might also arise because the person in question simply has little spare time, or if so, this time is mainly used for relaxation and recovery. In cases like this it might be even more difficult to identify natural competencies since they tend not to be used during leisure time either. Thus, more effort is needed in these cases, possibly professional coaching might be useful (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000, p. 30f.).

### **5.4.3 Originality of results: Summary**

Existing literature reviewed here tends to focus on working life but has not paid much attention to the question of the extent to which one’s working life and non-working life (more specifically: leisure activities) bear an important connection to each other. For example, the literature on work-life balance (Stock-Homburg & Roederer, 2009, p. 23f.) tends to ask what companies can do for a better work-life balance of employees, but it does not pay that much attention to leisure activities since these are hardly amenable to work-life balance activities of a company (an exception may be, for example, company-facilitated sports activities).

The CF-model focuses exactly on that. It suggests how the two fields might be connected and exactly how one's activities outside of work can help increase one's levels of success and satisfaction in the work field leading to greater fulfilment. The present study draws attention to the fact that it might be easier to discover, develop and sharpen one's natural competencies whilst engaged in a much loved enjoyable leisure activity than it is to do so under pressure at work. In the free environment outside of work, individuals may get a better glimpse of their natural competencies; in addition, they may be more motivated to develop these competencies and to later seek opportunities to employ them, in a career that allows them, ultimately, to be more successful.

Finally, the CF-model suggests how an individual that lacks motivation and has generally fallen into a rather depressed state or downward spiral with respect to their work can pick themselves up again and acquire the necessary intrinsic motivation to do well. The suggestion is that such an individual tries to find out what activities they are naturally motivated to pursue in their non-working time and discover their natural competencies by observing or recording these activities, as, for example, using the "good things in life" exercise. Then they can consciously train these competencies and employ them in their working life in order to generate a greater sense of intrinsic motivation, and eventually achieve the success and satisfaction that can put them into a positive upward spiral.

Of course, employing natural competencies, once identified, in working life may not be a straightforward process either. It may require considerable effort to discover what such an application of a natural competency looks like. This touches upon the more general problem of "transfer" of a skill or competency from one domain of action to another (Marini & Genereux, 1995, p.2f.).

For example, the natural competency of "structured, organised and deliberate way of approaching complex issues" might be different with respect to the nature of these issues. Collecting art may involve watching a complex, tangled market in order to be able to make the right decisions at the right time. In the working environment, watching a market may be a similar complex activity, but certain features might add to complexity, as, for example, the dynamics of its development.

Markets may change rapidly, as new competitors enter, or demand raises or drops, and this situation might be very different from the situation on the art market (as far as the subject is concerned). So, due to subtleties that are not evident at first glance, transferring natural competencies from the non-working world to the working world might not be straightforward. Nevertheless, the basic message of this research recommends trying to do this because it might be better to yield an imperfect match between the two worlds, than no match at all.

## **5.5 Skill and Competency Development: meaning and originality of results**

### **5.5.1 Sharpening competencies**

Within the last few years, many authors, such as Kolb (1984), Morrison & Hock (1986) and McCauley et al. (1994) to name a few, have discussed and promoted practice-based, experiential skill development. Further helpful advice is provided by Whetten et al. (2000) who note that skills could slowly develop into competencies through constant and prolonged practical training. In any case, most authors on this subject seem to promote constant training as key to experiencing success. What appears to be left out is that one's non-working life can be a great arena for such practical training to take place. This study suggests that competencies might develop just as much in the non-working arena as they can through practical work-experience.

### **5.5.2 Competency-training in non-working life**

As we saw in the literature review, discussions on skill-development does not focus on the possible positive effects of leisure activities on the building of competencies for working individuals. *The value of* competence-building through leisure activities is noted in adolescents, whereas, for working adults, skill and competency-development discussions focus on work-experience. The possibility of competency development for adults outside of work seems to receive little attention.

The present study highlights that many successful working adults trained those of their competencies that led them to succeed at work as well as outside the work-field. Out of all 20 art-collectors interviewed, the successful ones developed their competencies both in and out of their working life. This was the case for, e.g., Fritz,

Axel, Baruch, Isa, Sarah, Richard and Urs. For instance, Axel, the ex-owner of fashion agencies that liaise fashion-labels with fashion-producers remarks that he learned to trust in his gut-feeling and developed his judgment on good design and style in his non-working life, through his involvement with art:

*Axel: “No. It is really difficult to explain. No, you cannot put it that way. You see, each season four to five hundred different types of accessories would arrive. Certainly, I was never alone. There was usually someone there to assist me when the samples arrived. However, each season, right at the beginning, I would always take out some items and put them in the cellar straight away. “*

*Researcher: “Items that you did not like?”*

*Axel: “Yes, items I could not connect with. Things I found so awful that I just could not bring myself to sell them to somebody. ... Yes, I have probably learned to really trust my feeling in the art world, where I could often say, yes, this was the right decision, made from the bottom of my heart” (FI\_Axel\_244-254).*

For some, leisure activities are the only avenue for further developing a certain competence, because at that point in their lives, their job offers no such opportunities. Joe is one such example. As an engineer, he had fewer work-opportunities to develop his latent emotional competencies, which are important in his new role as CEO. However, he reports having sought opportunities to develop these competencies outside of work throughout his life, even before he began collecting art:

*Joe: “However in reality I also believe that engineers have certain deficiencies, certain shortcomings. And that is exactly it. I never ever felt the way the other men at the table did. Of course, at the ETH there were many students that thought, hey we are engineers and the only ones who know how to solve problems, but in the end I only studied engineering because I am good at maths and with mathematics you do not have to learn so much off by heart.”*

*Researcher: “Yes. Ok.”*

*Joe: “I find it far more interesting to...whatever... go to concerts, or go hiking, enjoy nature or visit a gallery. You know to indulge yourself with other things.*

*Things where emotions are important and not only primitive, basic things like analytical thinking.”*

*Researcher: “But as CEO... as CEO you have that. You should be doing both.”*

*Joe: “Yes?”*

*Researcher: “You have to understand your product completely but also you have to be emotionally extremely strong.”*

*Joe: “Absolutely. When I think about it, I have often trained also this side, [I] remember that after University, I went to South America, just to train also this emotional side of me.... it was much fun and now helps also in my job...”  
(FI\_Joe\_549-571)*

Once he landed the CEO post, Joe continued developing these skills by indulging in art-collecting

So the present research indicates that successful and satisfied candidates used their non-working activities consciously and unconsciously to train some of the competencies, which were later employed in their work field. The candidates who admitted to train their competencies outside of work said that they had much fun and were very motivated in doing so, as they saw what they were doing as a freely chosen leisure activity, offering them great joy which leads to the best learning result. Hence the present study also suggests that training competencies outside of work can be a source of enjoyment and fun, which is likely to motivate individuals to practice more often and for longer periods, as well as allow individuals to carry that sense of motivation through to their work.

