

# Chapter 14

## An Early Calling, a Late Career: Psychobiographic Investigations into Paulo Coelho's Career Development



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**Abstract** How do extraordinary individuals develop their career? This question has been responded to from various theoretical stances, however psychobiographical research has seldom contributed to answering this question. This chapter explores the career development of Paulo Coelho throughout his life, thereby responding to Van Niekerk et al. (*J Psychol Africa* 25(5):395–402, 2015) request for further psychobiographical studies on career development. Methodologically, the study is based on a single case and uses the methodological frame of Dilthey's modern hermeneutics. First- and third-person documents were collected and analysed through content analysis, focusing on particular events in the writer's life. Ethical considerations were applied. This chapter is limited to the single case analysis of the career of Paulo Coelho throughout his life by using one selected theory. Findings describe the career development of the world-famous contemporary writer within the context of Greenhaus et al. (*Career management*, 4th edn. Sage, Los Angeles, USA, 2010) model of career development. The analysis shows that Coelho's life only partly matches with the proposed career development model and expands it through concepts of spirituality, calling, life goals and serendipitous career development events. The chapter thereby contributes to new insights into career development theory and psychobiography with regard to the life and works of extraordinary individuals.

**Keywords** Career development · Extraordinary individual · Psychobiography · Single case · Paulo Coelho · Writer's life

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You are what you believe yourself to be.

Paulo Coelho

## 14.1 Meaning Creation through Career Development

A huge part of meaning in life is constructed through work, career and career development (Blustein, 2006). Work and career provide individuals with resources and sources of structure, relationships and connections with others (Juntunen, 2006; Richardson, 2012). Both work and career can impact positively on individuals' lives, life satisfaction and value development (Savickas, 2011). Career development theories have been criticised and redefined repeatedly over the years. They have been discussed, besides others, in the context of developing career adaptability, resilience and coping in dynamic and globalised work contexts (Lent, 2013), the management of career stages and transitions in the context of identity development and creation of meaningfulness (Fouad & Bynner, 2008). Methodologically, the importance of case study research with regard to career theories and practice has been pointed out (Swanson & Fouad, 2015) and the development of the self and the identity have been explored (Fouad & Bynner, 2008; Hartung & Subich, 2011;). Psychobiographies deal with single case studies across the lifespan (Kasser, 2017), which perfectly suit the need to focus on career and long-term development perspectives of individuals across the life span (van Niekerk, Vos, & Fouché, 2015). Thereby, psychobiographies focus on extraordinary and historically significant individuals (Fouché & van Niekerk, 2010, p. 2) and aim at reconstructing the life of the individual in focus through psychological theories, with particular interest in developmental aspects (Burnell, 2013). They ask about the individual in terms of who they are and how they develop across their lives (Mayer, 2017).

Psychobiographies as research method and theoretical approach in psychology have gained international recognition, often using psychoanalytic theoretical approaches (Anderson, 2015; Alexander, 1990; Belzen, 2013). They contribute to a holistic and complex understanding of individual processes. With regard to career development, psychobiographies can contribute to a refinement of career development theories, not only for individuals in general, but for extraordinary individuals in particular. Such a theoretical refinement seems to be overdue in career development (Bloch, 2005; Patton & McMahon, 2014) and in psychobiography (van Niekerk, Vos, & Fouché, 2015).

Kasser (2017) recently pointed out that mainstream psychology should appreciate the contributions of psychobiography in terms of psychobiographical knowledge construction regarding scientific theories and methods. Ponterotto, Reynolds, Morel, and Cheung (2015) recommend that psychobiographical training at universities should emphasise the importance of various theoretical and methodological approaches to psychobiography in theory and practice. In this chapter, it is argued that psychobiographies can contribute not only to psychology, but also to other specific psychological sub-areas, such as career development. On one hand, this study contributes to the exploration of career development from a single case study perspective, presenting a historically significant individual as role model, highlighting interesting career

development aspects from which readers could learn (Mayer, 2017). On the other hand, psychobiographical research can impact on evaluating and reconstructing theories in career development on an in-depth level of analysis, referring to Schultz & Larence (2017).

