

**A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF THE CAREER NARRATIVES OF SIX SOUTH
AFRICAN BLACK PROFESSIONALS**

By

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DECLARATION

Unless specifically indicated to the contrary this study is a result of my own work,

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As the candidates supervisor I have/have not approved this thesis/dissertation for submission.

Signed_____, Name_____, Date _____

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the contextual factors that influence the career development of black South African professionals. The study is a response to the modernism approach to career development which has led careers and career development to be perceived as being linear, stable and fixed. Rational, western career development and career guidance has been used in South Africa but has, however, not been applicable to the South African context as it has been largely influenced by values of individualism and diminishes the importance of context. There has been limited research that explores the influence of wider contextual factors on career development. This study investigates the narratives of career development of a sample black professionals in the context of the legacy of apartheid, which continues to impact the education and training system in South Africa and which continues to create class, racial, gender, and other inequalities around access to educational opportunities. The study uses a qualitative narrative and hermeneutic method based on social constructivism and systems theory, to contribute to theoretical understanding of career development. Six participants (2 males and 4 females) were selected for this study. Being 35 years or older the respondents have lived through the apartheid era which has had an influence on their career development, and also have a substantial career narrative they can reflect on. Non-probability purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used in the study. The study finds that many contextual factors influence the career development of black South African professionals. Family played a significant role, even more so than finances, on the career development of participants. Individuals in the study emphasised the need for social conformity, collective decision making and conforming to familial expectations when it comes to career decision making. These findings challenge traditional theoretical assumptions of a career as solely determined by intrapersonal factors. Other factors such as family, religion, gender, self-efficacy, political factors, socio-economic factors and culture play an important role in career development. It also demonstrates the interplay of family and culture that has largely been ignored within career research. In light of this study's findings, it is suggested that more research using the qualitative method of data collection and analysis in this study could be used to explore the impact of various contextual factors on the career development of black South Africans who have been under-researched in career research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 Background to the research	1
1.2 Problem statement	2
1.3 Research aims.....	5
1.4 Research questions	6
1.5 Overview of the study	6
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Traditional approaches to career development research	7
2.3 Overview and critique of traditional career development theories	8
2.3.1 Holland’s trait-factor theory	9
2.3.2 Super’s life-space theory	11
2.3.3 Critique of traditional career development theories	13
2.4 Social constructionism and the Systems Theory Framework	14
2.4.1 Social constructionism.....	14
2.4.2 Systems theory framework	18
2.5.1 Role of gender	21
2.5.2 Role of culture	21
2.5.3 Role of HIV/AIDS.....	22
2.5.4 Role of Religion and spirituality	23
2.5.5 Role of family	24
2.5.6 Role of education.....	24
2.5.7 Role of socio-economic status.....	25
2.6 Summary	25
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	26

3. Methodology	26
3.1 Research design.....	26
3.2 Research participants.....	28
3.4 Biographical Details	29
3.3 Type of sampling.....	29
3.4 Study procedure, data collection techniques and instruments.....	30
3.5 Method of data analysis	32
3.5.1 Reading one: Reading for the plot and for responses to the narrative.....	32
3.5.2 Reading two: Reading for the voice of the ‘I’	34
3.5.3 Reading three: Reading for relationships	34
3.5.4 Reading four: Placing people within cultural contexts and social structures.	35
3.6 Ethical considerations	35
3.7 Strategies for ensuring the trustworthiness of the study	36
3.7.1 Transferability	36
3.7.2 Credibility	36
3.7.3 Dependability.....	36
3.8 Conclusion.....	37
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	38
4.1 Reading 1: Reading for the plot and responses to the narrative.....	38
4.1.1 Reading for the plot	38
4.2 Enablers	39
4.2.1 Family	39
4.2.2 Perseverance during the transition to democracy	45
4.2.3 Culture	48
4.3 Constraints.....	49
4.3.1 Gendered Positions	49
4.3.2 Socio-economic status	51
4.3.3 Socio-political factors.....	54
4.4 Reading 2: Reading for the voice of the ‘I’	56
4.5 Reading 3: Reading for relationships	58
4.5.1 Family	58

4.5.2 Gendered relationships	60
4.6 Reading 4: Placing people within cultural contexts and social structures	61
4.6.1 Institutions	62
4.6.2 Culture	63
4.6.3 Political factors	64
4.6.5 Community	68
4.7 Summary	70
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	73
5.1 Introduction	73
5.2 Study overview.....	73
5.3 Contributions of this study	74
5.4 Recommendations	76
5.5 Limitations of the study.....	76
5.6. Conclusion.....	77
REFERENCES.....	79
APPENDICES	98
Appendix 1: Respondent introduction letter	98
Appendix 2: Informed consent.....	101
Appendix 3: Interview guide.....	102
Appendix 4: Research approval	103

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the research

Post-apartheid South African society is still characterised by the legacy of apartheid. High levels of inequality still exist between the different racial groups, rates of unemployment are still high and poverty is persistent in formerly disadvantaged groups, which are black¹ African people and particularly black African women. The legacy of apartheid continues to impact the education and training system in South Africa, which continues to create class, racial, gender, and other inequalities around access to educational opportunities.

According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (as cited by Cloete, 2009) a study of post-school youth conducted by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) and the Further Education and Training Institute (FETI) discovered that, in 2007, there were 2.8 million people between the ages of 18 and 24 who were unemployed and not in some form of education or training.

The Government has introduced career education policies and legislation in order to improve career development. This is evident in the National Skills Development Strategy 2010 and as well as in the Skills Development Act of 1998. According to Grawitzky (2007) the National Skills Development Strategy and Skills Development Act were motivated by the commonly held view that the economy was being constrained by a shortage of skilled labour and a political imperative to accelerate the redress of past discrimination in training, education and employment opportunities. The Green paper for post-school education and training by the DHET (2012) emphasises the significance of improved learning and education opportunities for South Africans. It argues that poor quality education and socio-economic factors continue to have an impact on young people as they grapple with their education and work careers. It goes on to state that “It is important to analyse these problems, identify the reasons for their persistence and to put in place

¹ While this thesis uses the concept of ‘race’ and the associated terms of black and white to reflect on racial disparities in the area of career research historically and currently, it is acknowledged that “these are socially constructed labels associated with apartheid-era population classification that served particular political purposes. The use of these terms and constructs in no way implies the acceptance of the racist assumptions on which these labels are based” (Duncan, Bowman, Stevens, Mdikana, 2007:181).

answers to overcome them” (p viii). The paper places emphasis on the need for research that explores the contextual factors that impact on the career development of South Africans. It is hoped that this will ultimately assist in providing appropriate career guidance.

1.2 Problem statement

Career development and career guidance based on Western, rational values, has been used in South Africa but has, however, not been applicable to the South African context because it has been largely influenced by Western values of individualism. Career development is defined as the process of ongoing understanding and implementation of one’s career decisions that provide purpose and direction in one’s vocational future (Peterson, Sampson & Reardon, 1991, as cited in Mhlongo, 2009). The Institute of Career Guidance (ICG), defines career guidance as “... a process of interventions designed to empower individuals to make realistic and well-informed decisions about work and learning which are right for them (ICG, 2002, cited in Bosley, 2004, p.23). This suggests that career guidance is intended to provide individuals with guidance to enable them to make informed career choices and transitions which are related to their educational, personal and career development (Watts and Young, 1997, cited in Bosley, 2004). According to Watson (2009) the multicultural and economic contexts of South Africa are the most important factors influencing career development, and yet they have received insufficient attention in South African career literature. There has not been adequate research done that explores the impact of wider contextual factors on career development. There is a need for frameworks/theories and research that explore the meanings and socio-cultural factors that affect career development in South Africa.

According to Stead and Watson (2006) career psychology in South Africa originated from main stream psychology that had its roots in both European and American psychology. Some of the major career theories that have been influential are the Trait-Factor Theory by Frank Parsons, John Holland’s Person-Environment Fit Theory and Life-Space Theory by Donald Super (as cited in Stead & Watson, 1998). Gelatt’s (1992) observation in early 1990 that these theories were sufficient for environments in which the progress of technology, economics and social welfare was more stable, but not for rapidly changing contexts is still relevant today. Although career theory is transforming traditional theories continue to influence career research and practice. The traditional approaches perceive individuals and the environment as stable and static and did not

adequately address the influence that social contexts have on career development (Stead, 1996). The traditional approaches are positivist in that they reduce individuals to laws and objects that are studied in isolation of the environment (Watson & Stead, 2002). For example, Holland's career theory assumes that individuals pursue work environments that match with their personalities (Watson & Stead, 2002). When this theory is applied in the South African context it becomes problematic, as contextual factors such as socio-economic status and culture play a role in influencing career choices. Therefore traditional theories have been criticised for their static treatment of context and individuals.

Another criticism with regards to traditional theories is their inability to concentrate in a detailed way on sociological issues affecting career choices (Albugamy, 2014, Patton and McMahon, 2014; Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). Mignot (2000) argues that theories which overemphasise the influence of personal agency are not sufficient to explore the role of cultural and structural variables in the career choice behaviours of individuals. Closely aligned to Mignot's argument, Pringle and Mallon (2003) argue that not enough attention is given to social structures such as gender, ethnicity, and context in career literature. According to Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) using traditional approaches in the South African context as a way to promote career development has put emphasis on individuals, rather than communities and as a consequence, disregards the reality of an already disadvantaged majority of the population due to apartheid history (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000) . South Africa is a country that continues to change in terms of economic, cultural and social dynamics; and many of the lingering assumptions of career theories do not accommodate for these environmental changes and interpersonal factors. Career choices are not only determined by individual personality but also by circumstances that individuals are faced with, such as political and economic factors that constrain their employment choices. For example, factors such as culture and family play a big role in determining the career development of women (Albugamy, 2014; Frizelle, 2002). Furthermore, career choices are influenced by psychological factors that are entrenched in certain indigenous understandings of personhood and social context (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000).

Due to the limitations of traditional career theories it is necessary to investigate and foreground alternative theories that acknowledge the impact that contextual and interpersonal factors have on

career development. Career development research in South Africa has previously been largely quantitative in design and informed by Western ideologies, which focuses on individualistic factors while ignoring the wider contextual factors that might have an impact on career development. Mkhize and Frizelle's (2000) argument in early 2000 is still relevant today. At the time of their research they argued that there was a need to understand career development in multiple cultural, social, and historical contexts. While the literature will show that there has been more contextually sensitive research it will also argue that there is a continued need for research that explores the impact of wider contextual factors and that is qualitative in design. Currently there is an absence of theoretical development and empirical research into how individuals in non-Western cultures make career choices. Richardson (2000) argued that vocational psychology is caught within a middle class of white male American and European samples. As a result, there is limited understanding of the impact of culture on career development on non-Western individuals (Hartung, 2002). This lack of attention to contextual factors influencing career choices of individuals that belong to a collective culture in current career choice theories has been raised by other researchers (e.g. Duffy and Dik, 2009; Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005; Ituma et al., 2011; Stead, 2004; Stead & Watson, 2006; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Watson, 2009; Wong & Liu, 2010).

“It is generally acknowledged that South African career counselling, career assessment, and career research has by and large reflected international theories, models and measures, the appropriateness of which has been consistently challenged” (Stead & Watson, 1998, cited in Watson, 2009, pg.135). Due to this history and the political history of South Africa there is insufficient research that explores the career experiences of Black South Africans (Blustein & McWhirter, 2000, as cited in Watson & Stead, 2002). Carpenter (2005) argues that current career development processes and research is still largely based on a western sample and thus does not take into account the influence of race and culture. Discussing the importance of developing an appropriate career psychology in South Africa Stead and Watson (2006, p. 184) argue that “interpretations and meanings of career phenomena should be generated from South African data that may or may not be applicable to people in other countries”. Historically, there has been insufficient research that has focused on Black South Africans and it is, therefore, important to focus on this sample when generating South African data. Considering a history of racist career practices stemming from Apartheid (Nicolas, Naidoo & Pretorius, 2006) there is a need to increase research that opens up for exploration the ongoing ramifications of contextual factors like

apartheid on black South Africans' current career development. Nicolas et al. (2006, p. 184) highlight the importance of research that recognises that "career behaviours of people within various cultural and ethnic groups can vary considerably". As already noted, research in South Africa has focused largely on white participants influence by individualistic culture and there is, therefore, a need to make more visible the experiences of black participants who are influence by more collectivist cultures. It should be noted, however, that recognising the variance in career behaviours does not imply that cultures are homogenous or static. Research that uses a black sample should, therefore, not make claims that homogenise the experiences of black participants, but rather recognises the way in which South African cultures are transitioning (Nicolas et al., 2006).