### **5.5.3 The right career path**

There is much focus in the literature on career exploration and coaching (e.g. (Holland, 1980; Schein, 1978). These are seen as being central to future career decisions and successful development. The main message of these writings is to concentrate on one’s strengths. However in discussing this subject with candidates in their 40s, who are now beginning to think about the second half of their working life and are wondering which way to go next, that is, what the strengths are exactly. The idea that one’s natural competencies may shine through in one’s non-working



activities is corroborated by the fact that results from psychological profile and competency tests carried out on employees by companies seem to match those that can be glimpsed from observing a person's behaviour in their non-working life. For instance, Patrick, who is employed as an engineer overseeing major projects in a manufacturing company, told me that various professional tests have shown him exactly what we discovered together about his natural competencies – namely that he is an engineer who understands and is interested in the entire life-cycle of a product:

*Patrick: "...one of the more interesting ones [tests] was a few years ago... it was trying to match our characteristics to where we fitted in project life cycles. Have you seen life cycles, where you start with a – it could be a circle – where you start with a conceptual design or just the idea of a need? Working right through developing it, bonding it, building it, selling it, until you...well, right through to decommissioning it even; and that happens in practically all of these projects, for certain, because they have to be demolished after maybe 30 years.... So it is a well-designed cycle. When we did testing to see where people like working best, we generally found that people liked doing one aspect of it. Something like, the conceptual design, or the project management of building it, or the maintaining of it, or whatever... [...] And uhm... most people have, really, one peak, and maybe a secondary one. And I, along with only another two or three percent of the sample, actually had three peaks, one at the conceptual stage, one at the project management stage and one at the, sort of, the making it better later on stage."*

*Researcher: "Ok."*

*Patrick: "I had peaks of interest right through the cycle, which is very rare according to the psychologist. So maybe I am more left and right brained, more balanced or something. "*

*Researcher: "Ok."*

*Patrick: "I am not just focusing on one thing or another. Maybe there is a tie in there or something."(Patrick\_FI\_532-553)*

Another discussion with Patrick shows the same theme:

*Researcher: “Ah, so you are interested in the whole. The whole, like ‘cycle’, means from the beginning up until maintaining the project, everything is in – ”*  
*[Researcher is interrupted by Patrick]*

*Patrick: “Yeah, I am not so interested in maintaining things. But I have been involved in the decommissioning of nuclear plants so... And I wasn’t uninterested whenever that came up, a lot of people aren’t interested in that side of things at all because they do not see it as making something.” (Patrick\_FI\_557-566)*

Hence, by observing Patrick’s art-collecting behaviour, we have arrived at the same conclusions about his natural competencies as those that resulted from his psychometric tests.

This research also indicates that a working individual undergoing a change of direction or crisis at work may assess the situation very quickly and choose the right path for the future, by looking at what they are naturally inclined to do outside of work, what they are good at, and what gives them joy. This method may constitute a faster and more direct way for an individual to determine which direction to take at a crisis point, half-way through their working life, in order to achieve greater success and satisfaction.

#### **5.5.4 Self-efficacy beliefs as related to success**

As Bandura and Wood (1989, see also Bandura, 1986) note, having a positive self-image and outlook on life seems to increase one’s chances of success and overall fulfilment. They note that belief in one’s self-efficacy is relevant to success because it can affect the type of environment one selects or creates, and the extent to which one can visualise oneself as successful in it. The result is that individuals with a higher level of self-efficacy belief are more successful, whereas individuals with lower self-belief tend to choose unchallenging jobs and to rather fall into depression.

The question, however, is how an individual can increase their self-efficacy beliefs, begin to interact more positively with their environment, and so have better chances at being successful – especially if they are currently experiencing low self-esteem and depression.

Of course, problems of low self esteem and depression may call for some therapeutic intervention. But for “mild” cases not clinically relevant, again, the CF-model may offer a way forward. Firstly, when an individual first notices and then focuses on their natural competencies, their belief in their own efficacy could be thereby augmented and form a good starting point for a new positive turn. This, in turn, might encourage these individuals to seek employment where their competencies match those required by the job, hence where they can do what they are best at and this, in turn, could lead to increased levels of success and satisfaction, which will lead to an increased desire to further train the right competencies. In this way, their self-efficacy beliefs could be increased yet more and a positive upward spiral can be initiated towards fulfilment.

### **5.5.5 Originality of results: Summary**

Although existing research emphasises the importance of practical training for skill- and competency-development, it seems to ignore the value of non-working activities as a fruitful area for the identification and development of competencies in working adults. Rather than undergo elaborate tests, individuals can discover their natural competencies by looking at what they love to do in their non-working time, and, more importantly, how they like to engage with it. Moreover, leisure activities provide a very motivating environment for the training of those natural competencies that may be required for one to progress in one’s career. This is especially valuable when one’s current employment offers no avenues for such training.

Moreover, the present study suggests that the focus should shift from relatively fixed character strengths to competencies, as sensitive to the uniqueness of each individual, as well as amenable to training and development, and so possibly able to provide a more fruitful and hopeful avenue for identifying those individual strengths that might lead to fulfilment.

Finally, the training of one’s natural competencies outside of work can also allow one to jump-start the positive spiral of self-belief, success and satisfaction which is discussed in the literature, yet, for which little instruction is given. The CF-model may encourage individuals to generate such a positive spiral when it is not already

present, by focusing on their natural competencies and by generating congruence between natural and required competencies.

## **5.6 Summary of chapter 5**

This chapter places the empirical results of this study in the context of existing research in the fields of identity, fulfilment, working and non-working life, and competency-development, juxtaposing present findings with existing theories. The structure of the discussion basically follows that of the literature exposition in chapter 2, in order to clearly elucidate how this study enriches each of the topics that inform the research. Real-life examples, taken from the empirical data, are used to underline particular points. These sometimes show how existing theories work in practice, bringing these theories to life. And, sometimes, they offer support to new ideas arising from this study. The key outcome of this entire project is summarised in the CF-model, which simply and clearly presents the connection between natural competencies, work and fulfilment.

## 6 Implications

### 6.1 The implications of these findings for theory and practice

As we saw in the previous chapter, the empirical results of this research can shed light on, and fill certain gaps in positive psychology, identity theory and the working life and skill-development in working adults. The following pages discuss the implications of this research for those particular aspects of those fields, where these new findings can add value and answer unaddressed questions.