## 14.2 Aims of This Study on Paulo Coelho

Many stories have been told about Paulo Coelho (Mayer, 2017; Mayer & Maree, 2017, 2018a, 2018b); however, his career has not yet been reconstructed based on a psychological career development theory. This study therefore focuses on his career (development), thereby contributing to holistic lifespan research in outstanding individuals (Eliastam, 2011) to reconstruct their lives from a new perspective (Mayer, 2017). The study includes information from selected creative works, such as *The Pilgrimage* (Coelho, 1987) or *The Alchemist* (1988) which flourished from the 1940s onwards (Arias, 2001; Morais, 2009). Coelho won many national and international awards during his career and is one of the most widely read and translated contemporary writers in the world.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse and reconstruct the life and work of Paulo Coelho in the context of the career development model of Greenhaus, Callanan, and Godschalk (2010) following the general recommendation of van Niekerk et al. (2015) to take the psychobiographical approach to career development further. This topic was chosen due to the fact that Paulo Coelho made an extraordinary, highly successful career as a writer and is therefore subject of interest in this psychobiographical work. The research question is: How can the life of Paulo Coelho be reconstructed with regard to his career development? To respond to this question, the Greenhaus et al. (2010) model is used, providing a piece of complex understanding of the person through different lenses.

This chapter is part of a series of psychobiographical publications on the life and creative works of Paulo Coelho (Mayer, 2017; Mayer and Maree, 2017, 2018a, 2018b). It aims to complement a holistic, multiperspectivist view of the person, which cannot—so it is argued here—be reached by just applying one theory to the life of a person. It needs various theories highlighting different foci and specifically analysed life events to develop a holistic view of an individual across the lifespan. Table 14.1 provides an overview of publications on Coelho which contribute to a multiperspectivist view of the writer.

The study at hand adds to the holistic research on Paulo Coelho's life, and in particular explores his career development and takes previous findings into account. It thereby complements the insights into the selected, extraordinary life on one hand, and contributes to new forms of psychobiographical research through cumulative theoretical and methodological research approaches on the other.

**Table 14.1** Psychobiographical publications on Paulo Coelho’s life

Publication on Paulo Coelho from psychobiographical perspective	Theoretical focus and new insights
Mayer, C.-H. (2017). The life and creative works of Paulo Coelho. A Psychobiography from a Positive Psychology Perspective. Cham, Switzerland: Springer	Holistic wellness across the writer’s life Faith development across the writer’s life This book explores the holistic wellness theory and the faith development theory with regard to the development of Paulo Coelho and 70 years of his life. Findings show how holistic wellness and faith interact and how they contribute to Paulo Coelho’s development Methodology: modern hermenutics
Mayer, C.-H. & Maree, D. (2017). A psychobiographical study of intuition in a writer’s life: Paulo Coelho revisited. <i>Europe’s Journal of Psychology</i> , 13(3), 472–490	Intuition in the writer’s life The article provides insights on how Coelho uses intuition throughout his life and how it supports him to write, to become a writer and to be creative Methodology: modern hermenutics
Mayer, C.-H. & Maree, D. (2018b). The magical life and creative works of Paulo Coelho: A psychobiographical investigation. <i>The Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology</i> , 18, 16 pages	Theoretical exploration of magic This article explores how magical thinking in Coelho’s life interacts with his personal development and his belief system. The interlinkages of magical belief and the stories and narrations in selected creative works are analysed and discussed Methodology: phenomenology
Mayer, C.-H. & Maree, D. (2018a). Creativity across the lifespan—a psychobiographical perspective on Paulo Coelho. <i>Journal of Genius and Eminence</i>	Creativity in the writer’s life Acts of creativity are analysed according to a specific theoretical model of creativity, and acts of creativity are reflected in terms of the development of his writing and his personal development Methodology: modern hermenutics
Mayer, C.-H. (2018). Exceptional human experiences in the life and creative works of Paulo Coelho: A psychobiographical investigation. <i>Spirituality in Clinical Practice</i>	The theoretical state-of-the-art of exceptional human experiences is presented. The article evaluates a few highly impactful exceptional human experiences which happened during Coelho’s life. The experiences are categorised in terms of their impact (positive and negative impacts) Methodology: modern hermeneutics

Source Author’s own construction

### 14.3 Career and Career Development

The development of a career is described as a multidimensional process during which individuals progress in terms of several stages (Sharf, 2010). This process includes social, psychological, educational, economic and physical contributing factors (Zunker, 2010). Career development meta-capacities ensure that an individual can flourish in the career context, taking internal and external factors and influences into account (Savickas & Porfeli 2012). Career meta-capacities, which are defined as a set of career resources to be used by individuals to manage and plan their career development, are crucial factors in career development (Coetzee, 2008). They are higher order skills and knowledge and include the ability to judge the availability, application and learnability of personal competencies (Beheshtifar, 2011).