1.3 Research aims

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of contextual and interpersonal factors on career development through the qualitative analysis of career narratives. It further aims to add to a body of research that explores the career narratives on Black South Africans who have historically been under represented in career research. In sum, the research hopes to contribute towards a growing body of career development research that is informed by context sensitive theories such as the social constructionism and systems theory framework and a qualitative research methodology.

It is hoped that the findings of the study will provide career practitioners and researchers with rich insights into the way in which various contextual and interpersonal factors either constrain or enable individuals' career development.

1.4 Research questions

The following research question frames this research:

- What contextual factors (for example gender, culture, economic and socio-political) influence the career development of black professionals in South Africa?

The research aims to answer the following sub-questions:

- How do the identified contextual factors either constrain or enable black professionals' career development?
- What role do interpersonal factors play in the career development of black professionals?

1.5 Overview of the study

The following chapters of this research are as follows: Chapter Two reviews pertinent literature for the study, exploring the influences of traditional career theories on career research and their limitations, and further explores alternative theories of career research. Chapter Three describes the research methodology of the study, which includes the study design, type of sampling, study procedure, data collection techniques, data analysis, ethical considerations, and the credibility, transferability and dependability of results. Chapter Four encompasses the analysis and discussion of the findings. Chapter Five provides a summary of the study. Conclusions are highlighted and recommendations for future research are made.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the study. The review commences with an exploration of the influences of positivism on career research and theory, focusing mainly on existing traditional theories. Two traditional mainstream career theories are then critically discussed, namely Holland's (1997) career theory and Super's (1980) life-space theory. Problems with the adaption and applicability of these two traditional career theories within the South African context are also discussed. Postmodern approaches to career research are discussed as a viable alternative to the traditional career theories which rely on modernist approaches. The Systems Theory Framework (STF) and social constructionism are then discussed as alternative frameworks for exploring and understanding career development (Patton & McMahon, 2006; Collin & Young, 2000). Thereafter, the role of contextual and interpersonal factors, such as culture, gender, family, spirituality, one's calling and community is explored. Furthermore, the influence of political and economic factors on career development is also discussed. The review concludes with a summary of the ideas which have been covered.

2.2 Traditional approaches to career development research

The traditional approach to career development research is grounded in modernism (Watson & Kuit, 2007). Fundamental to the modernist approach to career research and theory is the belief in a logical-positivist world view, which is that an individual's behaviour can be observed, predicted and measured (McMahon & Watson, 2008). Thus modernist career research is objective, empirical and impersonal. More emphasis is placed on the individual than the context in which the individual lives. It is presumed that individual ideas, opinions, experiences and beliefs originate from within the individual. The individual is perceived as "inhabited by drives and motivations, possessed by traits and characteristics and whose freely chosen actions are monitored by conscience" (Burr, 1995, p. 65).

Modernist approaches are more quantitative than qualitative-based. This modernist approach to careers has led to careers and career development to be viewed as being linear, stable and fixed

(Maree & Beck, 2004). The main underlying assumption of modernism is that every individual is a free, autonomous agent engaging with the world against few (if any) external constraints or barriers (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). This approach fails to accommodate all the contextual complexities which are pertinent to a place like South Africa. For example Sampson (1989) recognised in the late 1980's that that individual's choices within the South African context were often largely limited to choosing between alternatives which are already "pre-determined by socio-economic forces about which one is only vaguely aware or able to affect ... And yet the ideology of autonomy and of individuality remain deeply carved in the subjective consciousness of the culture" (p. 5). It is suggested that despite a considerable time lapse this ideology of autonomy and individuality is still evident in the way in which careers are theorised.

In sum, it is vital that career research, like this study, continue to take the influence of the contextual/external environment on career development into account when exploring career development. According to Stead and Watson (2006) there is a need for researchers to recognise that contextual factors like unemployment, socio-economic status, gender and location all impact on career development. Furthermore, the traditional modernist approach has placed a lot of focus on individuals rather than communities (Watson & Stead, 2002), yet a culture of sharing and a focus on collectivist needs rather than on individualistic needs is characteristic of approximately 90 per cent of South Africans (Maree, 2009). As a consequence, this career development approach has further marginalised the perspectives on life of an already disadvantaged population (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000).

It is therefore these contextual factors that this study aims to explore. Holland's (1997) career theory and Super's (1980) life-space theory are now critically discussed. These two theories have been chosen as they are characteristic of the traditional theories influenced by modernism. In addition, it is argued that these theories continue to have an impact on career research. Other relevant theories have been omitted due to space and time constraints.

2.3 Overview and critique of traditional career development theories

According to Stead and Watson (1999), "Career theories provide parameters within which we can understand career behaviour and choice, and from which we can hypothesise about the meaning

of such behaviour and choice” (pg.15). The following section of this review explores two of the traditional theories on career development that continues to inform career research and practices. Due to space constraints each theory is briefly outlined and then critically discussed.

2.3.1 Holland's trait-factor theory

According to Mokgolodi (2014), John Holland's theory of vocational personality evolved from the trait-factor theory. They argue that Holland suggests that there are certain types of individuals and certain types of matching work environments. Holland believes that traits of an individual correspond to one of the six personality types, which are the realistic type, investigative type, artistic type, social type, enterprising type and the conventional type (Mokgolodi, 2014; Patton & McMahon, 2006). This personality type also corresponds to a specific work environment. Holland also believes that individuals often pursue work environments that match the type of person that they perceive themselves to be (Mokgolodi, 2014, Patton & McMahon, 2006). Holland (1996) argues, "it is assumed - other things being equal- that congruence of person and job leads to job satisfaction, stability of career path, and achievement" (p. 397). According to this theory, what determines one's behaviour is the interaction between an individual personality and what makes up an individual's environment. Thus, according to this theory, individuals often search for environments that will allow them to exercise their skills and abilities and express their attitudes and values (Booyens, 2012).

The key criticism of Holland's theory is that it is too simplistic, the model fails to identify social changes, and the theory does not effectively deal with how individuals develop their personality type (Mokgolodi, 2014,). However, Brown (2003) believes that the theory “will continue to dominate the assessment of interests and research on variables such as occupational satisfaction” (p. 469). Nevertheless, John Holland's theory greatly impacted the field, visibly demonstrated by several research projects inspired by the theory (Herr et al., 2004). Stead and Watson (1999) argue that a limitation of Holland's Theory is that it offers a rigid classification of occupations. It is argued that the environment is never constant as it is always changing, therefore one cannot stay in an occupation for an indefinite period of time. Stead and Watson (2006, p. 47) further argue that the person-environment interaction on which Holland's theory is built is described “in static trait-oriented terms”. This static conceptualisation is problematic considering what Stead and Watson

(2006, p. 47) refer to as “the complexities and change that are observed in modern careers”. In the early 1990’s Gellat (1992) highlight that due to the changing realities of the economy and occupation due to globalisation, one cannot remain in an occupation for a long time. This continues to be the case today. Stead and Watson (1999) further argue that the philosophical assumptions of the trait-factor theory need to be challenged. For example, the assumption that an individual makes a career choice only once, that there is a career choice readily available for every individual and that there is a single right career choice for every individual. These assumptions disregard the economic and political realities of the contexts in which individuals develop their careers.

In the South African context where huge inequalities still exist, the majority of people do not have the luxury of choosing occupations that match with their personalities. In reality, career choices are often about financial security and a means of escaping from poverty. South Africa is a country with one of the highest unemployment and illiteracy rates, in which a vast majority of individuals cannot afford education. This then affects the career development of individuals. Holland’s theory does not address how ones career is constructed within its historical and cultural context. For example, prior to 1994, South Africa was in a period in which the main ideology was apartheid, meaning black people were politically, socially and economically marginalised. According to Stead (1996) it was not because of personal preference that individuals entered into certain occupations, but rather this occurred because of the main ideology of the time, which entailed racialised legislation that determined the careers of individuals. Career choices are also informed by parents or elders in a family. In most collectivist cultures, elders are viewed as experts who hold important knowledge, and therefore most individuals seek advice from them.

The difficulty of applying the traditional approach espoused by Holland is demonstrated by a study on cross-cultural research testing Holland’s theory done in South Africa by Watson, Schoregevel and Stead (1997). The findings show that Holland’s typology does not provide a good fit with the realities of disadvantaged black South African adolescents, and thus were not applicable to the context (Watson et al., 1997). Although the theory has some room for improvement, it is still relevant and useful, but it needs to be supplemented by other theories (Costa & McCrae, 1998).

2.3.2 Super's life-space theory

According to Stead and Watson (1999) Super's theory is named the life-space theory of career development. It incorporates the lifespan by including a developmental approach. The theory states that one's career choices are made based on a lifelong process comprising of particular stages during which career choices are made. Super argues that individuals go through five career stages during their lifespan. In each stage there is a mastery of specific tasks and each stage is affiliated with an age that one ought to be in that stage (Stead & Watson, 1999). The stages are Growth (0-15), Exploration (15-24), Establishment (25-44), Maintenance (45-64) and Disengagement/Decline 65+. Career maturity needs to take place in each stage for successful accomplishment of age and stage development (Stead & Watson, 1999).

Super's greatest contribution to career development has been his notion of self-concept, which is a key part of Super's approach to career behaviour (Zunker, 1990 as cited in Mokgolodi, 2014). The term 'self-concept' has been defined as the driving force which determines the career pattern that an individual will follow during the course of their life span (Mokgolodi, 2014; Herr et al., 2004; Zunker, 2012). According to Super, self-concept changes eventually and develops throughout one's life, through various experiences (van Reenen, 2010). Super conceptualises a career as a dynamic process, which shifts from focusing on understanding an individual's present behaviour towards a more holistic time perspective in which individuals' past and future career behaviour are also taken into account. Stead and Watson (1999) argue that, although Super emphasises a holistic view of the self-concept and highlights the impact of socio-political, socio-economic and familial factors, however his theory assumes a context in which an individual may have different options when making a career decision. In the context of South Africa, widespread unemployment makes it difficult to apply this theory. Super's theory fails to take account of the dynamic interaction between an individual and the environment (Chinyamurindi, 2012). The theory does not accommodate the uniqueness of individuals, that individuals are different, mature at different stages and cannot assume a fixed level of maturity and vocational commitment at a certain age (Chinyamurindi, 2012). Individuals from rural or impoverished communities are not as exposed to different exploratory learning experiences as individuals from urban and advantaged

communities, who would have a high level of career maturity. A study done in South Africa by Pieterse (2005) on the relationship between time perspectives and career maturity for grade 11 and 12 learners found that learners from advantaged schools achieved the highest average in career maturity in comparison to learners in disadvantaged schools who achieved the lowest. This further supports findings by Reid-Van Niekerk and Van Niekerk (1990) who found that coloured and black first year students acquire lower career maturity attitudes than their white counterparts. Based on these two studies it is evidenced the role that contextual factors such as culture and race play in career development. Super fails to take into account contextual factors that might have an influence in one's career development and career maturity.