In each section, the discussion is two-fold: it first focuses on the implications of the results of this study for theory (labelled “theory” in the subsequent sections), and then on their practical applications (labelled “practice”). In those latter sections, examples are provided to help illustrate what the results of this research really mean for an individual and how this knowledge could be applied. This chapter loosely follows the structure of chapters 2 and 5, going through the practical and theoretical implications for the four topics in the literature: identity, fulfilment, working and non-working life and competency-development. Discussion is limited to those aspects of those topics for which this study seems to have important practical and theoretical consequences.

### 6.2 Identity theory: Theoretical and practical implications

Theory: Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical model, according to which people display their particular values through their behaviour and possessions, has been corroborated by this research with respect to art-collecting, both as a leisure activity and as a set of items an individual possesses. As far as true art-collectors go, we can say with relative certainty that the particular pieces chosen by a collector speak volumes about that collector’s personal values. In that sense, again, art functions just like more mundane possessions such as clothes, cars and other accessories. Moreover, as collecting art is an investment of money into something that the person will look at on a daily basis, so it is reasonable to suppose that the particular piece bought says much about the person and what they value most.

Ullrich (2009) notes that politicians and other such individuals sometimes use art to project a strategically planned image to society. This study also found this to be the

case, to some degree, for normal collectors. Every art-collector uses their art to some degree to project an ideal image of themselves onto the world. However, in this case, that image tends to represent that individual's values, even if it contains attributes that the individual aspires to but does not possess. This is not necessarily the case when it comes to politicians who may artificially engineer an image which bears no relevance to any personal values, simply to gain public approval.

Practice: What was remarkable in my own experience during this research project is that in practice we could almost say that an individual art-collector's values literally hang on their walls. However, a discussion with the collector is essential in order to decipher those values and avoid misunderstandings based on the fact that the viewer invariably projects their own ideas onto a piece of art. One needs to ask the collector for their reason for obtaining this particular piece, what it means to them, what they like about it, what motivated them to acquire it at that moment in time, and so on. Even if a collector is not very forthcoming with their answers, one can thereby gain information about them – for instance they are rather private. But most individuals enjoyed taking the opportunity to show their art to others and talk about it, often being eager to reveal certain qualities that they possess, like being intelligent, knowledgeable, say, with regard to roman art, innovative, cutting edge, intuitive, etc. One must always try to understand why the individual mentions a certain quality, as these clearly reveal the individual's values.

### **6.3 Fulfilment: Theoretical and practical implications**

#### **6.3.1 Influences on fulfilment**

Theory: Peterson and Seligman (2004) and Vella Brodrick et al. (2008) list meaning, engagement and pleasure as the three factors essential to finding fulfilment. What their analysis does not tell us is what an individual could do to introduce these elements into their life according to their own specific needs. The CF-model adds value to the picture put forth by these authors, by showing that an individual can introduce meaning, engagement and pleasure into their life, by discovering and developing their natural competencies outside the work-field and then choosing work which requires those very same competencies for success.

Practice: In practice, this means that an individual should search for engagement, meaning and pleasure at work, according to their own particular needs. A look at what they do in their spare time could provide individuals with information regarding what kind of activities are most pleasurable, engaging and meaningful to them, and then lead them to seek to transfer the most essential elements of these activities to their working life.

### **6.3.2 Character traits influencing fulfilment**

Theory: Brickman et al. (1978), Costa and McCrae (1980) and Lykken and Tellegen (1996) seem to agree that a person's fulfilment depends on their personality, and that it is difficult to do anything to change one's set level of fulfilment. Park et al. (2004) even use a rigid list of virtues to analyse individuals' character strengths and determine who has the best chance of achieving fulfilment. In contrast, the CF-model advocates that we should openly and freely examine a person's non-working activities instead, thus representing a more person-sensitive and flexible approach. Natural competencies are thereby defined individually for each person, and their unique combination of competencies provides a unique competency-profile. There is no definitive 'list of natural competencies' for individuals to be tested against, allowing individual attributes that might lead to fulfilment to be defined in a more open and free way.

This method has now been tested and seems to work very well, since I was able to define the most important competencies of each candidate taking part in this research and sketch their character through examining one of their most enjoyable leisure activities. This means that besides the pre-defined set of character strengths, there are other factors that might be important in drawing a good picture of an individual's strengths, as relevant to finding fulfilment in life. The CF-model guides us to these factors and to how to determine them for each person and on an individual and personal level.

One should bear in mind, though, that the natural competencies were derived with the help of modified Grounded Theory, that is, with a qualitative, theory generating procedure. The natural competencies identified so far have to be corroborated by accompanying hypotheses testing procedures, and they should have some generality

in order to be applicable for a variety of subjects. Developing hypotheses testing procedures might include development of diagnostic instruments such as more standardised tests or questionnaires, and they would have to be validated by comparing them to other diagnostic instruments. (For example, the natural competency of being able to approach a complex and ill-defined issue in a structured and deliberate way might be expected to correlate with general problem solving ability, or maybe with intelligence.) Testing and validating the natural competencies developed is not part of this work, but this should be done in further research.

On the other hand, the inductive nature of hypothesising individual natural competencies by Modified Grounded Theory might have specific benefits in its own right. It may be more able to capture the specific subtleties and peculiarities of each individual than standardised tests would ever do. For example, there might be specific elements in Sarah's way to approach a new art project that would not be captured by standardised tests. After all, generating general, validated, operationalised constructs (that is, specific natural competencies) may not be the main priority here: The first priority lies in identification of the specific natural competencies of each individual in order to help this individual with finding that specific workplace fitting them best. So, in a sense, the approach pursued here is strongly centred around the individual, it deals less with specific competencies. The situation is similar as in, for example, coaching, or psychotherapy: There are general guidelines for conducting a therapy (depending on the therapeutic school, of course), and there are even classification systems, for example, for mental disorders that might be approached by psychotherapy. Yet, still, each client is special. For, and with, each client specific goals are established, and a specific path of therapeutic intervention is pursued.

Practice: Determining one's characteristic strengths in the form of natural competencies has the practical advantage that (a) an individual can – at least in part – initiate this for themselves without the need for specific tests carried out by specialists classifying an individual with respect to a pre-determined list; and (b) rather than issuing a verdict on an individual's chances of fulfilment in life, it



allows an individual to get a more sensitive picture of their unique strengths and precise instruction as to how to use them to find fulfilment.