Several theories focus on career development across the lifespan and life-space in terms of career, chronological time and contextual development (Hartung, 2013). The idea of a career as a calling in the context of spirituality has become popular in recent years, according to Weiss, Skelley, Hall, and Haughey (2003). These authors describe the lives of extraordinary individuals such as Ghandi and Martin Luther King, who experienced a calling to careers which changed their lives significantly during a process of exploration, trial, establishment and mastery. This process is driven particularly by the person and not by an organisation, in a non-linear, circular and developing way (Weiss et al., 2003). Taking system dynamics into account and asking for the exploration of content and process in career development (Patton & McMahan, 2014), such a calling is closely connected to constructing meaning in life through success and crisis during a lifelong process (Siegrist, 1997). Career thereby contributes to building a coherent identity (Mayer, 2011) and to managing oneself (Seibert, Kraimer, Holtorn, & Pierotti, 2013). It can be experienced as a sense of purpose, which refers to the idea and feeling that a person is meant for a certain career (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Such a calling usually impacts positively on the person and their career (Hall & Chandler, 2005) and is often connected to “serendipitous events”—non-predictable unexpected events and factors (Super et al., 1957), strategy planning and information, as well as to intuition and emotion (Betsworth & Hansen, 1996).

Career (decision-making) and establishing a career can become a stressful process (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, & Peterson, 2000) when the individual experiences conflicting emotions and hindrances on the career path. A strong sense of coherence as an individual, however, impacts positively to strengthen the individual (Mayer, 2014).

In psychobiographical studies, analysis of career across the lifespan has been emphasised (van Niekerk & Fouché 2010, 2014, 2015a, 2015b; Perry, van Niekerk & Fouché, 2016). van Niekerk et al. (2015) point out that career development includes various stages through which individuals move during their lives and which usually hold specific tasks to be addressed. The current study makes use of this career development model because its developmental stage perspective integrates the view of an individual’s total life with work, family and self-development. It is valuable as a framework for this lifespan study which does take characteristics of the environment and career development into account (Singh & Greenhaus, 2004) and

which focuses on career development, management and long-term success (Mulhall, 2014). All of these aspects seem to be important in the concept of a psychobiographical career development investigation. Further, in their psychobiography of heart surgeon Christiaan Barnard, van Niekerk et al. (2015) use the career development model of Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godschalk (2010) successfully to analyse his career during his lifetime.

According to Greenhaus et al. (2010), career development is viewed as a continuing process in which individuals progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterised by a relatively unique set of issues, themes, and tasks. The authors define career development in terms of four stages in the context of work, family and self-development dynamics, while other external influences such as socio-cultural background, gender, globalisation, economics, demographics and business might also influence the career development path. Hartung (2013) notes that career stages might be repeated, while individuals (re-)cycle around career development (stage development) processes.

In the first stage, the **occupational and organisational choice stage** during the first 25 years of life, the individual reflects on choices of occupations, completes training, gains job offers and enters the career and occupational contexts. During this stage individuals aim to find an occupation which fits their needs to flourish on the job. Super, Savicka, and Super (1996) highlight that their choice is influenced by the life-space and is bound to the life roles enacted by the individuals, while Savickas (2005) associates career development with vocational personality, career adaptability and life themes. Maree (2017) emphasises that the career path is developed early in life and early attention is needed to motivate learners. Porfeli and Skorikov (2010) point out that career exploration is not only about specific career expectations, but also about the broad learning area concerning the world of work and the self in context. Others define callings as work with a purpose or destiny (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009) and a source of fulfilment (Berg, Grant & Johnson, 2010), a purpose and passion (Dobrow, 2006). These callings can occur in childhood or at any other stage in life (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Weiss et al., 2003).

The second stage—the **early career stage**—is embedded in the years 25 to 40. Most important during this stage are establishment and achievement, in which individuals develop expertise on the job, career strategies, deepen their value orientations and aim at gaining acceptance from colleagues. Kay, Hagan, and Parker (2008) emphasise how important mentorship is in the early stages of career development. After the establishing themselves, individuals strive for achievement which requires them to gain authority, manage challenges, show competence, emphasise decision-making and achieve career objectives. Thereby, the contribution a person wants to make is defined. Hall (2002) observes that career is not only bound to the increase in status and salary, but also to personal potential, accomplishment of life goals and satisfaction.