Building on Super's work, Savickas (2005) developed a theory called Career Construction Theory which is a more recent development in career theory and practice which de-emphasises career maturity and argues for career adaptability. According to Savickas (2005), "careers do not unfold; they are constructed as individuals make choices that express their self-concepts and substantiate their goals in the social reality of work roles" (Savickas, 2005, p. 43, as cited in Muir, 2014). Thus, Savickas places emphasis on meaning and interpersonal processes which play a role in vocational behaviour (Muir, 2014). Contrary to the arguments against Supers theory, Savickas supports Supers life-space theory but modernises his ideas by bridging the segments of life-span and life-space theory (Muir, 2014). Savickas proposes that career adaptability replace career maturity as the central construct in career development theory (Muir, 2014). "Adaptability means the quality of being able to change, without great difficulty, to fit new or changed circumstances. The connotation of unending change improves on maturity and the stage model by emphasizing a continual need to respond to new circumstances and novel situations, rather than to master a predictable and linear continuum of development tasks" (Savickas, 1997, p.254). Thus career adaptability is the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions. According to Savickas (2013), "Career construction theory recognises the increasingly temporary nature of work and recommends that individuals need to become adaptable to macro-contextual career influence in order to prepare themselves for possibilities" (as cited in Watson, 2013). Central to career adaptability is a planful attitude, self and environmental exploration and as well as informed decision making (Savickas, 1997, cited in Mokgolodi, 2014). Watson (2013)

argues that Savickas definition of career adaption makes sense in a post-industrial world as it may be difficult to interpret in a world that perpetuates an underclass of underemployed and underpaid workers. Ones definition of possibilities in a depressed working environment thus becomes a challenge (Watson, 2013). Savickas (2013) further argues that one's development is directed by ones adaption to an environment rather than by motivation of inner structures (as cited in Watson, 2013).

2.3.3 Critique of traditional career development theories

De Bruin (1999) argues that Super and Holland take insufficient account of the context in which career development takes place. Brown and Brooks (1990) argue that most traditional theories of career development have not sufficiently recognised aspects such as race and socio-economic status in career development. According to Dik and Duffy (2009) both Super's theory and Holland's theory assume that individuals making career decisions have the volition to do so and are primarily seeking their own satisfaction. Decisions are often made with limited options or in a collectivist context. External factors, both positive and negative, shape the development of internal interests, values and skills among individuals. Dik and Duffy (2009) argue that family expectations and needs, life circumstances, spiritual and religious factors and social service motivation can be external factors/influences on career choices. Each of these categories represents factors outside the individual that are hypothesised to constrain or motivate individual behavioural choice. Individuals don't always make career decisions out of volition or out of primarily seeking their own satisfaction, but rather external factors come into play. A study by Rousseau and Venter (2009), aimed at finding out the importance of factors related to career choice among Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University students, found that culture, friends and family were the primary sources of information when making a career decision.

The goal of determining the objective truth and perfectly matching the person to the environment has been perceived as a fruitless endeavour as human beings are always engaged in a process of on-going self-construction. Individuals create meaning based on their culturally bound construction of reality (Cushmen, 1995; Collin & Young, 1992). Traditional theories also fail to take into consideration the role that chance events and uncertainty play in career development (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Career development is not always linear; events that happen through

chance encounters play a huge role in career outcomes. Chance encounters or events are unplanned events that occur randomly in one's life, which create opportunities and learning for one who encounters them (Mitchell, Levin & Krumboltz, 1999). Both theories also do not take account of the role that spirituality and religiosity plays in career development (Dik & Duffy, 2009). Thus, Savickas (2013) argues that through the deconstruction, reconstruction and construction of traditional career theories, it is believed that career theory and practice will be able to be responsive to the complexities of career development in the twenty-first century (cited in Watson, 2013).

2.4 Social constructionism and the Systems Theory Framework

There is a need for more qualitative, constructivist approaches to career development theory, as these approaches provide for broader contextual factors affecting career development. These approaches also have potential to address the diverse cultural perspectives and experiences and meanings that influence individuals' career aspirations and careers (Maree & Molepo, 2006; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Watson & McMahon, 2009).

2.4.1 Social constructionism

One of the main limitations of the traditional theories is that they have reduced human functioning to laws and principles/assumptions. Holism, which is central to the creation of meaning, is not encompassed in the traditional theories. Events, behaviours, and attitudes can only be understood in relation to the context in which it takes place. Individuals do not exist in isolation, which traditional theories imply, but exist in a system with interactions of various factors. A positivist worldview was used by traditional theories, which was quantity oriented and which emphasised the discovery of casual laws, empirical observations and research that was value free (Neuman, 2001). With the many influences that affect individuals, one needs an interpretive paradigm that looks beyond casual laws. According to Cohen and Durbely et al (2004) the assumptions of social constructionism can inform an alternative approach to researching career development.

Social constructionism emerged within a movement of postmodernism which rejects the idea of an ultimate truth, and contrasts with the western modernist tradition that highlights the notion of a self-contained individual with measurable traits (McIlveen & Schutheiss, 2012). According to

Collin and Young (2000) social constructionism stems from multidisciplinary sources such as sociology, literary studies and postmodern approaches. In application to career research, social constructionism enables the understanding of the various meanings that are attached to career development, making it possible to discover the influence of gender, education, power, socio-economic status and other social and political factors on the process of career development (Young & Collin, 2004).

Social constructionism views the world as not being a fixed/objective entity, external to individuals and impacting them in a deterministic way, but as constructed by individuals through their social practices and through language. Language is constructed by the individual through relationships which are rooted in socio-cultural, socio-economic and as well as socio-political context (Burr, 1995). A career is constructed by the actor herself/himself through interaction with others. Human behaviour according to this perspective can only be understood in the context of which the behaviour occurs.

Social constructionism holds principles that differ from positivist approaches. Social constructionism takes a critical stance towards the ability to know empirical knowledge and ways of understanding individuals and the world. It challenges the worldview of knowledge being based on objective facts and that each person has some definable and discoverable nature (Burr, 1995; McIlveen & Schultheiss, 2012). Language is seen as a tool to construct alternative understandings and perspectives (McIlveen & Schultheiss, 2012).

Social constructionism believes that one's understanding of the world is historically and culturally embedded. Knowledge is recognised as a product of history and culture, Social constructionist theory assumes that people are a by-product of their environment. Thus one's career choice is conceptualised as constructed within relationships (Collin & Young, 2000). One's career constructions are based on language of which draws upon social and cultural discourses such as gender, age education and job status (Burr, 1995). Language provides a way of interpreting the world and giving it meaning. In this sense language constitutes rather than reflects reality. There are no truths that are objective, but only shared versions of knowledge that are constructed by everyday social interaction (Burr, 1995). Socially constructed and negotiated forms of worldviews

can take a variety of forms and lead to associated patterns of social action. The social constructionist perspective places focus on the process and as well as the dynamics of social interaction and not on the structure/framework of the individual knowledge of the object truth (Burr, 1995). According to Bujold (2004) a narrative can be understood as means through which individuals give interpretations and meaning to their experiences and actions. Young and Collin (1992, as cited in Frizelle, 2002) illustrate the socially constructed nature of narratives as follows, “It is built from history, culture, society, relationships and language. It embodies context, although individuals are not likely fully aware of how context is manifest in their narratives or in the actions on which they are based. But we become aware of context through narrative”. (p. 8). Social constructionism believes that experience is subjective and has many different meanings for each individual. Thus research informed by social constructionism uses narrative accounts of the experiences and lives of different of individuals (Burr, 1995, as cited in Blustein et al, 2004).

Individuals come to understand themselves as part of a life narrative that of which brings together unity and meaningful order to their experience. The narratives or meanings that individuals construct are constructed through the influence of multiple systems. A career is given expression or meaning differently by different groups. How an individual defines a career depends on the group that one is part of.

Culture plays a role in determining the meanings one makes. According to Stead (2004) “culture is a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols” (p. 74). To illustrate this, Stead and Watson (1999) show how “work” takes different meanings among Xhosa speakers. The word *imisebenzi* (plural noun) refers to the work related to cultural duties at home or in the community, and *umsebenzi* (singular noun) refers to a worker conducting either formal or informal work. This highlights the various meanings attached to one word and the relevance the word has to the specific culture. This also shows the many facets of work for individuals that are linked to cultural contexts. Collectivist cultures conceive of the self as interdependent; one cannot make a unilateral decision. However for individualists (Westerners) career decisions are made in a unilateral manner. This highlights how different cultural meanings influence career choice. There is meaning associated with important career constructs such as career maturity, career decision making, career values and life roles (Stead, 1996).

Gender also plays an important role in how meaning is created in terms of career choices (Stead, 1996). In most African cultures, a career is associated with males as they are seen as the head of the households, while women are considered to be child-bearers and are trained to be good housewives. A study conducted by Cohen, Duberley and Mallon (2002) on females moving into portfolio careers, was informed by social construction theory and was interpretative and qualitative and also based on a life history methodology. The study sampled 41 female professionals who left organisations and entered into portfolio careers. The females described several factors that influenced their decisions which were characterised by a desire to leave an organisation which caused them discomfort on a personal and professional level. Some of the respondents believed they could take an important role in changing the structures of career opportunities which are available to them as women. Some of the females in the study stated parental duties and the desire to ensure the best for their families as genuine reasons to leave. The women described themselves as “pioneers”, “trend setters”, and “role models”. This study enables one to examine the role of gender, power and ideology in how individuals make sense of their careers. Another study by Frizelle (2002) explores the influence of contextual factors affecting career development of ten black Professional South African women, The study indicates that women understood their career development as situated in, conditional on and profoundly dependent on a number of contextual factors. Various factors, including economic factors, apartheid legislation and policy, cultural values and gender, were seen as instrumental in directing the career development of women (Frizelle, 2002). Other issues such as financial constraints, positive uncertainty, family, culture and socio-political constraints were identified as factors which forced women into certain areas of employment (Frizelle, 2002).

Social constructionism allows one to address how careers are constructed and to be critically aware of the process of career development in its historical and cultural context. Similar to social constructionism, systems theory also acknowledges that the individual is influenced by the world which is constantly changing and that the social world is constructed through social processes and interaction of various systems.

2.4.2 Systems theory framework

The Systems Theory Framework has been identified as a constructivist approach by Patton and McMahon (2006) and thus shares a constructivist and interpretative stance with social constructionism. Systems theory framework demonstrates how the different systems that one is part of are constructed, how meaning is informed in different systems and how various systems influence each other in informing one's career choice. Understanding of careers therefore comes from an understanding and interpretation of the meanings and narratives that people tell about their career experiences.

The Systems Theory Framework is a meta-theoretical framework rather than a theory (McMahon, 2014). The STF as an overarching framework, values the contribution of other theories as they provide detailed accounts of constructs it depicts (McMahon, 2014). Patton and McMahon (2006) define the Systems Theory Framework as a map for understanding the roots of career counselling. According to Patton and McMahon (2006) the Systems Theory Framework places emphasis on the individual system which encompasses a series of intrapersonal influences on career development, such as one's personality, ability, gender, and sexual orientation. The individual system is linked with influences that consist of the individual's social system as well as the broader environmental/societal system. According to Austin, Bezuidenhout and du Plessis (2009) different levels and groupings of the social context can be described as systems that are interdependently connected to the whole. For one to have understanding of the whole, one has to examine the different systems. If a single system is affected, the whole automatically becomes affected (Austin, Bezuidenhout & Du Plessis et al., 2009). The Systems Theory Framework presents career development as a dynamic process, depicted through its process influences, recursiveness, change over time and chance. According to Patton and McMahon (2006), "Fundamental to understanding the Systems Theory Framework is the notion that each system is an open system which is subject to influence from outside and may also influence that which is beyond its boundaries. The interaction of influences is termed recursiveness in the Systems Theory Framework" (p.154). The systems of influence are situated within the context of time – past, present and future. One's past influences the present and both the past and present influence the future.