### **6.3.3 Events influencing fulfilment**

Theory: Much of the literature on fulfilment regards external – positive or negative – events as highly influential on an individual’s level of happiness, both from a short- and a long-term perspective (Lucas et al., 2003), (Wengle, 1986), (Wortman & Silver, 1987)

This is a classic ‘outside-in’ approach, over which the individual seems to have little control. Compared to that, the CF-model offers an ‘inside-out’ approach, encouraging each individual to take active steps to understand their natural competencies and search for a job with congruent requirements, thereby increasing their levels of success, satisfaction and so fulfilment in life. In that way, an individual’s chance at fulfilment depends upon the individual themselves.

Practice: By taking an active role in discovering, shaping and training their competencies, and by looking for employment for which the required competencies match their own, individuals will not feel at the mercy of external events but, rather, pilot their own course to job-success and satisfaction, and so fulfilment in life. Taking responsibility and control of one’s own way of life, and being able to guide one’s working life in the right direction is already the first practical step to a more fulfilling life-path.

### **6.3.4 Attitude or relative point of view influencing fulfilment**

Theory: Much literature on fulfilment places emphasis on the attitude and relative point of view of an individual with respect to their social environment and the large extent to which these influence the individual’s levels of fulfilment. For instance, by comparing themselves and their achievements to those of their contemporaries who have had a similar start in life; individuals might tend to feel more or less satisfied with their life (Brickman et al., 1978; Schneider, 1975; Easterlin, 1973; Cameron et al., 1973; Andrews & Withey, 1976).

In contrast to this rather passive understanding of individual satisfaction and fulfilment, the CF-model places greater emphasis on focusing on oneself and one’s

own natural competencies to find fulfilment in life. It highlights the immense value of simply looking within and focusing on improving one's life by detecting and developing natural competencies and by thinking about how to most fruitfully employ these at work. In that sense the CF-model represents the idea that comparing oneself to others barely leads to sustained overall fulfilment. Rather, it suggests that one should firmly focus on oneself and act accordingly in order to achieve longer-lasting success and satisfaction.

Practice: the CF-model can practically help an individual to stop comparing themselves to others and to seek, instead, to develop those qualities inside themselves that are more likely to lead to a fulfilling life. For, judging oneself to be better than others, despite occasionally providing momentary satisfaction, cannot offer a practical basis for the experience of enduring satisfaction and fulfilment. In contrast the key lies in an individual's knowing their natural competencies and putting them to use to improve their attitude and work toward fulfilment, irrespective of what anybody else is doing.

## **6.4 Working life and non-working life: Theoretical and practical implications**

### **6.4.1 Impact of working life and non-working life on overall fulfilment**

#### **6.4.1.1 Natural competencies are the link**

Theory: Back in the 1970s, authors began to recognise that an individual's working life has an impact on their overall fulfilment. Forty years later authors view working life as central to fulfilment. As Barnett and Hyde (2001) and others illustrate, one's working and non-working life, and the fulfilment one experiences, are bound in an intimate interrelationship where developments in one area affect the other. The present research adds to this picture by highlighting the important role that natural competencies play in finding overall fulfilment, which can be discovered and trained in one's working life and employed to bring greater success and satisfaction to one's working life, hence, greater fulfilment overall.

Practice: In practice, this means that individuals should make use of their natural competencies, which can be discovered or trained in their non-working life and

strive for applying these gifts to augment their working life experience and levels of success at work.

**6.4.1.2 “Spill-over” or “compensation” to find fulfilment? The way an activity is carried out matters**

Theory: Banner and Himelfarb (1985), note that there are two ways in which leisure activities are chosen by individuals to improve upon their overall fulfilment. One, which they call “spill-over” consists of the idea that individuals choose leisure activities which are similar to those they engage in at work; the other, the compensatory approach, dictates that individuals choose very different activities – ones that allow them to have experiences that they cannot allow for in their working life. The CF-model emphasises congruence of competencies required at work with the natural competencies that are developed whilst engaging in a leisure activity outside of work. Further similarities or differences of the leisure activity to daily working activities do not seem important.

Practice: In practical terms, these findings mean that individuals should not worry about whether they should choose hobbies that are similar or different to their daily working activities and behaviour, as long as the way that they engage in their favoured hobbies allows them to train their congruent natural competencies.

**6.4.1.3 Employee values and fulfilment: Natural competencies offer a clearer picture**

Theory: Much of the literature, such as Vella-Brodrick et al. (2008), see a congruence between personal and work values as important to fulfilment. While this research does not dispute that a general congruence in values is important, it suggests that congruence in competencies might be a more clear indicator and guide toward fulfilment.

Practice: While employees should certainly seek a working-environment which is not opposed to their values, they should focus on achieving a congruence between their natural competencies and those demanded for success in that environment if they want to experience success and satisfaction in their career, and hence greater fulfilment.

#### **6.4.1.4 Motivation in working life: Look to your beloved non-working activities**

Theory: Eggerth (2008) and Dawis (1991) talk about the importance of intrinsic motivation for success and inner satisfaction at work. The CF-model enriches their theory by showing how such intrinsic motivation can be generated in the workplace. By focusing on one's natural competencies, as exhibited and trained in one's non-working life where one is naturally highly motivated without external pressures, and by employing these in one's working life, one can increase one's levels of intrinsic motivation at work.

Practice: In practice, the CF-model offers a starting point for generating intrinsic motivation at work. The key is to start implementing one's natural competencies in the workplace, or if that is impossible, to find work where one can do so.

Additionally, the CF-model may assist managers and employers to hire the most highly motivated individuals for the job – those whose natural competencies match those required at work. This would imply to receive information about what the individuals in question do best, and like most, in their leisure time. By asking candidates what they like to do in their spare time, it might be possible to determine important natural competencies that the candidate may possess. Candidates must agree to this, of course. Finally, the model might also help managers to find more effective ways to motivate their existing work-force, when they see that motivation and productivity are flagging.

#### **6.4.2 Fulfilment and job-success**

Theory: Existing research on fulfilment shows that job-success follows satisfaction and satisfaction follows job-success in an ever-repeating positive cycle. This creates an upward spiral that can be very beneficial for a working individual. But it seems to be more difficult to explain what an individual can do to get this positive spiral going in the first place. The CF-model provides an answer: One should get to know one's natural competencies and match these to those required at work. This might allow a person to jump-start the positive spiral by giving them an experience of satisfaction and success from which to move forward. So, natural competencies are the key for generating a positive spiral.

Practice: In practice, the person wanting to enter the positive spiral of success and satisfaction begins with a clear focus on themselves, on what they do best, and on what gives them pleasure and satisfaction outside of the field of work. This gives the person an initial sense of satisfaction, allowing them to take the first step into that positive spiral.