During the third stage, the **mid-career stage** (40–55 years), the career is defined by the confrontation with midlife transition, maintaining of levels of productivity, upgrading of skills and the mentoring of younger colleagues. During this time of

career development, individuals have to adapt to both environmental and individual changes and challenges in career and/or lifestyle.

Finally, the fourth, **later career stage** starts at the age of 55 years and refers to tasks such as leadership responsibilities. During this stage, individuals usually take on commitment, adapt to change brought on by their increased age, and either engage in career activities or disengage. They might also plan and prepare their retirement during this stage (Post, Schneer, Reitman, & Ogilvie, 2013).

## 14.4 Research Methodology

This chapter describes a longitudinal single-case study which is psychobiographic (Ponterotto, 2014) and person-centred (Elms, 2007). It is anchored in Dilthey's modern hermeneutics (Dilthey, 2002) and explores the development of the career of Paulo Coelho. Dilthey's philosophy is built upon the assumption that a life can only be understood ("Verstehen") by taking its context into account through reflection and a view of the entire life. Dilthey (2002) uses a particularly broad understanding of hermeneutics and emphasises the importance of biography within the context of psychology, while pointing out the importance of the individual's uniqueness and wholeness as extraordinary. These characteristics of Dilthey's approach make it particularly valuable for this study.

Data was collected from first- and third-person documentation (Allport, 1961). The first-person data documents included autobiographical manuscripts, his creative works, one documentary, and various internet statements. As third-person documents, one biography (Morais, 2009), one published interview (Arias, 2001) and various other documents, interviews, published comments and creative works were analysed and interpreted. Coelho was chosen purposefully as a sample for research owing to his extraordinary career and success as a writer.

For analysis, the five-step content analysis process of Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Kelly (2006, pp. 322–326) was used. The steps are familiarisation and immersion, inducing themes, coding, elaboration, and interpretation and checking with regard to career development. For the analysis, parts of the data processing and analysis matrix of van Niekerk et al. (2015, p. 397, see Table 14.2) were applied and matched with the content analysis of first- and third-person documents.

## 14.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical and legal considerations in psychobiography have gained importance recently (Ponterotto & Reynolds Taewon Choi, 2017). Ethical considerations were taken into account in the current study, such as respectful treatment of the data and non-maleficence, particularly since the subject of research is still alive (Elms, 1994). Only data available in the public domain was analysed. Although repeated attempts were

**Table 14.2** Career development stages

Stages	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
	Occupational and organisational choice	Early career: establishment and achievement	Middle career	Late career
Age (years)	0–25	25–40	40–55	55 onwards
Developmental tasks	Consider alternative occupations Make tentative occupational choice Complete required training programmes Obtain job offers Enter the organisational context	Develop expertise Utilise career strategies Acquire organisational values Gain acceptance as colleague Demonstrate competence Decide what type of contribution to make Explore opportunities Implement strategies to achieve career objectives	Confront the midlife transition Maintain productivity Upgrade skills Act as mentors for younger colleagues Consider changes in individual and environmental factors	Accept leadership responsibilities Adapt to change Remain committed Adapt to increased age

Source van Niekerk et al. (2015, p. 397)

made to contact Paulo Coelho, finally his personal agent responded that the writer does not have time to read through or comment on the study. The standards of ethical vigilance in psychobiography (Ponterotto & Reynolds Taewon Choi, 2017) were followed, in terms of discussing ethical aspects with other researchers. Self-reflection, using inter- and intra-subjective validation (Yin, 2009), was also undertaken throughout the writing process.

### 14.6 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the theoretical framework of psychobiographical research, to the theory described and applied and to the limitations which are bound to the research methodology (Schultz, 2005). It is expected that this research may have a researcher bias which is already expressed through the choice of theory, methodology and subject (Nortjé, Fouché, & Gogo, 2013).



## 14.7 Findings

The career of Paulo Coelho is analysed from his birth to his 70th birthday by using a chronological view of his development, highlighting selected life events, applying the four stages and developmental tasks identified in Table 14.2 (Greenhaus et al., 2010; van Niekerk et al., 2015).