McMahon (2014) identifies two broad components of Systems Theory Framework which are content and process influences in career development. Content influences refer to the individual influence system, the social influence system and environmental-societal influence system (McMahon, 2014). Within the individual system a range of intrapersonal influences are included such as one's values, personality, gender, interests, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation (McMahon, 2014). From an STF perspective, such influences can be accounted for by subjective narrative accounts told by the individual themselves and by drawing on theory and research from other disciplines. Within the social influence system a range of societal influences are included such as family, peers, school, media and the broader environmental societal system that of which includes influences such as socioeconomic circumstances, globalization and geographic location (McMahon, 2014). An individual is not perceived as an individual entity but is perceived as a system and part of a greater contextual system consisting of the social and environmental-societal systems (McMahon & Watson, 2008; McMahon, 2014). Both the components influence each other and all have an impact on career development.

According to Young and Popaduiuk (2012) a story/narrative is the key feature of the Systems Theory Framework in which an individual brings meaning to the systems of influence through a construction of their own functional autobiographical narrative (McIlveen & Patton, 2007). People are not perceived as isolated beings but as agents that are socially embedded which constantly interact with various systems of influence.

In a study by Stead and Watson (1993), black South African high school students were asked to rank the five most important sources of career information. Guidance teachers and parents were recognised as the most important sources of career information. According to Stead and Watson (1993) the advice of black disadvantaged parents was inadequate. A lot of black parents worked in low income jobs mostly because of the political ideology of the time which constrained educational and career development. Subsequently, knowledge of career options held by the parents and by children remained limited. The study illustrates how various systems such as family, legislation and individual factors are interdependent, and how changes in one system of influence brings about changes in other systems (Ramphele, 1992, cited in Stead and Watson, 1993). This study furthermore confirms that career development is an outcome of an individual's

embeddedness in a particular socio-cultural context. Systems Theory Framework provides a means to understand how these contextual issues affect the career development process. Systems Theory Framework has also been used in recent career psychology research by Bojuwe and Mbanjwa (2006) to investigate the contextual factors that influence the career choices of South African tertiary students.

Systems Theory Framework supports a holistic and multidisciplinary view of career development, which includes intrapersonal, interpersonal and as well as other wider contextual influences (Arthur & McMahon, 2005; Watson et al, 2004). Systems Theory Framework informs understanding in career development in looking at how various contextual factors affect career choices and also highlights that career choices are not only influenced by individuals and intrapersonal factors such as one's personal interests and personality, but also by various systems interacting with each other. Factors such as family, level of education, political factors, socio-economic status and culture all affect career choice. There is a need for research that will explore how different systems influence career development. Both the social construction theory and systems theory framework have highlighted the need to look at wider contextual factors that have an influence on the career development of individuals. Both approaches acknowledge that an individual does not live in isolation but they construct meanings through interactions with various systems and social processes. Both the social construction theory and systems theory framework also inform research that is more qualitative; which can explore the meanings, interactions of numerous systems and wider contextual factors that affect career development. Social constructionism is therefore valuable in the South African context as it recognises that humans are social beings who create meanings through interactions. It does not focus on individualistic factors but also takes into account the wider social influences that influence career development. Systems Theory Framework is also useful in the South African context as it explores how numerous unique historical factors, institutions and systems have an influence on career development.

A number of authors state that there are numerous contextual factors that significantly influence ones career development. The influence of gender, culture, HIV/AIDS, religion and spirituality, family, education, socio-economic status will be discussed in relation to career choice.

2.5 Contextual factors influencing careers

Up until this point the review of the literature has primarily been a theoretical review arguing for an approach to career research that explores contextual factors that either inhibit or foster career development. This section aims to identify and briefly explore a selection of contextual factors that have been identified in the literature as having an influence on career development. While a number of other contextual factors are likely to play a role, this section explores the factors that have emerged in the research sourced and reviewed for this study.

2.5.1 Role of gender

Gender has been reported to be one factor that plays a significant role in career development (Hancock, 2012; O'Neil & Bilimaria, 2005). Through sex role socialisation at an early age, individuals learn that females and males have different abilities, interests and aptitudes which are often informed by school, family and peers, and which dictate different jobs for men and women (Hayes, 1986). Career stereotyping occurs as young as 5-6 years of age (Hayes, 1986). This suggests that when individuals make career decisions they already hold specific gendered ideas about certain occupations. A study conducted by Sinclair and Carlsson (2013) found that males preferred male-oriented jobs such as of being a fire fighter, computer technician, car retailer or pilot, while females preferred female-oriented occupations such as being a nurse, hairdresser, fashion designer or kindergarten teacher. In another study by Frizelle (2002) on black female professionals, it was found that gender plays a significant role in the career development. Women found themselves torn between two worlds; one world where they were embedded in a collectivist culture which values interdependence and conforming to familial expectations and the other world which values independence.

2.5.2 Role of culture

According to Stead (2002) career development is in part determined by ones cultural values and constraints. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

(2001, as cited in Ratele, 2002), culture is a “set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs”. Thus culture is a symbolic and material habit-dependent system where lessons and acts are learnt over time and used to navigate our worlds (Ratele, 2002).

Culture plays a role in career development in terms of creating opportunities and as well as constraining opportunities. Fitzgerald and Betz (1994) state that culture can play a constraining role in career development and career choice through a process of gender socialisation, in which in some cultures women’s desires to seek out non-traditional occupations may be limited in a case where their role and responsibility in the household may be emphasised.

Culture also plays a role in career development in that individuals from western culture emphasise individuality, self-actualisation and competitiveness and thus score high in career maturity than individuals from a collectivist culture. In contrast, individuals in collectivist cultures emphasise cooperation, interdependence and are more community-oriented, this then explains why many individuals from collectivist cultures are in social-type occupations (Stead, 1996; Mjoli, 1987). Cross-cultural career research that has been done by Reid-Van Niekerk and Van Niekerk (1990) support the link between culture and career choice as they found that black technikon students were more oriented towards community roles and occupations and student roles than the white students. Black students emphasise social conformity, collective decision making and career decisions made need to conform to the familial and societal expectations and approval is sought from parents and other authority figures while whites emphasis one’s self-enhancement and self-assertion (Reid-van Niekerk & van Niekerk, 1990) .

2.5.3 Role of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS also plays a role in career development (Frizelle, 2002). HIV/AIDS plays a constraining role in the career development of many young South Africans. South Africa has amongst the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the world (Bozalek, 1997, cited in Frizelle, 2002). The illness impacts more upon females who are often the caregivers of the ill which results in

many females leaving school to provide assistance to the ill. This consequently reduces female participation in sectors beyond home (Bozalek, 1997, cited in Frizelle, 2002).

2.5.4 Role of Religion and spirituality

Aspects of spirituality and religion have been examined regarding their relationship with career variables by various authors (Bigham, 2008; Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Dik & Duffy, 2009). According to Duffy (2006) spirituality and religion have a positive relation to career choice. One's spirituality and religiosity shapes the preference for careers that individuals want to pursue. Spirituality and religion are often used interchangeably by authors and yet they are two different terms. According to Duffy (2006:52), "Religiousness generally refers to a person's relationship with a certain religion, church, or faith community. Spirituality, in contrast, can refer to varying concepts such as an individual's relationship with a higher power or powers, a type of energy or guiding force, or a belief system in a common good". Studies have shown that religious beliefs often played a role in career development by which individuals believe that they have been called to a specific occupation by a higher power (Hirsbunner, 2012, Duffy, 2006). A 'calling' has been defined as one's orientation toward work motivated by external summons to integrate work with one's sense of purpose and meaningfulness in life. Individuals who choose a career based on a calling believe that God had predestined them to be in that particular career. A sense of calling provides individuals with a sense of identification, meaning, importance and a sense of moral due and vigilance (Duffy et al, 2012). It was found from various studies that individuals that believed they were called to certain occupations viewed work differently and experienced greater satisfaction at work, and their calling gave their work deeper meaning than those that simply believe that their work was just a fit for their skills and interests (Bigham, 2008; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Prater & McEwen, 2006; Werzeshiewski, 2010). Lips-Wiersma (2002) conducted a study of sixteen individuals regarding the role that spirituality played in their careers. It was found that spirituality inspired a desire to serve others. According to Duffy and Blustein (2005) spirituality plays a huge role in one's career decision self-efficacy which has been described as, "the degree to which individuals believe that they can successfully complete tasks that are necessary in making career decisions" (p.430).

2.5.5 Role of family

The role that family plays in career choice and development cannot be underestimated (Vondracek et al., 1986, as cited by Stead, 2002). Family involvement is the most significant predictor of career choice, especially in gender-oriented occupations. In a study by Stead and Watson (1993) on black high school students, parents were considered more important sources of information than teachers and other relatives. This is also influenced by culture, in which in most collectivist cultures it is believed that elders are carriers of knowledge. Parents also support specific occupations which often follow their own. Families also hold gendered perspectives which also influence an individual's career choice (Mudhovosi & Chireshe, 2012).

2.5.6 Role of education

Historically career education and career development in South Africa has been infused with inequality as it was largely determined by race (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999; Bholanath, 2007; Stead & Watson, 1998). A long-standing policy restricted access to education for blacks historically and allowed career development to operate within the segregated segments (Bholanath, 2007). Historical inequalities resulted in limited access to career education services, little exposure to the world of work and limited knowledge (Bholanath, 2007). Thus race was a factor that determined the above mentioned inequalities and it is, therefore, important that more research is done with Black participants. Inequalities were experienced primarily by Black South Africans and it is therefore important to explore their on-going impact.

According to Stead (2002) education plays a role in career choice. Individuals from disadvantaged schools often receive inadequate education, which results in a large pool of unskilled labour. School career guidance is often inadequate as there are relatively untrained personnel, which therefore results in a situation in which individuals are unaware as to which factors they need to consider when choosing a career. Because of the limited career knowledge that they have, individuals end up choosing a career on a trial-and-error basis (Stead, 2002). Parents' level of education also plays a part in an individual's career choice (Stead, 1996). In the South African

context, the limited education that parents received in the days of the apartheid restricted their educational and career development and has had a ripple effect on their offspring, as both the occupational knowledge and that of the offspring then remains limited (Stead, 1996).

2.5.7 Role of socio-economic status

The poor financial bases of individuals from impoverished environments or communities often deter choices of education and careers. According to Salami (2006) individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to avoid careers that appear to require a long period of training as their finances are limited. Salami (2006) also highlights a link between socio-economic status and gender-oriented careers, finding that the lower the socio-economic status, the more female students choose gender-oriented careers such as nursing and teaching. The majority of the students that chose engineering were from higher socio-economic backgrounds. This suggests that one's socio-economic status plays a big role in career choice and development.

2.6 Summary

An individualistic and positivist approach to career development research and theory in South Africa is too restrictive considering our local complexities. By failing to take account of the contextual factors that influence career development, career research would serve to further marginalise an already disadvantaged majority. There have been calls for more qualitative, contextualised career development research that will accommodate the local realities. Central to this study is how constructs such as socio-economic status, gender, culture, family, spirituality and religiosity interact with each other and how they impact on career development. Social constructionism and the Systems Theory Framework were proposed as the alternative theories which will be able to take account of the contextual environment.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology used to conduct the present study. The research design includes the sampling techniques used, data collection procedures and analysis of the data. The approach and design of the study are discussed in detail. Ethical issues pertaining to the study are also presented, and lastly, strategies for ensuring the trustworthiness of the study are discussed.

3.1 Research design

The study adopted a qualitative research approach rooted in the social constructionism and systems theory paradigm, based on the aims and objectives of the study. The strength of this study is in demonstrating the importance of qualitative research that allows for an exploration of the contextual influences on career, as highlighted by Creswell (2003).

Due to close researcher involvement in this research, the researchers were able to gain an insider's view of the field of career research. This allowed the researchers to explore the issues that are often missed by quantitative research. Creswell (2003) argues that qualitative studies are appropriate when there is a lack of literature. Since there was not enough research on black professionals in career research, a qualitative research method effectively captured the lived experiences of the participants in this study.