## **6.5 Skill and competency-development: Theoretical and practical implications**

### **6.5.1 Competency-training in non-working life: A powerful training arena**

Theory: While authors such as Kolb (1984) discuss the importance of experiential skill-development, the fact that training competencies outside of work can help a working individual become better at work appears not to have been discussed so much yet. This is somewhat surprising given that non-work situations are much more motivating and so conducive to productive training than those which are often artificially created in the work-place. So the CF-model adds an important new dimension to how we should view skill and competency training, namely by placing greater importance on the role that one's non-working life can play there.

Practice: Many employers do not provide opportunities for their employees to develop those competencies that will allow them to progress beyond a certain point in their career. Instead, rather than invest considerable time and resources in effecting changes that might, in fact, upset the current balance of their company, employers simply implement training programmes, if any, that will allow their employees to stay put and work faster at their current job, thus, simply maximising return for the employers. This means that, usually, if an employee wants to acquire competencies which will prove really useful in climbing the corporate ladder, they have to take action for themselves and take their development in their own hands. This research suggests that, rather than attend courses, such employees could develop those natural competencies, which will help them progress in their career, in their non-working life.

But employers might also support this process. This may be done by activities of enhancing corporate culture, employee development, and health promotion (Stock-Homburg & Roederer, 2009, p. 31). Within the context of work-life balance, companies may offer leisure activities to their staff – possibly in cooperation with

clubs and associations of various kinds (sports association, chess club, etc). While activities like this are usually discussed within the context of improving communication and culture of the firm, becominbg aware of natural competencies might be another important reason to promote company-facilitated leisure activities.

### **6.5.2 The right career path: Focusing on strengths**

Theory: Drucker (2005) and other authors argue that an individual who wants to be successful should focus on their strengths. Drucker recommends that an individual should undertake feedback analysis in order to get to know their performance strengths and inner values. His contribution is well known in business circles but one cannot help but wonder whether there may bwe a more direct way to determine one’s values and performance strengths as hardly any individual is willing to follow his complex procedure. The present research translates Drucker’s “values” and “strengths” into “natural competencies”, urging individuals to discover these by looking at what they enjoy and engage in the most in their non-working life. As already noted, this may not always be possible, or it might be imperfect, but in those cases it works, it is the simplicity of this approach that is most innovative. And the simpler an idea, the easier it is to implement it. Therefore, the present findings might constitute progress upon on the subject of discovering and utilising one’s own strengths to progress along one’s career.

Practice: The practical upshot of these results is that rather than having to undergo rigorous feedback-analysis procedures, one can discover one’s natural competencies by looking at one’s favourite leisure activities. The advantage of this approach, over that of Drucker, lies in its increased simplicity, and its accessibility to all individuals whatever their working position, their available time and material resources. Potential disadvantages of this approach, as compared to Drucker, may be that Drucker’s approach may lead to a more thorough identification of strengths, and it tends to avoid the transfer problem (transferring natural competencies from leisure to the workplace). Although, in situations where these disadvantages seem of less importance, the approach proposed here may be very valuable. In addition, the approach proposed here could be extended by an approach like that of Drucker. That is, looking at natural competencies may give first cues that already imply

practical consequences. A Druckerian analysis then could be added in order to add depth to the analysis.

Consequently, it is argued that in certain cases the immediacy of approach proposed here is of great value, because the correct career-path is often the result of many small correct decisions in everyday working life, which must often be made on the spot. This requires the individual to be able to quickly think and decide whether a certain prospective role lies within their field of natural competency. It is here that the immediate accessibility of this approach, allowing the individual to simply bring to mind how they behave in their spare time, what they enjoy and what they are good at, can help in what can often be a fast, urgent decision-making process.

## **7 Conclusion**

This chapter presents a succinct summary of the discoveries, implications and limitations of this research project. It begins with a restatement of the central thesis and a review of the main findings. It then proceeds to summarise the theoretical and practical implications of these results, in that order, juxtaposing them with existing research in the areas of fulfilment, the connection between working and non-working life, skill- and competency-development and identity-theory. The chapter ends by outlining relevant limitations, as well as possible avenues of future research.

### **7.1 Restatement of thesis**

The empirical analysis suggests a connection between natural competencies and fulfilment as follows: If an individual's natural competencies are congruent with the competencies required of them in the work-field, then that individual experiences, in all cases, a greater sense of overall fulfilment.

Natural competencies are competencies the enactment of which leads to engagement, experience of meaning, and thereby positive emotions. This is because they originate from the personal identity of the individual, they are expressions of the personal identity. They may be discovered, at least in part, in one's non-working life by looking at a person's particular behaviour and ways of acting when engaged in their favoured leisure activities, and what motivates them to act in that particular way.

The CF-model which drops out of this research shows how natural competencies can increase one's job success and satisfaction opening the way toward overall fulfilment. In order for this to happen, the competencies required at the work place must match the natural competencies.

### **7.2 Review of findings**

This research was carried out by interviewing 20 candidates who collect art in their non-working time. Art-collecting simply represents a much-loved non-working activity and could be replaced with any other leisure activity, such as playing hockey or sailing a boat, without affecting the main findings of this study. What



matters is how a candidate behaves when engaging in their favoured leisure activity. This provides hints as to where their natural competencies lie. Leisure activities in one's non-working life provide a perfect arena for the training of competencies, because they are much more motivating and provide pleasure, making training very effective.

Where a candidate's natural and required competencies are congruent the candidate may experience overall fulfilment. In the current research, this was true in 100% of cases. Where there is no congruence of competencies, it has been found to be either not satisfied or not successful (or both) and therefore, as such, not overall fulfilled.

This information is fully backed in the CF-model, which shows the connection between natural competencies stemming from personal identity, required competency in working life, and fulfilment, depending on whether there is congruence or incongruence between natural and required competencies. So, as the model shows, a person's natural competencies, which are discovered and trained in their non-working life, need to be congruent with the required competencies in their work life. Only then will the candidate experience success and satisfaction, hence, greater fulfilment.

### **7.3 Theoretical and practical contributions**

The contribution of this study to existing research is presented with reference to the four main subjects of fulfilment, working and non-working life, skill- and competency-development, and identity theory.

#### **7.3.1 Contribution to the literature on identity theory**

The present study shows that the art-related behaviour and possessions of art-collectors may showcase values and the desire for distinction: The way these people collect, the social circles they identify with, and the artworks that they possess all showcase their values, what is distinct about them, what elements in society they identify with, and what image they want to project to the world. No particular patterns emerged as to when individual art-collectors started to collect art, however, beyond the mundane fact that most of them began to invest in art when they made their own money.