### 14.7.1 Occupational and Organisational Choice

Paulo Coelho was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1947 into an upper middle class family; his father was an engineer and his mother a housewife (Morais, 2009). The parents wanted him to become an engineer as well, but Paulo only enjoyed the world of books and fantasy (Morais, 2009). In primary school, he was known for his talent in story-telling, and in 1956 he won his first writing competition (Morais, 2009). He behaved as if he had already chosen his occupation in childhood; it was not even a “tentative choice” (Greenhaus et al., 2010), but was rather a conscious choice to become an author (Morais, 2009).

During primary school, Paulo wrote poetry and short stories and trained himself through reading novels and adventure stories (Morais, 2009). At the age of 12, he started to write a daily diary and tape-recorded his feelings, ideas and emotions to construct a contemporary self-portrait (Morais, 2009). He also began to write letters to family members and scribbled thoughts on paper for future books. At the same time, his parents were irritated and worried about his lack of interest in school and sciences; they did not appreciate his interest in books (Arias, 2001).

During adolescence, Paulo hardly managed to finish secondary school, while only being occupied with becoming a writer. He developed an *idée fixe* (a life goal, according to Hall, 2002) and just wanted to become a famous writer (Morais, 2009, p. 62) whose books were read. It could be argued that this was already an early calling into his career as a writer (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Weiss et al., 2003). However, the reason (Greenhaus et al., 2010) for wanting to become a writer is not described. In 1993, told his mother that he refused to become an engineer (Coelho, 2006, p. 11): “No, mother, I just want to be a writer. Not an engineer who writes books.” He then constructed a list of the characteristics of a writer: a maladjusted, rebellious intellectual and poet, critical of and fascinated by other writers. Coelho aimed to be seen as he considered famous writers to be. Further, he wanted to live his passion and spread his ideas through writing, thereby sharing his perspectives, and perhaps even influencing others. Probably his focus on becoming a famous writer was part of his rebelling against his parents and a strong statement against a lifestyle driven by rational thought. However, his aim to become a writer seems to have been a deeply rooted wish which was fuelled through the experience of a calling (Morais, 2009).

Already at a young age, Coelho emphasised that he was a writer (Coelho, 2006) and founded a literary club called “Rota 15” (Morais, 2009). He self-trained and

led the club without any formal training programme, mentoring or guidance (see Greenhaus et al., 2010) and wrote his first theatre play at the age of 17. He published a mimeographed booklet of poetry, continued writing poems and won first prize in the Academia Literária Santo Inácio in 1994. He wrote articles for a newspaper—thereby making his first occupational choices (Greenhaus et al., 2010). However, his poems and newspaper articles were rejected for publication and he doubted his abilities as a writer (Morais, 2009).

Striving for his dream profession and career kept him alive, while he suffered from depressive episodes and worried about how to establish himself as a recognised writer (Morais, 2009).

After he finished secondary school, Coelho started to study law, based on the wish of his parents who felt that law was an appropriate field of study for him. Coelho considered this an “alternative career path” (Greenhaus et al., 2010). He became unhappy and stopped studying after one year to return to establish his career as a writer. From 1965 onwards, Coelho developed his own literary programme which included the following: to buy a newspaper every day, read book reviews, send articles to relevant people, talk to people in the writing scene, contact newspapers and radio stations to make himself known, and find the addresses of famous writers (Morais, 2009). He explored opportunities and implemented strategies to achieve career objectives (Stage 2 of Greenhaus et al., 2010).

From the beginning of 1968, Coelho produced his own theatre plays on a regular basis, while keeping up his dream (Morais, 2009), developing more expertise in writing and organising theatre plays (Stage 2 of Greenhaus et al., 2010). He became a member of the Brazilian Society of Theatre Writers and worked at the university teaching theatre classes, during which time he also won a short story competition (Morais, 2009). Through these actions he demonstrated competence and implemented career development strategies (Greenhaus et al., 2010). However, his wish to become a world-famous writer was not yet reached; he was not accepted as a colleague by other writers and he was unaware of his personal contribution through writing (Stage 2 of Greenhaus et al., 2010). During his first 20 years, Coelho put several strategies in place to develop himself, while testing alternative occupations (Greenhaus et al., 2010), such as becoming a lawyer, a theatre play producer and lecturer. But he was not happy with any of these pathways (Morais, 2009).