According to Blustein et al. (2004) qualitative research occurs in natural settings in which data is derived from the individual's perspective. A qualitative research design focuses on complex relations between personal and social meanings, individual and cultural practices as well as the context in its totality (Ulin et al., 2002). All qualitative research is flexible, and qualitative designs can be readily changed to meet the demands of the immediate research situation. Using the method and the framework of qualitative research, social constructionist research seeks to establish a more empathetic and closer connection to the participants and to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences through first-hand accounts, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, interviews and narratives (Burr, 1995). This design helps researchers to not only gain a more complex and realistic

understanding of the participants' lives but also offers a means to participate together with participants' as they construct meanings (Ulin et al., 2002). Qualitative research methods fit well into the social constructionist and Systems Theory Framework; as they both explore complex relationships between individuals, groups, and their contexts (Lee, 1999, as cited in Blustein et al., 2004). The systems theory framework and social constructionism that was presented in the previous chapter offers a useful tool in this study in terms of guiding this research. Theoretical frameworks in this study reinforce the notion that a person is a system and is always interacting in the wider societal sphere. The constructionist and constructivist approaches to career development were, therefore, useful in this study as both theories acknowledge the external factors that play a role in the career choice of individuals. Both the theories provide an understanding of meaning to lie in the object, the person, the idea or an event in the real world (Stenqvist, 2015).

According to Chinyamurindi (2012) a qualitative approach in career research and development will be valuable for a number of reasons. Firstly, a qualitative approach will give voice to samples that have been neglected. Secondly, a qualitative approach enables a contextual understanding of careers and thus helps in developing a theory from context specific cases. Lastly, a qualitative approach will assist in capturing in detail cultural and social nuances. Postmodernism stipulates that reality is created by individuals and groups in various personal, historical and cultural contexts and emphasis is placed on context, meaning and language (Hergenbahn, 2005). The postmodern approach embraces local contextual accounts of individuals. Postmodern approaches make use of constructivist theories such as Systems Theory Framework and social constructionism and narratives; which all hold a belief that individuals need to be studied in the context of their environment (Blustein et al., 2004).

According to Terre Blanche et al. (2006) social constructionist approaches to research argue that individuals' thoughts, feelings and experiences are informed and shaped by the particular social context in which they reside, and in such a way the meaning of these experiences exist at a social rather than an individual level. A qualitative design therefore fits well with the research as it explores the subjective accounts of black participants' career development, and also shows how career choices are influenced by larger societal discourses.

According to Patton and McMahon (2006) both systems theory and social constructivism have been developed from a similar worldview and both acknowledge that the person is an open system who is subject to influence from the external environment. Social constructionism and constructivism focus on meaning-making; constructing psychological worlds through individual and also through social processes and interaction, which are central to assumptions in this study. It is for these reasons that a qualitative methodology was selected for this research.

3.2 Research participants

In this study, a non-probability, purposive sample of six black, Zulu-speaking, South African males and females from Durban, KwaZulu-Natal participated in the study. The sample was made of two males and four females. A small sample was chosen because of the nature of the research which is qualitative. Qualitative research seeks transferability rather than generalizability. The goal of qualitative research is to produce data that is conceptually representative and not statistically representative of people within a specific context (Ulin et al., 2002).

The participants were thirty years and older. Four participants were married with children and the other two participants were not married. All participants were in different professions and had been in their professions for more than five years. The participants work roles fell similarly into four broad groups (managers, technical specialists, functional specialists, and generalists). Black professional females and males were selected for this study because most career development research in South Africa has primarily focused on white samples (de Bruin & Nel, cited in Stead & Watson, 1998). Please see table 1 below for specific biographical details.

Inclusion criteria on which the participants were selected are that participants should have been in their profession for five years or more, be 35 years of age or older, hold a professional tertiary qualification, and be a black South African. These requirements were necessary because participants would have lived through the apartheid era, which had an influence on their career development, and also because they have a substantial career narrative they can reflect on. Males and females were chosen to allow for multiple perspectives, which reduced the limitations of using one gender and also allows insights and comparison in terms of how contextual factors, such as the social construct of gender, impacts on the career development process.

3.4 Biographical Details

The following table provides an indication of the biographical details of the sample used, indicating their name, occupation, gender, race, age, marital status and number of children.

Table 1: Participants Biographical Details

Name	Occupation	Gender	Race	Age	Marital Status	No.of children
1. Anonymous (1)	Electrical Engineer and Artisan	Male	Black	57	Married	3
2. Anonymous (2)	Maths Lecturer	Female	Black	47	Married	4
3. Cynthia	Nurse	Female	Black	42	Married	2
4. 'Ned'- Pseudonym	Social Worker	Female	Black	36	Single	0
5. Sandile Mthethwa	Manager	Male	Black	40	Single	0
6. Thulile Mlotshwa	Office Administrator	Female	Black	37	Married	1

3.3 Type of sampling

Non-probability purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used in the study. Purposive sampling was used because it allows the researcher to choose a case that illustrates some features or processes that the researcher is interested in (Silverman, 2001; Neuman, 2001). The purposive sampling enabled the researcher to locate the participants which met the criteria. According to Neuman (2001) snowball sampling is a method for sampling the cases in a network. The researcher begins with one case, and then based on the information about the interrelationships from that case, finds other cases and repeats the process several times. This sampling type was relevant for the study as it assisted in identifying the participants that met the criteria. One person referred another person and that person in turn referred another person who met the criteria. Participants were identified through already existing networks between the university and surrounding communities. Colleagues were approached to help identify key informants that met the criteria. As the researcher did not go to a specific organisation and the researcher had to rely on a referral network of specific people, referrals from previous cases were used, and these referrals further assisted in referring

more cases. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used as the research did not target a specific organisation with a readily available sample and also because there were specific criteria that participants had to meet, which is that they must be black South African professional and must be over the age of 35 years. Purposive and snowball sampling also assisted in the research process of constructing narratives and meaning together with participants, as it was easier for the participants to trust the researchers as they were referred to the researchers by a friend.

3.4 Study procedure, data collection techniques and instruments

Before the collection of data, the study was first approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (see appendix 4). Data for this research was collected by three different researchers. These are three female students who interviewed two participants each. Two of the researchers interviewed one male and one female each. The third researcher interviewed two females due to her inability to find an appropriate male participant.

After locating the participants, the participants were thoroughly informed about the research aim, procedures, benefits and risks involved. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured and each participant was given the option of using a pseudo-name. The participants were also informed that their participation is voluntary. After sufficient information had been given to the participants, the participants were asked to give written consent (see appendix 1). The study took place at a place that suited the participant.

To collect the data for the current study, a participatory exercise called the ‘river of life’ was undertaken by participants. The river of life exercise is a participatory method that assisted in helping the participants to reflect on their career paths. This exercise was useful as it helped participants identify events, people and things that have influenced their career development. According to Zarb (1992) participatory methods emanate from qualitative research approaches which aim to reflect, explore and disseminate the views, feelings and experiences of the research participants from their own perspectives, thus this data collection instrument served a useful purpose by providing sufficient relevant information to meet the objectives of the study. The river of life exercise was created in collaboration with the researcher and the research supervisor. The

exercise was conducted individually, and it took between thirty to forty minutes. This exercise was used as a starting point for the interview.

The participants were asked to sit at a table and were asked to illustrate a river that reflected the start of their career journey up to the present moment. The participants were then asked to note significant moments in their career journey using the device of drawing rocks and boulders to illustrate those factors and people that were obstacles in their career development, and bridges to illustrate those factors and people that enabled their career development. Participants were then asked to write brief notes explaining these factors on their illustration.

The second data collection technique used was a narrative interview. The narrative interview was suitable for this study as social constructionism and social constructivism explore how cultural, social, and political factors affect career development. According to Young and Collin (2004) the narrative approach is linked to constructivism and social constructionism as both recognise that meaning is created through language in context. This approach therefore allowed for capturing narratives that were meaningful to the participants.

Career narratives are valuable as they provide opportunities to explore the dynamic interaction between the individual and their context, by recognizing the impact of contextual factors of career development (Naicker, 1994; Stead, 1996; Vondracek et al, 1986; as cited in Frizelle, 2002). A career involves human action and ones access to that action for hermeneutical study is through its expression in narrative (Collin & Young, 1992 as cited in Frizelle, 2002). Through narratives, individuals are able to tell their own career experiences and stories (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

After completing the river of life exercise, an interview was conducted using the river of life exercise as an interview guide. The semi-structured interviews were conducted immediately after the exercise (see appendix 3). The participants were asked to describe their river and discuss the various factors that they included in their illustrations. Probing questions were asked to explore other contextual issues that the participant may not have considered, but may have had an impact on their career development. A semi structured interview guide was used to collect data. Semi-structured interviews were a particularly useful data collection tool in order to obtain in-depth and subjective information about the participants' experiences of their career journeys. The individual

interviews allowed participants the privacy to reflect on their career journey and past experiences. This data collection method allowed for rapport to be established between the researcher and participants (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The duration of the interviews varied between thirty and sixty minutes. The interviews were recorded on an audio tape recorder and then transcribed by the researcher. The interviews were conducted primarily in English. The transcripts were then submitted to the research supervisor for safe keeping for five years.

3.5 Method of data analysis

A voice-centred relational method was used to analyse the data. Mauthner and Doucet (1998) argue for a relational ontology, as the traditional ontological image which prevailed from the liberal political thought and the Western philosophical tradition believes in a separate, self-sufficient, independent and rational self. In contrast the relational ontology postulates the notion of 'selves-in-relation'. Individuals are viewed as interdependent of each other. According to Mauthner and Doucet (1998) the voice-centred relational method holds at its core the idea of a relational ontology which posits the notion of 'selves-in-relation' and a view of human beings as interdependent and embedded in a complex web of intimate and larger social relations. This method of analysis was chosen as it allows participants to offer a more varied and detailed account of their own personal stories as they experienced them first hand (Goodley, Lawthom, Clough & Moore, 2004).

The voice-centred relational method supports Systems Theory Framework and social construction as it places importance on relationship and understanding individuals in their context. This method looks at issues such as contextual factors, interpersonal factors social structures, and cultural and political factors which are explored by social constructionism and constructivism and is therefore appropriate for this study. This method is applied to four distinct readings of the interview transcripts according to themes (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998).

3.5.1 Reading one: Reading for the plot and for responses to the narrative

The first reading incorporates two elements. First the text is read for the overall plot and the story that is being told by the respondent, which includes the main career development events, the protagonist and the subplots. The researcher listened for images that were recurrent, metaphors,

words and contradictions in the narratives (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). The river of life exercise and the interview allowed the researcher to capture the overall plot and story being told by the respondents, the main events, protagonists and the subplots. In this reading the researcher was interested in the respondents overall career narrative plot. The researcher noted recurrent images, metaphors, and inconsistencies and contradictions in the respondents overall career narrative plot and highlighted these in a pink coloured pencil.

In the second 'reader-response' element of this first reading, the researcher places herself, with her own particular background, past and experiences in relation to the person interviewed. Brown (1994), Brown and Gilligan (1992, cited in Mauthner & Doucet, 1998) highlight the importance of reflexivity in terms of the researcher's social location and how she emotionally responds to the respondent. The researcher read the narrative on her own terms, how she was responding emotionally and intellectually to the person. This method allowed the researcher to explore some of her own assumptions and views (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). In the study, while the researcher was listening to the participant tell his/her story, the researcher placed herself, with her own particular background, history and experiences, in relation to the person interviewed. The researcher was aware of her own assumptions, biases and views; this is called confirmability. According to Ulin et al (2002) reflectivity contributes to confirmability in which the researcher confirms by audits that reflect as accurately possible the perspectives and experiences of the participants without being biased/prejudiced. The researcher was mindful of one of the major potential limitations of qualitative data analysis such as the possibility of bias in analysis and interpretation as there was more than one researcher involved in the study such as making incorrect interpretations of participant responses because of misunderstanding (Wolcott, 1994). Constant revisiting of research questions and the data, and verification with the other researchers helped the researcher eliminate subjective views and allowed the researcher to interpret data objectively and fairly. As a researcher in this reading I was also aware of my assumptions and biases as they may affect how the data was collected and also how the respondents responded to the questions. The researcher had to acknowledge that her own perspective and standpoint would have influenced the analysis and interpretation process, in order to ensure that there weren't any biases in the interpretation and analysis, the researcher at all times, took responsibility to be aware of the way in which her own assumptions and values may have been influencing the process of

analysis and thus engaged in an “ethic of interpretation based on care and responsiveness” (Frizelle, 2002, p. 51).