While most candidate partaking in this research are of middle- or upper-middle-class background, most have wildly different collecting styles, indicating that their behaviour is influenced more by individual factors (and budget), than social background. Hence it was possible to use these differences between candidates to create hypotheses about their natural competencies.

Research also indicates that a person's identity, in terms of their personal values, influences their behaviour and, so, their levels of fulfilment in life. The present study can shed more light on this connection by illustrating the role that natural competencies – particular behaviours – play in finding fulfilment.

### **7.3.2 Contribution to the literature on fulfilment**

The CF-model, arising from this research, proposes a connection between identity theory and fulfilment (or, more generally, “positive psychology”), and this link is provided by natural competencies. “Natural competencies” are competencies that are congruent with the subject's “true” identity and, if utilised, lead to engagement, the experience of meaningful activity, and pleasure, in short: fulfilment.

An individual's character strengths tend to be rather stable, yet do determine the levels of fulfilment that individual experiences. The CF-model draws attention to natural competencies instead, which also guide an individual toward fulfilment, but which may be more flexible and can be actively developed and moulded. Natural competencies are more directed towards processes than states. Moreover, individual's natural competencies have been proposed based on analyses of modified Grounded Theory, and they tend to give a more unique, less formulaic picture of that individual.

An ‘outside-in’ approach means that external events and comparisons with one's peers dictate one's levels of fulfilment. In contrast, the CF-model works from the ‘inside-out’, showing that if an individual focuses on their own natural competencies, ignoring external events and comparisons, they can actively influence their levels of fulfilment.

Existing theory promotes the idea that pleasure, engagement and meaning lead to fulfilment. The CF-model complements such theory by showing that these factors

can first be activated in one's non-working life, through discovering and training one's natural competencies whilst engaging in one's favourite leisure activities, and then expanded and transferred to one's working life, thus increasing one's chances of fulfilment.

### **7.3.3 Contribution to the literature on working- and non-working-life**

Existing theories recognise that there is an important connection between working and non-working life and that these two areas influence each other, while providing different hypotheses as to how energy from one field flows into the other. The CF-model adds to this connection, illustrating how detecting and training one's own natural competencies in one's non-working life can be of direct benefit to one's working life.

There is disagreement about whether the "spill-over" or compensation approach toward choosing one's leisure activities is more conducive to fulfilment. This study suggests that this might be the wrong question, since congruency is what matters. Superficially, the respective activities may be similar or very different.

As shown, theory tends to indicate that personal fulfilment and job-success feed off each other creating an upward spiral leading to an increase in intrinsic motivation and yet more success and fulfilment. However, it does not provide any information as to how this positive spiral might be started. This study suggests that the entry point to this spiral consists of focusing on one's competencies.

### **7.3.4 Contribution to the literature on skill- and competency-development**

Existing research places emphasis in experiential skill development, but largely tends to ignore the potential of leisure activities as a training ground for competencies for working adults. The present study adds value by pointing out that non-working life may be an experiential training ground for competencies, especially since individuals are highly motivated when engaging in leisure activities. The CF-model suggests that individuals can use their leisure activities as a setting in which to develop the required competencies to progress along their career path.

Research shows that individuals' behaviour and beliefs, especially their beliefs in their own efficacy, directly influence their environment and success-levels which, in turn, inform their attitudes and beliefs, and so the cycle continues. This can generate a positive cycle of ever more positive beliefs and experiences. But little information is given as to how to get this process started. The CF-model provides a specific entry-point: by discovering and putting congruent natural competencies to work, an individual's self-belief and success-levels might increase, changing their attitude towards the world, thus feeding back to greater self-belief and inviting more success. This can initiate a positive spiral.

## **7.4 Limitations**

### **7.4.1 Methodological limitations**

#### **7.4.1.1 Kind and size of the sample**

This research has been carried out by studying 20 cases. This figure cannot statistically, or purely quantitatively, confirm the findings of this research. Application of Grounded Theory is a tedious task, and often studies working with Grounded Theory use even smaller samples. Nevertheless, the size of the sample limits the explanatory power of the results. Furthermore, the sample is biased, of course. Collecting art is a very special hobby, and the results of the study possibly do not tell much about people performing other leisure activities, like sailing, climbing, playing chess and card games, and the more.

#### **7.4.1.2 Time limited research**

The present study was carried out within the space of roughly two years. One may reasonably assume that the situation for a candidate might look different during another period of their life. Therefore, a longer-lasting study, tracking behavioural and surrounding changes for each candidate over a longer period, might add further insight to these findings.

#### **7.4.1.3 Subjectivity**

Another methodological constraint pertains to subjectivity of interpretations. It is important to note that this entire research project contains key subjectivist elements. For instance, interviewees are asked to report on their own life conditions and job-

requirements as they subjectively perceive these. Moreover, they are asked to judge for themselves whether they feel successful and satisfied. No attempt is made as part of this study to define the notion of success objectively. Urging interviewees to determine whether they feel successful and satisfied allows them to reflect on these matters in a way that reveals something about their overall sense (or lack thereof) of having found fulfilment in life.

On the other hand, a large degree of subjectivity might not be negative since fulfilment is ultimately a subjective category. The subjective well-being of the person is the crucial factor since it may also determine other aspects discussed, such as intrinsic motivation.

Given the qualitative nature of this study, much depends on the interpretative abilities of the researcher, giving her great power over the results which must be handled responsibly. Accordingly, important methodological constraints were put in place. Measures were taken to ensure the robustness of this research, eliminate bias, minimise extraneous influences, keep communication channels clear, set boundaries, and act ethically and self-critically avoiding prejudice. Nonetheless, a verification of these findings would be valuable, placing this study in a wider quantitative context.

For example, it would be interesting to see whether candidates who sharpen their congruent competencies in their non-working life increase their levels of success and satisfaction at work.

#### **7.4.1.4 Model testing**

Finally, the CF-model has been developed in accordance with the empirical findings of this study, as indicated by methodological standards of Grounded Theory. But its validity has not yet been actively tested on new subjects. Such a study would require participants to act according to the directives of the model, consciously and actively seeking to achieve congruence between their natural and required competencies, and then seeing whether they thereby experience increased levels of success and satisfaction and, consequently, overall fulfilment.

### 7.4.2 Conceptual limitations and open questions

There are, of course, open questions left. Some of them are discussed in this section. Additionally, the last section of this chapter will point to some directions of future research.

First, it might not be easy to derive natural competencies from the kinds of activities studied in this research, because applying Grounded Theory is a largely interpretive process. In addition, the natural competencies might be fairly unspecific (such as “likes to socialise”), leaving a wide range of occupations that fit these competencies. Further research should explore these issues in more depth, that is, what seems to be an adequate grain size and specificity of natural competencies identified.