### ***14.7.2 Early Career: Establishment and Achievement***

Between the ages of 25 and 40, Coelho went travelling and began at the age of 31 to write songs for famous Brazilian songwriters and singers (Morais, 2009). Although he was depressed about his inability to become a famous writer, he became famous as a songwriter for Raul Seixas. They became friends and together explored the occult, the devil and black magic (Morais, 2009). Coelho made a pact with the devil to become a famous writer (Arias, 2001; Morais, 2009), but withdrew soon after from this particular form of career development strategy (Greenhaus et al., 2010).

Coelho received his real calling—what Arias (2001) refers to as the “birth of the writer”—while visiting the concentration camp in Dachau (Hall and Chandler, 2005; Weiss et al., 2003). Shortly afterwards he became a member of Regnum Agnus Mundi (RAM), a secret Catholic order, at the age of 35 and was sent on a spiritual pilgrimage to France and Spain (Morais, 2009). A year after this pilgrimage, Paulo wrote his first bestseller *The Pilgrimage* (Coelho, 1987), a book on his spiritual journey and his application of spiritual exercises for personal growth.

Together with his life partner, Cristina, he developed career strategies (Greenhaus et al., 2010) to promote his book (Morais, 2009). Coelho became a “warrior of light” following his spiritual pathway (Morais, 2009; Stage 2 of Greenhaus et al., 2010). He developed his expertise in writing (Greenhaus et al., 2010) when writing a second book, *The Alchemist* (Coelho, 1988), one of his best-selling books to date. He developed spiritually and described this development in his books (Morais, 2009), seeing his contribution in his spiritual messages (Greenhaus et al., 2010). He became “a magus” (Arias, 2001, xix), while using this spirituality to develop his ability as a writer, and inspired his readers through his self-development (Morais, 2009).

Coelho’s personal spiritual development and his career as a writer are strongly interconnected. Many of his books provide the reader with a personal prologue, updating his personal spiritual self-development as, for example, described in *The Pilgrimage* (Coelho, 1987) and *Aleph* (Coelho, 2011). It has also been pointed out that particularly his exceptional human and spiritual experiences contributed to major life decisions which impacted positively on his development as a famous writer (see Mayer, 2018).

For his career development, Coelho did not acquire organisational values as described by Greenhaus et al. (2010), but developed his own personal values and a spiritual foundation which contributed to his success (Mayer, 2017). In the beginning of this early career, he gained scarcely any acceptance by his colleagues (Morais, 2009), as described in Greenhaus et al. (2010). Particularly his Brazilian colleagues did not accept him as a writer and criticised him strongly over at least two decades. His first international recognition came between the ages 37 and 40 (Morais, 2009). He demonstrated competence (as in Greenhaus et al., 2010) and wanted his books to be read (Morais, 2009). It was been argued before (Mayer, 2017) that the writing process contributed to his spiritual development and vice versa, while implementing further strategies to promote his writing, shaping his career.

### ***14.7.3 Mid-Career: Developing towards International Success***

Coelho expanded his promotion strategies (Morais, 2009) to being recognised as a writer (Greenhaus et al., 2010). He promoted himself on television, during talk shows, through friends and through his agent who promoted his work in Europe

(Morais, 2009). Several aspects of his early career were further developed in his mid-career.

Coelho confronted his midlife transition (Greenhaus et al., 2010) through his spiritual self-development, and tapped into concepts of eternity. He felt a continuing urge to follow his dream (Coelho, 2003a). His forties were mainly dedicated to writing more best-selling books, such as *Brida* (Coelho, 1990), *The Valkyries* (Coelho, 1992), and *The Fifth Mountain* (Coelho, 1998). He further developed spiritually through the practices of RAM and experienced spiritual transitions. The mid-career stage was not necessarily to maintain his productivity, as is usual in this stage (Greenhaus et al., 2010), but rather to build his productivity and name as a best-selling international writer and spiritual master. Through writing and informal education in terms of reading books and developing his inner qualities (Mayer, 2017), Coelho upgraded his ability to write books, publish and negotiate with the publishers. Writing and spirituality were strongly interlinked (Mayer, 2017, 2018).

Coelho started to mentor new RAM members as a spiritual master (Morais, 2009), but he did not mentor young writers as far as is publicly known (see Greenhaus et al., 2010). He was more occupied with developing his own career as a writer, than with mentoring others.