3.5.2 Reading two: Reading for the voice of the ‘I’

The second reading focused on how the respondent experienced, felt and talked about themselves. This reading looked at specifically where the respondent uses personal pronouns such as ‘I’, ‘we’ or ‘you’ when talking about themselves. This reading process centred attention on the active ‘I’ who is telling the story, and amplifies the terms in which the respondent sees and presents himself/herself, highlighted where the respondent was emotionally or intellectually struggling to say something, and identifies those places where the respondent shifted between ‘I’, ‘we’ and ‘you’ – signalling changes in how the respondent perceived and experienced herself/himself. This second reading represented a first step of a process of listening to respondents as they speak about themselves, the lives they live and the worlds they inhabit (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). In the study this allowed the researcher to see how the career choice of the respondent had been influenced by themselves when they talked in ‘I’ terms, and how it had been influenced by interpersonal factors when they talked in ‘we’. This method also allowed the researcher to capture how the ‘we’ had changed/influenced the ‘I’. The ‘I’ reflected their motivation and personality characteristics, where the ‘we’ reflected family expectations, cultural norms and values and race since the research study was also looking at how history has played a role in career development. The researcher highlighted information where the participants used personal pronouns such as ‘I’, ‘we’ and ‘you’ when the participants start talking about themselves.

3.5.3 Reading three: Reading for relationships

In the third reading, the researcher listened for how the respondents spoke about their interpersonal relationships they had with others, such as with their partners, their relatives, their children and the broader social networks within which they live (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). Reading for relationships enabled the researcher to see how family, peers, cultural norms and engagement with the community influenced respondents’ occupational choices. During this reading the researcher was vigilant for recurring themes such as family, peers etc. the themes were then highlighted with a red coloured pen.

3.5.4 Reading four: Placing people within cultural contexts and social structures.

In the fourth reading, the respondents' accounts and experiences are placed within the broader social, political, cultural and structural contexts. This final reading focused on how an individual experiences a particular social context from within which they are speaking (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). In this reading, the researcher looked at where the person spoke in terms of, or through their cultural norms and values of society. Because the participants were 35 years and older means that they have lived through apartheid, which enabled the researcher to see the social structures and social institutions that formed the social worlds that the participants have lived within. This enabled the researcher to recognise how structural and ideological factors, such as oppressive legislation and deprivation of resources and opportunities, acted as forces that constrained/enabled career development. In this reading the researcher highlighted information that related to broader social, political, cultural and structural contexts in a yellow colour.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Once ethical clearance from the University and informed consent from the participants had been received, the study then commenced. Each of the participants were informed about the purpose and the procedure of the interview. The participants were also informed that the data that was collected, such as pictures, audio recordings and transcriptions, were to be stored in a safe and secure place and that the only people that will have access to it will be the researcher and the research supervisor. Another issue was the revealing of names in the study, with some participants not comfortable with revealing their names; therefore, anonymity was maintained by using pseudonyms. The participants were assured that their information was not going to be dispersed to the public. Each participant was required to give informed consent verbally and in writing (see appendix 2).

3.7 Strategies for ensuring the trustworthiness of the study

3.7.1 Transferability

The concern in positivist work is the extent to which the findings of a study can be generalised to other contexts (Merriam, 1998, as cited in Shenton, 2004). However, since findings of a qualitative study are specific to a small number of individuals and context, it is impossible to generalise results to other contexts and other populations (Merriam, 1998, as cited in Shenton, 2004). Transferability refers to the level a study may or may not be applicable beyond a certain context within which it originated (Kelly, 1999; Willig, 2003). The aim of the study was to achieve transferability and not generalisability (Kelly, 1999, Ulin et al, 2002). The transferability of this study was ensured by providing in-depth and precise information on the research procedures, the methods used and the context from which the narratives were drawn. This ensured transferability as other research can use the findings of the study to reflect on and make comparisons.

3.7.2 Credibility

Credibility deals with the question of how congruent the findings are with reality (Merriam, 1998, as cited in Shenton, 2004). According to Lincon and Guba (1985, as cited in Shenton, 2004), “ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness” (p.64). Credibility was assured in two ways. Firstly, during the interviews the researcher constantly reflected on what the participants had said and asked questions and probed for clarity. Secondly, credibility was ensured through sampling a range of people from different organisations and from different professions; this is called site triangulation (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation is one of the ways one can ensure credibility. According to Shenton (2004) when similar results emerge at different sites, the findings are said to have greater credibility.

3.7.3 Dependability

Researchers in positivist research believe that reality is static and unchanging, thus they believe that if research were to be repeated in the same context, using the same methods and same

participants, similar results would be obtained (Shenton, 2004). However in interpretive research, the researchers believe that they are studying constantly changing and non-static realities. Thus interpretive research acknowledges that the findings will differ each time due to the changing realities. This study has sought to show dependability as the study was reported in a rich and detailed manner.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology applied in conducting this study. The approach and design of the study were described. The research design, research participants, including sampling techniques used, data collection procedures and the analysis of the data were reported. Ethical issues pertaining to the study were also discussed. The following chapter will present the analysis and findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an analysis and discussion of the narratives of six Black South African professionals who participated in the study. The data is comprised of very rich accounts of the lived experiences of the six participants. The use of the voice-centred relational method was used, which attempts to analyse and ‘unpack’ the participants’ data through the process of four separate readings. This particular section further presents the major themes that emerged throughout the process of interpretation along with a discussion of these themes.

The voice-centred relational method is based on the idea of a relational ontology that suggests the notion of selves-in-relation (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). This method views individuals as embedded in a complex web of intimate and wider social relations (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). The four readings can be regarded as separating the obtained information into four broad themes, and various sub-themes within each broader theme. However it must be recognised that any specific reading does not fit definitively within any specific theme, but flow across the themes (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). In this section a particular quote may, therefore, be relevant to more than one reading and may appear as illustrative of more than one theme. This highlights the recursive nature of career development process and the many factors that influence this process. Each section is subject to analysis, drawing on insights and assumptions in the literature.

4.1 Reading 1: Reading for the plot and responses to the narrative

The first reading reads for the overall plot and the story that is being told by the participant. This reading pays attention to the recurrent images and words as well as contradictions. This reading also identifies the protagonist’s central sub-plots (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998).

4.1.1 Reading for the plot

After critically analysing the narratives of the participants, the results were grouped into two minor-themes: contextual enablers and contextual constraints, that influenced the career development of the participants interviewed. Contextual enablers refer to events or conditions which enable one to progress in a career. Contextual enablers include contextual factors,

interpersonal factors (e.g. support from family and peers) and intrapersonal factors (e.g., desire, resilience etc.). Contextual constraints refer to events or conditions that make it difficult to progress in a career (Crites, 1969). Contextual constraints/ barriers include contextual factors (e.g., poverty, lack of access to education), interpersonal factors (e.g., influence of peers, family etc) and intrapersonal factors (e.g., personality, lack of interest etc.). According to Luzzo & Hutcheson, “The perception of career barriers, whether real or imagined, influences an individual’s career development process, thereby facilitating or detracting from career goals” (Luzzo & Hutcheson, 1996; Stead, 2004 as cited in Albien, 2003). Under the minor themes are sub-themes that are factors which impact career development, namely family, culture, self-efficacy, socio-economic status and socio-political factors. The important factors out of those mentioned are family and socio-economic status. From the narratives of the six participant’s family, self-efficacy and culture were found to be contextual enablers and gendered positions, socio-economic status and socio-political factors were found to be more of contextual constraints.

4.2 Enablers

4.2.1 Family

Family seemed to play a big role for all the six participants in terms of their career development. It is important to note that family played a dual role for the participants; one was of an enabling role and the other was more of a constraining role in their career development. So for example, although participants felt that family was sometimes a constraint in their career development, family was, however, also something they needed in their lives and thus played a positive and enabling role in their lives.

The following extract highlights the importance of family in one’s career development. Family in career development has been previously viewed as problematic and as a limiting factor in career development (Wienrach & Strebalus, 1990, cited in Frizelle, 2002). Frizelle (2002) further argues that family should not been seen only as limiting but also as an enabling factor in career development. The importance of family for Ned and the enabling role that family plays is evident in the following extract.

Amanda: Okay, So when was the first time you thought about a career?

Ned: The first time I thought about a career was when I was 15 years old; I was in high school (Oxford Secondary in Verulum). At the time and I wanted to be a nurse or a radiographer. My parents did not approve of my choice for nursing because my aunt was a nurse and she always said how overworked and underpaid she was; therefore my parents said nursing was a definite No-No. The choice of radiography became too far-fetched for my parents; I think because it was not such a popular profession and the fact that they earned too little, and so my parents thought it would be difficult to pursue. So at that age my parents influenced a lot of my career/ choice of study decisions because they were going to pay for my studies and they were very strict especially my mom

In the above extract it is clear that for Ned, her parents played a significant role in her career development. Her first choice was to be a nurse or a radiographer, but she could not pursue a career in nursing nor radiography as her parents disapproved. Ned continues to give a detailed account of how her family influenced her career choice:

Ned: ... The option of Law was influenced by my personal background, especially family law where I would get the opportunity to work with families. I wanted to deal with custody cases and family disputes like divorce cases. I come from a divorce situation and I watched my parents' divorce. No one spoke to us about the process or asked us how we felt throughout the process. I wanted to pursue family law because I wanted to provide support for the families throughout divorce processes. Unfortunately I was told that my personality would not fit with the profession and I somewhat believed that. I was very shy when I was young; I was even placed in a programme that was developed at school where they tried to teach us on how to be confident and not to be shy.

Amanda: You say 'you were told that your personality would not fit with the profession of law', if I may ask told by whom?

Ned: My family told me that especially the older working members; they told me that in order to be a lawyer you should not be shy. Well with the other career interests like chemical engineering it was different. A cousin of mine was studying towards this career

field. She told me about it and so I did my own research trying to find out what it is and what does the profession entail ...

Amanda: So what would you say influenced your career choice?

Ned: it has to be my family especially mother because after the divorce she became very strict and tried to protect us.

The next extract is Cynthia's extract of how her family expectations and needs played out in her career development, like Ned, Cynthia's career was influenced by her parents but also by her family's circumstances:

Amanda: If I may ask you to elaborate on that career interest.

Cynthia: I knew that doctors heal people and I wanted to change people's lives; however that career interest changed because after I completed matric my parents sat me down and told me that I needed to go find a job; that way I would be able to help out my family.

Amanda: At the time who was the bread winner?

Cynthia: It was my father; he worked at the mines and he came home month end to buy food for us. I am the eldest child from a family of 5 girls so I was under pressure to help out my father. After I completed my matric I started looking for a job; any job that was going to pay me. I got a temp job at the hardware store near our location; I worked Monday to Friday and sometimes weekends. I worked for 2 years then my boss told me that I was an honest worker and he wanted to give me a proper full time job. I worked there for 5 years and tried to save up for technikon.

From the above extracts it is clear that the individuals emphasised the need for collective decision making and conforming to familial expectations when it came to career decision making. Cynthia who is a nurse, also highlighted the role that family played in her career development. In the below extract Anonymous (2), like Ned, mother played an influential role in her career development. Anonymous (2) was influenced by her mother who is also a teacher, her role model and as the person to go to for assistance and advice.

Thokoza: Ok..so you say you got accepted at..you took your acceptance offer at University of Zululand..

Anonymous (2): Yes..i did..

Thokoza: And then from there onwards, what happened?