Another open question pertains to generalisation. Generalising of the model in the context of any other leisure activity might be feasible as first attempts within the domains of hockey-playing and frequent weekend travelling have indicated. But the model has not been empirically tested as yet on a statistically significant scale with respect to a wide selection of leisure activities.

Third, the concepts of success and fulfilment are difficult to capture, and there is certainly much work left to do. As argued earlier, in the current context it is important to define these concepts in a subjective way. Fulfilment largely depends on emotion and personal attitude. In addition, fulfilment, as described earlier, has largely been defined in a holistic, global, sense, i.e., as broader evaluation of a person’s life as a whole (Diener, 2000, p. 34-35) influencing positive emotion, engagement, satisfaction, and meaning. But there may be alternative ways of conceptualising fulfilment, that is, to identify several life areas, or facets (like job, family life, leisure activities, friends, and so on) and then combining them to some holistic measure. The simplest way would be to gather ratings and then create an average value, but there would be conceptual questions to be solved in order to determine whether this is feasible. This problem is not really tackled by this research. The same is true for the notion of success, which might be such a facet of fulfilment.

Finally, during the research, the question arose as to whether constantly increasing one's existing competencies in some areas would lead towards greater success or satisfaction. The supposition that this is so seems reasonable, as long as it is one's congruent competencies that are increased. However, more research would be required to illustrate the intricacies of this point.

## **7.5 Future Research**

### **7.5.1 Twenty cases**

It would be interesting to seek statistical confirmation for present findings, probably testing results on a larger number and wider variety of individuals and providing questionnaires which focus exclusively on testing the CF-model.

### **7.5.2 Different leisure time activities**

In relation to the above, it would be interesting to extend this research to candidates with different leisure activities. This might allow for more detailed information to emerge regarding a candidate's natural and required competencies and the kind of leisure activities in which they chose to engage.

### **7.5.3 Analysis of individuals with the help of art**

The empirical data gathered at interview reveal a great amount regarding each art-collector's identity. These revelations are more powerful than expected and might indicate the potential for building a different model, one that might help psychologists to understand their clients better. There are already techniques using client's drawings to delve into their inner world. In comparison, this putative model would bring into focus an individual's motivations, what attracts them and how they display their identity to others. Art seems to be a very good medium for answering such questions.

### **7.5.4 Time limited research**

It would be interesting to study the candidates who took part in this project, especially those who reported a lack of fulfilment, over a longer period of time to see whether training certain of their competencies in their non-working time would improve their circumstances.

### **7.5.5 Conscious applications of the model**

Similarly, it would be interesting to know whether conscious applications of the CF-model, where a candidate deliberately proceeds according to the model in all their working dilemmas, achieves grater levels of fulfilment than those who are in the same position as that candidate, but are ignorant of it.

### **7.5.6 Values and competencies**

It would be interesting to carry out more in-depth research as to how the personal values of working individuals influence the development of their natural competencies and their chances of success and overall fulfilment, paying attention to whether some values are more conducive to the latter than others. For instance, while it seems rational to suppose that ethical values may increase one's chances of overall fulfilment, one might also reasonably suppose that, much like existing research by Park et al., (2004) reveals in the case of character strengths, such elevated values do not lead to success, hence reducing one's chances of overall fulfilment.

### **7.5.7 Does working life also help to understand oneself better?**

Finally, one may wonder whether the CF-model also works in reverse, so to speak. That is, whether an examination of the working life and behaviour of an individual reveals valuable information as to leisure activities in which they should engage for their own personal growth.

## **7.6 Final word**

To close this thesis, the core message of the CF-model, which distils the core conclusions of this research, is stated:

*An individual's natural competencies, which may be discovered and developed in their non-working life, need to be congruent with the competencies required of them in their working life. Only then will that individual experience the professional success and satisfaction which can lead to a greater sense of overall fulfilment.*

It is hoped that research in the realms of positive psychology, identity and, most important, natural competencies, will continue. This might elucidate a list of competencies, but maybe it will uncover that these competencies are so



idiosyncratic and context dependent that any attempt for generalised descriptions misses the main point. If this is so, research might have to turn away from trying to identify true competencies, and move towards developing methods for transferring individual competencies from one domain, such as leisure, to another, such as work.

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## 9 Appendix

### 9.1 Final list of candidates

Here follows the final list of the 20 people who went through the finalised interview, character sketch, and codification process. Real names have been replaced with nick-names to protect candidates' anonymity.

Initials of the person	Nick-name	Short description
AD	Peter	A creative art collector. Works in the computer industry.
AK	Axel	A former fashion agent. Speaks of himself as an art-addict.
AW	Sandra	A collector who loves having direct contact with the artist. A mother and medical doctor.
BS	Bruno	Collects to live out his rebellious side. A retired owner and CEO of a medical company.
BW	Eva	Loves to travel and collect art. Has her own advertising and consulting agency.
BWB	Baruch	Collects art in a strategic and reflective way. Owns and leads a fashion house.
EG	Evelyn	Collecting allows her to remain young. A retired art consultant.
GW	Gregor	Collects like his father and grandfather did through mixing with art-lovers and artists. A medical doctor
HB	Fritz	Collecting art proves that he has a 'good nose'. Owner and leader of a production company for industrial goods.
HK	Hans-	Collects because he enjoys having the power to help the artist.

	Heiri	Owner of an IT-service company.
IK	Isa	Collects because it allows her and her boyfriend to work together by learn from each other. A doctoral student and teaching assistant in philosophy
JB	Gian	Collects because art completes his architectural creations. A retired architect.
JL	Joe	Collects because he can thereby impress others and display social status. An ex- manager who recently became CEO of an industrial company.
MdP	Miriam	Collects because she thereby feels part of the scene and can mingle with the rich. A self-employed art adviser.
MC	Mark	Collects for his love of beauty and as an investment. A fund-manager for a big pension fund.
MN	Sarah	Through art she has access to important people in the creative industry. Owner of an advertising company.
RF	Patrick	Collects because he is interested in the more technical aspects of art, especially printing. An engineer and consultant for big projects.
RN	Richard	Collects because he feels connected to the artist by possessing something of theirs. An architect with own studio.
RB	Urs	Trough art and the art-scene he learned to understand very different kinds of people and their ways of thinking. A successful business man who set up and ran many different businesses.
YR	Ian	Collects in an emotional way and likes to go to unconventional art events. A graphic designer with own studio.