Only in his fifties and onwards, was Coelho accepted by the community of international and Brazilian writers (Morais, 2009). He experienced a major life change (see Greenhaus et al., 2010) and became a jetsetting celebrity. He remained self-driven, mainly considering his personal and individual well-being (Mayer, 2017). From the age of 50, he maintained his publishing productivity (Morais, 2009), as described by Greenhaus et al. (2010) as appropriate for the mid-career stage, and was officially and finally accepted in the Brazilian Academy of Writers in 2001, after having once failed to gain membership (Morais, 2009). This acceptance by his Brazilian colleagues only came late in his mid-career, whereas, according to Greenhaus et al. (2010), it should have happened already during his early career.

#### ***14.7.4 Late Career: Staying Committed***

As in the previous career stages of his life, Coelho stayed committed (see Greenhaus et al., 2010) to being a successful writer by publishing continuously during his late career. In the later years he published *Veronica decides to die* (Coelho, 1998), *Eleven Minutes* (Coelho, 2003b), *The Zahir* (Coelho, 2005), and *The Witch of Portobello* (Coelho, 2007). He developed spiritually, adapted to change and overcame spiritual crises (Morais, 2009). He then decided to publish his books online for free, committing self-piracy, to increase his overall sales (Morais, 2009), his success and his international recognition. His publishers remained quiet, since the strategy worked out well for all concerned. Coelho was self-driven, adapted to new challenges and implemented new strategic career development ideas to make his books read (Morais, 2009).

Coelho continued writing bestsellers, such as *The Winner Stands Alone* (Coelho, 2008a), *Aleph* (Coelho, 2011), *Manuscript Found in Accra* (Coelho, 2012), *Adultery* (Coelho, 2014) and *The Spy* (Coelho, 2016) during his sixties. His productivity remained high in his late career, as had been expected for his mid-career (Greenhaus et al., 2010), while the topics of his books turned away from spirituality (Coelho, 2014, 2016).

Almost no information can be found regarding Coelho taking on responsibilities of leadership or adapting to increased age. These are the stages described as typical by Greenhaus et al. (2010) with regard to late career.

Throughout his career, Paulo focused on self-development, and took on very little social responsibility as a mentor (mid-career) or a leader (late career). He only showed political engagement with regard to a public comment on the US war in Iraq (Coelho, 2008b) and on the Brazilian government's support of young writers (Tageblatt, 2014). However, these two short notice statements can hardly be viewed as signs of leadership responsibility as highlighted by Greenberg et al. (2010).

## 14.8 Conclusions and the Way Forward

The aim of this study was to analyse the career development of Paulo Coelho across his lifespan. In the following section, conclusions regarding selected themes are provided.

### 14.8.1 Coelho's Career Development

Coelho's career development was defined by his strong urge to create meaning in his life by becoming a writer. This urge began during childhood, but was not based on the need to use writing as a source of structure nor to connect to others as suggested by Juntunen (2006) or Richardson (2012). Rather, it was seen as a resource for a meaningful, self-directed life and to fulfil his dream (Blustein, 2006; Person, May, & Mayer, 2016).

From an early age, Coelho was fond of writing, but he also experienced periods of deep doubt, crisis and depression through all career stages, particularly during Stages 1 and 2. However, he remained resilient, coped and adapted to his slowly growing career (see Lent, 2013). According to his meta-capacities (Beheshtifar, 2011), Coelho was convinced from childhood onwards that he had the ability to become a famous writer and he felt that this was his passion and meaning in life, his calling, and his life's goal (Hall, 2002). When he then received a direct calling (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Weiss et al., 2003) of the "birth of the writer", he experienced a high motivation to start his career based on his intuitive childhood belief. This calling was a "serendipitous event", as described by Betsworth & Hansen (1996), and Coelho managed to invent a well-based intuitive strategy to promote his creative work. His

career was not a well-planned and organised path, but rather a path based on passion and intuition (Mayer & Maree, 2017), favoured by serendipitous events (the calling, and RAM membership invitation). The career path was strongly influenced by trial, establishment and mastery (see Weiss. et al., 2003) and serendipitous events (Betsworth & Hansen, 1996) around which Coelho cycled and recycled to build his life and his career (see Hartung, 2013).