Anonymous(2): In 1999, I completed my junior degree, and started working as a teacher at Amathanda High School.. thinking that I would only work for 2 years and then I would go back and pursue my initial study of Optometry.. But, in 1993 I got married, so all my dreams fell off.. then I told myself that I must just focus on Education.

Anonymous(2): mmm.. The initial challenge that I experienced which forced me to be where I am today was the responses from the University. Getting the responses late from Medunsa..really..made me to be where I am because if I go the acceptance earlier than the University of Zululand, definitely I was going to do my Optometry degree..so it means maybe today I would be maybe one of the doctors in the medical profession.. So that was the first stumbling block..... and the second one, because I had an option of dropping from the acceptance of University of Zululand to Medunsa, I had to consider the financial implications because I wasn't the only one at home (*1 of 7 children*)..i had my siblings who were also studying (*all are graduates*)..so my parents were not affording that much because my father was just a factory worker, and my mother was a teacher, so they had to finance all our studies..so, that is why I decided just to continue and forget about Optometry initially.. and I just told myself, "ok, let me finish the degree, after that, I will study for 2/3 years, and then I will finance my own studies further, maybe I get back to what I wanted".. but because of stumbling block of having children (*laughing*)..and marriage, then I had to focus on that..

From the extract from Anonymous (2) one can see the constraining role that family played in her career. She initially wanted to pursue a career in Optometry, but after getting married this changed. Anonymous (2) recognizes that family is much more important than her career and as a result she had put her family's interest first and sidelined her career aspiration. This is not surprising

considering the fact that all participants came from a collectivist culture that places emphasis on collective decision making. In collectivist cultures, sense of selfhood is derived through the relationships that individuals have with their families and society (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). These findings thus challenge traditional theories assumption of a career being solely determined by intrapersonal factors (Holland, 1996). These findings indicate that other factors, such as family and culture, play an important role when it comes to career development. It also demonstrates the interplay of family and culture. In a study by Reid-Van Niekerk and Van Niekerk (1990) found that most black students emphasised social conformity and collective decision making; career decisions that were made had to conform to familial and social expectations. Approval thus was sought from parents and other authority figures while individuals from individualistic cultures in the study emphasised more autonomous decision making. Students from individualistic cultures also demonstrated more independence, competitive behaviour and make their own career decisions, whereas students from collectivist cultures make career decisions that honour the family and community. Careers were selected to satisfy family expectations rather than individual interest.

This extract below show how Sandile (who is a Manager at Shoprite) came to considering his career choice:

Notsikelelo: I see that family and culture played a huge role in your life. How did it influence your career perspective?

Sandile: Yeah my family and culture mean a lot to me. I am where I am because of my family and culture. My culture and family has influenced my career perspective in that whenever I chose a career path I first had to consult with my family first. Even when I chose subjects in high school I first had to get approval from them.

Sandile's extract highlight the role family and culture played in his career choice. The above extract support findings by Stead & Watson (1993) that parents are often seen as more important sources of information than peers and teachers. The emphasis placed on parents can be seen as to be influenced by a collectivist culture which holds the belief that elders are the knowledge keepers

that direct one's path (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). This extract illustrates the influence of both culture and family on career development.

Cynthia's, Anonymous's and Sandile's extracts above all illustrate the influence and intersectionality of family, financial factors and culture in career development. According to Brah and Phoenix (2004, cited in Steyn and van Zyle, 2009:9), "we regard the concept of 'intersectionality' as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation –economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential–intersect in historically specific contexts". Emphasis placed on family, social conformity and collective decisions highlights the embeddedness of selves in relation to others. The self is made meaningful primarily in reference to social relation, such as family members (Mkhize, 2005). The participants made career decisions that conformed to the familial and societal expectations. This is contrary to Western theoretical assumptions, where self-enhancement and intrapersonal factors are the primary determining factors of individuals' choices (Holland, 1997, Mau, 2000). The literature in this area is supported by a study by Stead and Watson (1993) which found that, for students from collectivist cultures, family plays a big role in career development. According to Burr (2003:4), "it is through our daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated". According to social constructionism theory, individuals are constantly influenced by environmental factors within their context; therefore these findings illustrate how one's context can influence career choice (Collin & Young, 2000).

In this case, Anonymous's, Cynthia's and Sandile's career decisions were not based on their aspirations but were dependent on what their families thought was best for them. These findings support social constructionist notions of individuals as interdependent and the notion of the self as culturally and socially embedded (Burr, 2003). It is believed that individuals holding the beliefs of collectivism feel indebted to the family due to some sense of duty and shared 'ubuntu' and therefore make career decisions based on the needs of the family (Urdan, et al., 2007). According to Stead & Watson (1998) *Ubuntu* is based on the belief that a person exists through other people (Stead & Watson, 1998). According to Albien (2013) the cornerstone of the concept of ubuntu is

the belief that are people are people through others. This puts emphasis and explains the importance attached to the social level of influences in career decision-making processes.

Culture is an important factor in career development which is closely linked to family (Stead, 1996). One's view of career development is in part determined by cultural values and constraints (Stead, 1996). Western individuals are generally considered to identify with a lifestyle that places emphasis on independence, individuality and competitiveness. Collectivist cultures place importance on interdependence, in which family obligation is the most prominent organising principle. Collectivist cultures tend to be more community-oriented and career decisions are dependent on significant others, which can explain why family was the most recurring theme in respondents' career narratives; as all the participants were from a collectivist culture.

4.2.2 Perseverance during the transition to democracy

Perseverance, which is popularly understood as a character trait that enables success, was a common theme amongst the participants. Despite the restrictive laws that existed when the participants were growing up, the participants never lost hope. Perseverance was evidenced in the following extract.

Thokoza: Ok. And I see here on the River-of- Life that you drew, that you had to go for evening classes to get your qualification..

Anonymous (1): Yes..(smiling).. Yes.. After I saw that these laws that prevented us as African (black) people were becoming weaker, I then decided to go for evening classes..as there were a lot of opportunities available at the time..

Anonymous (1) illustrates that despite the fact that there was apartheid he did not lose hope and he still continued pursuing his studies. However, it is important to note that this perseverance was enabled by the transition away from Apartheid and the opportunities that became increasingly available. Even though anonymous had setbacks and was politically denied education by Apartheid, he was able to persevere with his studies because of the changing political system. The above extract illustrates how a personal and an 'intrapersonal' factor such as perseverance was

shaped by contextual factors (e.g. supportive family and socio political influence) which made it possible for him to continue with his studies.

Sandile on the below extract illustrates the role that perseverance played in his career journey:

Sandile: A friend of mine told me that they needed people at the local market to pack goods.. So I applied and I got the job as a packager. My job was to package goods. I did that job for two years but I did not like it. I worked long hours and I was always tired and the pay was extremely low, but it was better than nothing. But I had to provide for my family since my father passed away that same year. I was now the only male in the house. In my culture a man is meant to be the breadwinner, so now I had the responsibility of providing for my family.. So I had to provide for the family and also save for my studies. It was hard, but I had no choice.

Notsikelelo: You had no choice?

Sandile: Yes, I had no choice, *I had to toughen up for my family and be a real man.* At the time providing for my family took priority, saving for my studies was no longer that important.

But at some point Sandile fell very ill in the middle of his learnership programme and could not provide for his family.

Sandile: I think I was on my 18th month into the learnership programme when I felt ill. I could no longer work. I remember that I stayed at home for a full year and could not provide for my family..

Notsikelelo: ... That must have been a difficult period for you and your family... How did your family feel about you leaving work because of the illness?

Sandile: They were sad but they were very supportive, very supportive. I was immobile and unemployed.. It was very hard for them to accept the situation. It was even harder for me because as a man I was meant to provide. My two sisters had to take a break from school as I could not pay for their fees.

Notsikelelo: Then what happened next?

Sandile: A few months later, I got well and got back on my feet and started working again. My sisters went back to school and everything went back to normal. *I was so motivated* to work harder this time around. I applied for a bursary and a diploma in management studies.

Sandile's extract shows how his perseverance was created by a sense of responsibility. Sandile on the above extract indicated that he started as a packer at a supermarket just so that he could provide for his family as a male figure. This sense of responsibility is linked to cultural expectations of a man. As a man he believes he has to make ends meet for his family. Sandile talks about how he had to get a job so that he could provide for the family. He persevered regardless of socio-economic, political and structural barriers. Sandile had been through many obstacles in his life with regard to not being able to further his studies after matric and at some point falling ill in the middle of his learnership and not being able to provide for his family. His sisters had to take a break from school due to the fact that he could no longer pay for their fees. From the above extract, one can say that Sandile's perseverance and motivation was driven by contextual factors such as family and also driven by gendered notions of identity. Sandile's extract thus shows his personal agency in developing his career, which was motivated by his sense of cultural responsibility.

The above findings are supported by the Systems Theory Framework which depicts a multi-layered individual inextricably embedded in equally diverse interpersonal, social, economic, cultural and as well as political influences. STF acknowledges intrapersonal factors and sees them as linked to contextual factors. Systems Theory Framework holds that an intrapersonal system comprises of gender, interests and personality. This intrapersonal system is constantly interacting with a much larger contextual system (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2005). This theory thus explains how Anonymous's and Sandile's intrapersonal factor (perseverance) was influenced by contextual and interpersonal factors in their career development. All these influences mediated how the individual engaged in the process of creating meaning. Anonymous's perseverance was driven by a change in the political sphere as well as the support that he received from his family. Sandile's

perseverance on the other hand was driven by gendered notions of identity in his culture. In summation, STF acknowledges that the intrapersonal system is constantly interacting with a larger system (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2005).

4.2.3 Culture

In traditional career research, culture has often been seen as a nuisance variable that has to be controlled and it has been ignored in most career development research (Fouad & Bingham, 1995). From the below extract it is evident that culture plays an important enabling, rather than constraining, role in career development. Culture seems to have played an important role in the career development of most participants. Sandile talked about the influence culture had on his career development.

Notsikelelo: I see from your drawing that you experienced challenges along the way, please tell me more about those challenges

Sandile: Right after passing matric, my major challenge was money. My father could no longer finance my studies, he said *I was now a grown man* and should start financing myself. His only responsible at the time was financing my sisters and looking after my mother. *As a man* I had to start making big decisions for myself as it was the only manly thing to do.

Notsikelelo: What do you mean when you say it was the only manly thing to do?

Sandile: Well.... *In my culture, as a male I need to be a provider and be independent*, and not depend on my family as that is *unmanly* in my culture, I have the *responsibility* of providing for my family. I had to follow my father's footsteps.

From Sandile's narrative, it is clear the role that culture and family played in his career in terms of motivating him. One also sees that career for him was not just something that he wanted to do but something that he had to do so he could provide for his family and 'man-up' as he was expected to by society and his culture. It is important to note the embeddedness of the self within the wider socio political context. The social constructionism theory does acknowledge the influence of

culture on individuals and career development, and their co-construction of culture in a changing environment. According to Stead (2004:393), “Social constructionism puts more focus on relationships between people and their co-construction of culture in a changing environment”. Social constructionism views individuals as having many personalities which vary depending on time and context. Selves therefore take on meaning in relation to other people in varied contexts (Stead, 2004). The findings of the above extract suggest that culture, in addition to intrapersonal factors, plays a significant role when it comes to decision making, which is contrary to traditional theories. For Sandile, his responsibility toward family gave meaning to his sense of personhood and his career. A study by LeFebvre and Franke (2013) found that culture has an influence on career decision making amongst individuals and that cultural traits such as individualism and collectivism also have an influence in the general decision making of individuals. These findings challenge the assumption that career development is solely driven by intrapersonal factors.