Table: Candidates – nicknames and short overview

## **9.2 Data-collection in practice: Samples**

### **9.2.1 Assumptions before the interview**

This section presents an applied example of the process presented in 3.6.4.

**Person: Miriam**

**Date: 29.12.2008**

#### **Where do I know the person?**

I got to know her through GL, who was once her boyfriend. He told me to meet up with her when he heard that I am writing my dissertation about art. So he gave me her telephone number and told her that I will call her.

So, we met and became good friends right away. She lives near me and since we met in summer 2008 we often do sports together or cook something small.

#### **How is our connection since then?**

Very nice and friendly, on a friendship level. We are in similar situations because we have no children, we like intellectual stimulation, we love to have a good living standard and are of similar backgrounds.

She is very beautiful and was once the partner of a well known and successful manager from the best possible background and good connections.

#### **Why do I think it is an interesting candidate, what is her angle?**

Even though I do not want to write about people professionally active in the art-market I think that she is personally an interesting candidate, because she thinks of herself as a collector, which is brave or unusual. Her apartment is full of art.

She says about herself, that her desire to collect was awakened in her through her family. It was a family tradition and somebody had to look after it. So she always felt she had to do this for her own family and now she does it also for other people, as a consultant looking after other peoples' collections.

#### **My assumptions regarding how she sees herself (Identity)**



I often have the feeling that she feels as if she works at Christies. She often seems very anxious to find a new boyfriend and every man she meets either does not fit her picture or does not want to be with her. Sometimes I think she judges too fast or wastes her time with strange people.

She often gives people the feeling that she was a little princess and men have to care and carry her in their arms. On the other hand, she wants to be loud, independent, quick and clever. When she invites people around, she has this special “madam-behaviour” which I recognised often in my own family, pretending to be happy, that everything is under control, beautiful and according to the social rules of the upper middle-classes.

### **My assumption of how she collects art, what she collects and why?**

She collects probably by coincidence and when she comes across something beautiful.

She collects modern but also roman things, it’s totally my taste.

She is culturally very interested and spends much of her money on going to classical music events. I am not sure if it is only one of her ways of telling others that she is a cultural person or if she really needs to go. Anyway she tells all the time, which event she just went to.

She says that she is into art-collecting because she has to. It’s a family tradition that she took over and which she feels something like ‘born for’...

My assumption of how and in what way the person would like to influence me as a researcher and why?

She probably wants to present herself as a very cultural person and provide a bit of a picture of a grand dame. On the other hand, she has the same approach about art as I do, saying that good art does not have to be expensive.... I am curious to see how our interview will be.

### **9.2.2 Record of observations**

Here follows an example of a record of observations, following the template presented in 3.6.6.

**Person: Baruch**

Date of the interview: 10.1.2009/16:00

Place, duration, circumstances of the interview:

Met at his house in XXX, Tel. XXX

The interview duration was 2,5 hours

**My subjective observation in terms of the place itself, the surroundings, the apartment or house:**

Very new house, nice variation of these box-houses with the big windows. Very nice and stylish but understated. Jewish family with the torah on the door.

**My subjective observation of the interior design of the house in terms of price-range, style, interior-decoration important and stylish or rather unimportant:**

Expensive, but not to show off. No name on the door, no car in front. New and “the best quality available” minimalism but in a nice way, not feeling cold.

**My subjective observation in terms of art in /around the house. What is dominant in the entrance hall or living-room (artist, work piece, technique, price-range, symbolic value of the art itself and in connection with the person) and what is more hidden: is there art-work in a storage?**

Some art is in storage but most of it is hanging up. Mostly it is paintings, only contemporary art. Abstract but also figurative. Subjects like people, landscapes, still-life...

**My subjective observation of the person, their comments when speaking about the art when we are in front of it, argumentation of choice, language, voice-power, body language, signs of power and self-extension or signs of introversion:**

About the same age as I. A Jewish-looking attractive man from a well known family in Zurich, because of their fashion house.

**My subjective observation of the person's style in terms of clothes, shoes, brands, accessories, mobile phone, hairstyle, watch, jeweller, plastic surgery, general style etc.**

Jeans, cashmere pullover, easy going.

**My subjective observation of the person in terms of the language, style of speaking (distinguished, simple, argot, many foreign words) and the language we talked originally and my interpretation:**

Jewish accent, intelligent and well formulated but never arrogant. Very open but not over the top.

**My subjective observation of the person's body-language, eye-contact, posture, voice and reactions to the conversation, and my interpretation of it**

A one-to-one, open approach: I felt very welcome.

**My subjective observation, knowledge and assumptions regarding the education of my interviewee in terms of general education and specifically within the cultural field and the arts.**

Studied law, but later entered the company of his father.

**Information and knowledge regarding the family, its background especially with a focus on identity and art:**

His father also collected art and they were every Sunday in the Kunsthau. Also, his sisters had the same background but were never interested in art. He does not know why he is so interested.

**The social network and social surroundings of the interviewee, especially with a focus on identity and art:**

His surroundings are Jewish but he is also, on the other hand, among art collectors. The focus is on Zurich and New York.

**What, apart from art that is observed could lead in a similar direction of how I categorize the person? What in an opposite direction?**

Rational person. Tries to act that it makes sense. Sees art as a balance for the business life. The house is also furnished with best quality, not too much stuff, warm and friendly even if it is minimalism.

### 9.2.3 A character sketch

This is an example of a character-sketch using the guidelines presented in 3.6.3

<i>Name of interviewee</i>	BW = Eva
<i>Document name</i>	CS_Eva
<i>Date CS done</i>	21.11.2008
<i>Profession:</i>	Managing Director and partner in a film production company and freelance account director for an advertising project in consumer goods
<i>Age</i>	45 years old
<i>Main place of lieu</i>	Switzerland, Zurich, XXXstrasse 46
<i>Telephone / email</i>	+41 79 XXX XXX beratung@xxx.ch
<i>Character Sketch based on the following documents</i>	- Notes taken mainly during the interview in July 08 (Eva_notesCS1-5) - Recorded interview of July 08 - Emails between us (Eva_mail1-4) - Assumptions written down before the interview (Eva_notesCS1-5) - Notes of my observations of the house of the interviewee (Eva_notesCS1-5) - Photos of the art the interviewee possesses (Eva_art1-2) - Research on the art on the internet
<i>Word count:</i>	1894 words

#### Assumptions before the interview (Assumptions)

Before I met Eva I tried to understand why she might collect art. I have to say, I do not have a clue. She is a very old friend of mine and I have known her for about 20 years through work. She was always a cultured woman but not the type going to expensive openings and drinking champagne with the scene but rather a popular art lover going with the trends of the general public. She hardly ever misses bigger