### ***14.8.2 The Theory of Career Development of Greenhaus et al. (2010)***

Coelho's occupational choice (Stage 1) was clearly defined from childhood onwards and he mainly pursued his career wish through informal education and self-training in reading and writing. He did not receive any professional training, but built his talent self-directedly against all restraints (parents, society). He considered alternative occupations (law) only to please his parents, or to sustain his life (theatre plays, newspapers, lecturing, music industry), while aiming for his dream.

Only at the end of Stage 2 did Coelho begin his career as a writer. For him, Stage 2 of Greenhaus et al. (2010) was combined with Stage 3, regarding, for example, utilising career strategies, gaining acceptance as a colleague, being clear about the contribution to make (spirituality), exploring opportunities and implementing strategies to achieve career objectives. These aspects were all addressed late in Stage 3. The specific aspects of his Stage 3 (confronting midlife transition, becoming a mentor) are not relevant: Coelho neither took on the role of a mentor during Stage 3, nor did he consider individual and environmental changes or upgraded his writing skills through formal training, as described in Greenhaus et al. (2010).

In Stage 4, Coelho hardly accepted leadership responsibilities (he seldom commented on political, environmental or societal issues), but only developed himself personally and spiritually. However, one could argue that he mentors his readers indirectly through his publications, based on his calling. Even in late adulthood, Coelho remains committed, although he does not speak about adapting to change and/or to increased age.

Coelho's career is based on passion, a calling and serendipitous events, combined with an intuitive strategy, without any formal education or training. The concepts of the calling, the passion and serendipitous events should be taken into account in the Greenhaus et al. (2010) model. Coelho developed his career against all odds, self-directedly and independent of mentors, societal educational or other social support systems. His career follows an individualised, process without norms, and is infused by passion, personal drive, and meaningfulness. It is energised through his values, characterised by his personal competence, his rejection of authority and autocratic systems (such as school, university, professional societies), and his ability to cope with adversity (in the form of parents, school teachers, university). Through self-direction and personal strength in terms of resilience, resourcefulness and spirituality,

**Table 14.3** Coelho’s career development

Career development	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Coelho’s age	Childhood and adolescence	Young adulthood	Mid-adulthood	Late adulthood
Coelho’s developmental tasks	Professional dream of becoming a writer Develop ideas on professions (writer) and anti-professions (engineer) Explore how professionals of this occupation are/ behave/ think/ feel Explore ways to become a professional writer Collect information from family and peers on profession Passion for the profession and the work Strategies: build image as writer, organise professional association (Rota 15), participate in competitions	Decision to study law, thereby follow suggested and socially accepted career paths (parents, family) Overcome the social influence of others regarding the professional choice Follow the childhood dream/calling (birth of writer) Develop professional skills needed through informal education (reading and writing) Exploring and changing jobs Membership of professional writer associations Crisis and doubts in cases of failure and about strategies to become a writer	Start, increase and maintain professional productivity as writer Deepen the commitment to write Integration of professional life and life design (spirituality) Integration of professional and personal development Living the professional dream, experienced meaningfulness Self-directed, individualised, professional development	Continuous commitment to profession and dream Deepening of passion New perspectives in writing content Interpenetration of profession from different (disciplinary) perspectives Professional (self-directed) assessment and evaluation of career path

Source Author’s own construction

Coelho developed his career. With regard to the Greenhaus et al. (2010) model, several aspects of Stages 2 and 3 are delayed or irrelevant, while others, such as individual passion, meaningfulness, calling or serendipitous events, are highly relevant and need to be included in the model (Table 14.3).

### 14.8.3 *Career Development Research, Psychobiography and the Way Forward*

This study endorses the conclusions of van Niekerk et al. (2015) who have previously highlighted that more research on career development in extraordinary individuals is needed to contribute to career psychology and to the development of suitable models and theories which respond to extraordinary career paths from a holistic point of view through psychobiographical work. Further exploration is needed to understand how extraordinary individuals develop their (often unusual) careers, and to what extent intuition, serendipitous events, calling, passion, strategic and rational career planning and formal training impact on and are interlinked with such individuals. Methodologically, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods should be taken into account to analyse longitudinal single cases through psychobiography using different theories.

Based on these research approaches, psychobiographers should aim at developing career development models which speak to the lives and careers of extraordinary individuals. Thereby, existing models could be refined and new ones developed by taking systems' internal (intuitive/rational, conscious/unconscious, passion/strategy) and external (family, peers, values, status, cultural context, social context) psychodynamic factors into account.

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