4.3 Constraints

4.3.1 Gendered Positions

According to Stead (2004) gender socialisation and gendered beliefs is one example where cultures may constrain females’ desires to pursue non-traditional occupations by placing emphasis on their primary responsibility to the family role. Anonymous (2) recognises family as a constraint and labels it as a ‘stumbling block’ that one cannot do anything about. Anonymous (2) had to conform to societal and family expectations and selected her career choice in order to meet family expectations. Anonymous (2) also mentions her gender as an obstacle to career development, and believes pursuing studies is difficult when you are a female because of responsibilities that accompany being a female. Gender and family link together in informing career choices in the following extracts. Anonymous’s (2) narrative illustrates the societal and familial expectations and pressures that females have to comply with and consider when choosing a career. Culture and family can be enabling, but they can also be experienced as constraining. In the below extracts, gender roles informed by culture, is experienced as limiting for Anonymous (2).

Anonymous (2): It’s a stumbling block that you cannot do anything about it because you need at the end of the day to have our families.. That is why I think these days, males are

better educated than females..you find that if you are looking at professionals, most young males have masters or doctorate degrees as compared to females..so to be a female, and pursue your study further is difficult.. So it's better to do your study early and focus in family life later.

On the next extract, Cynthia highlights how African women always have to negotiate a multitude of gender constructs in the process of their career development.

Amanda: How did your family handle this change?

Cynthia: My mother was happy that I was getting a husband and my dad as well; but he was a bit sad about the income though. My dad is a very traditional man and so marriage was a beautiful event, but it meant that I would be away from my family.

Amanda: What did your career mean to your new immediate family (husband)?

Cynthia: Well...mmmmmm (sighs).. my husband loved me but he believed that a women should be at home raising the children. Luckily for me we spent the first few years of our marriage trying to have children. In the 3rd year of our marriage; I conceived and that meant a huge change for my husband and I. He asked me to take leave and care for the baby and our home; of cause at first I was a bit reluctant but my father always told me it is important for a woman to put her man's needs first. So I left work on a temporary basis and became a temp housewife.

The above extract reveals intersectionality, where the social axis of power of gender and familial discourses intersect in determining an individual's career development. Cynthia's extract illustrates how females compromise their career development because of their gender. Cynthia was instructed by her husband to leave work and take care of her baby on a temporary basis. From Cynthia's extract one gets a sense that Cynthia did not want to leave work but she had to as she believed it was the right thing to do as her father always told her that it is important for a woman to put her man's needs first. In a study conducted by Frizelle (2002) on black female professionals, it was found that gender plays a significant role in the career development of black South African women. Women found themselves torn between two worlds, one where they were embedded in a

collectivist culture which values interdependence and conforming to familial expectations, and the other world which values independence. Women have to constantly negotiate their career position with their families (Mkhize et al, 1998 as cited in Frizelle (2002). A study by Edwards & Quinter (2011) also found gender to be an important factor in influencing career choices amongst individuals. Fitzgerald and Betz (1994) state that cultural factors within families often play a constraining role in career choice and development through gender socialisation where certain cultures may limit or restrict females desires to seek occupations, and especially to occupy male-dominated fields by placing emphasis on their primary responsibility to the family. This resonates with the findings in this research. Females in the study had their own career aspirations but nevertheless could not follow their intended careers because their families discouraged them from entering occupations that are traditionally male dominated. Females also had to first consider family responsibilities and negotiate with significant others before choosing a career path. The female respondents in this study felt that males are not as constrained as much as females when it comes to choosing a particular career. Therefore gender continues to play a huge role in career development amongst black South African professionals.

4.3.2 Socio-economic status

South Africa is still characterised by the legacy of apartheid. Extreme poverty, inadequate housing, high unemployment and inadequate provision of education resources all continue to contribute to ongoing economic distress in South Africa. The impact of financial constraints on career development is explored in the below extracts. The influence of socio-economic status in career development was prominent amongst all the participants. Socio-economic status played a constraining role in career decision making as participants could not study further and follow their intended career paths. The career development of the participants was largely influenced by socio-economic constraints rather than personality (Holland, 1996). Sandile's and Anonymous's (2) narratives illustrates the influence of socio-economic status on their career development.

Notsikelelo: I see from your drawing that you experienced challenges along the way, please tell me more about those challenges

Sandile: Right after passing matric, my major challenge was money. My father could no longer finance my studies, he said I was now a grown man and should start financing myself. His only responsibility at the time was financing my sisters and looking after my mother. As a man I had to start making big decisions for myself as it was the only manly thing to do.

In the above extract Sandile mentions that his challenge right after passing his matric was money and as a result he could not finance his studies. In the below extract Anonymous (2) expresses his desire for doing a teaching degree however due to insufficient resources, he had to work. During the river-of-life interview, the participant did express that the reason behind his interest in teaching was due to recognising the lack of educated kids he saw around his community.

Thokoza: So when did you first consider what career you would make?

Anonymous (2): When I was young, a school age, so I was willing to be a teacher

Notsikelelo: And that influence came from...

Anonymous(2): No-one ever influenced me, I felt that I wanted to be a teacher- But there were some challenges at home that I can't go into teaching because there was no money, no funds. My father was on pension at that time, so.....after completing schooling.. I worked...

Anonymous (2) initially wanted to be a teacher but due to a shortage of finances, Anonymous (2) had to work. Anonymous (2) decision to work was determined largely by his financial context and not a choice based on, for example, a fit between a particular personality type and environment (Holland, 1996). Anonymous (2) was struggling financially and so he was unable to start his studies straight after completing his matric. Instead he was forced to work out of necessity.

Thulile's extract below highlights how her financial constraint largely determined her career path. The path of her career was opportunistic rather than a result of rational decision-making process driven by individual desires or abilities.

Notsikelelo: What made you consider a job in office administration?

Thulile: The main reason why I chose office administration is because it was a quick fix for me.

Notsikelelo: What do you mean when you say quick fix?

Thulile: It was a quick fix because everyone that did a Diploma in office administration got a job quickly than others who did other diplomas. There were a lot of opportunities available at the time... I needed money to be able to provide for my family. My mother was unemployed and I was the only person who could provide for the family. After getting my twins, my financial situation got worse, so I needed something that would guarantee me a job.

The above extract illustrates the intersection of socio-economic, cultural and gendered factors influencing career choices. Sandile, Anonymous (2) and Thulile couldn't continue with their studies because they lacked financial resources, therefore, lack of financial resources was a barrier for them. Sandile kept emphasising how, as a man, he had to start financing himself and look after his siblings and mother as it was expected of him as a male. Financial constraints are one amongst many barriers limiting the career development of many South Africans, which derives largely from the ramifications of apartheid (DHET, 2012). The above extracts also are aligned to Savicka's (2013) argument that one's development is directed by one's adaption to an environment rather than by motivation of inner structures (as cited in Watson, 2013). From the above extracts the participants had to adapt to environmental factors/constraints when it came to their careers.

Frizelle (2002) found that financial constraints largely influenced the career development of black individuals who turned to 'opportunistic' careers. Career development and decision making has been largely determined by financial constraints rather than just intrapersonal factors.

Socio-economic factors continue to play a significant role in the career development of a majority of black South Africans (Bester, 2011). All the participants at some point in their lives experienced financial challenges in their career development, and as a result many turned to opportunistic careers in order to be able to look after their families and save for their studies as seen from Thulile's and Anonymous's extracts. These findings challenge the individualistic notion of career

development as directed by intrapersonal attributes, and challenge the idea that career development is based on personal preference choices (Holland, 1996).

4.3.3 Socio-political factors

The influence of socio-political factors was common among all the participants career development. The below extract highlights a constraining role that political factors played in Sandile's career development. Apartheid ensured segregated and differentiated education; blacks were taught under Bantu education, which was of low quality and which was directed to enable blacks to meet the labour demands (Stead, 1996).

Sandile: After matriculating, I wanted to register for a diploma in Mechanical Engineering but.... I didn't have the required amount of points for the course. I had low points.

Notsikelelo: Is there anything that affected your low points?

Sandile: We did not have enough resources, we had less teachers and an overabundance of learners. Some teachers were under qualified. I was even surprised that I passed matric with that quality of schooling.

Sandile: During the time, there was apartheid. Our education was so limited in a way that even if we wanted to progress academically we couldn't because of the laws of the time. It didn't just affect school but also job opportunities for blacks... hence that's why my father decided to create his own income.

Thulile's extract also highlights the influence that socio-political factors have on career development.

Notsikelelo: So did you end up taking a career in teaching?

Thulile: No I couldn't because I did not have enough marks that were needed in order to register for a Bachelor degree in Education. My marks were below average. That explains the rocks and boulders that I drew in the picture..

Notsikelelo: Okay, so your marks have been an obstacle for you?

Thulile: Yes... they were an obstacle at the time. I couldn't study what I wanted to study.

Notsikelelo: Is there anything that influenced your marks?

Thulile: Well I have never been a bright learner... (chuckles).. but I was a hard worker. But when I had my two babies. ...it was difficult to juggle both motherhood and school at the same time. I didn't have time to do my assignments and prepare well for the tests as the babies also required attention... The school I went to also had an influence. I was taught under the apartheid system so the school that I went to was poorly resourced with less teachers and low quality teaching... So I think motherhood and poor quality education under the apartheid system influenced my marks.

From these extracts one can see how political factors affected career development of many South Africans; not only did it deny them rights but it also affected the quality of education that they could attain. The above participants share about how they could not register at University because of the poor matric results that they acquired, which was affected by the poor quality of teaching they received as a result of socio-political factors of the time. Socio-economic status can be linked to historical factors such as apartheid in that, because individuals were deprived of quality education, they were only able to attain low skilled jobs with low pay. This affected the career development of the younger generation. Furthermore, it is also important to note that socio-political factors also indirectly influenced the career development of the participants. Most participants mentioned how they sought career advice from parents, however, a large number of black parents had limited occupational knowledge due to apartheid and thus provided insufficient career guidance, further limiting their career development (Stead, 1996). These above findings challenge the assumptions held by traditional theories of individuals having autonomous control of their careers, showing that most individuals do not have full control over their career

development. These findings link with and are supported by social constructionism theory, which maintains that individuals' career choices are socially, historically and culturally negotiated. This theory postulates that individuals are a by-product of their environment thus this therefore suggests that career choices are conceptualised as constructed within different contexts (Collin & Young, 2000).

4.4 Reading 2: Reading for the voice of the 'I'

This reading analyses how the participants see themselves by tracking the way in which they locate themselves within their narrative (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). This reading focuses on how the respondents experience, feel and speak about themselves. It focuses on when the respondent uses personal pronouns such as 'I', 'we', or 'you' when talking about themselves. The process of analysis in this reading focuses attention on the active 'I' who is telling the story (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). According to Steyn and van Zyl (2009) individuals are constantly negotiating stories which are constantly constrained and enabled by others. The following extracts show the various voices in the participant's lives that influenced their career decisions.

Amanda: Okay, So when was the first time you thought about a career?

Ned: The first time *I* thought about a career was when I was 15 years old; I was in high school (Oxford Secondary in Verulum). At the time and *I wanted* to be a nurse or a radiographer. *My parents* did not approve of my choice for nursing because my aunt was a nurse and she always said how overworked and underpaid she was; therefore my parents said nursing was a definite no-no. The choice of radiography became too far-fetched for *my parents*; *I* think because it was not such a popular profession and the fact that they earned too little, and so *my parents* thought it would be difficult to pursue. So at that age *my parents* influenced a lot of my career/choice of study decisions because they were going to pay for my studies and they were very strict especially my mom.

What is clear in this reading is that the participant often used two voices when she spoke about the 'I'. In the above extract two voices were identified; Ned's voice and the voice of her parents. Ned talked about herself as not having much influence on her career development. The dominant voice

is her parents, as they determined which career that she should pursue. This illustrates the socially embedded self and further illustrates that personhood does not reside within the individuals, but it is demonstrated in interaction with others (Frizelle & Mkhize, 2000).

Initially all participants spoke in the voice of 'I' when they spoke about what they initially wanted to do after finishing high school, their voices then shifted to the voice of 'we'. The following extract shows how Sandile also used two voices when speaking about his career development.

Sandile: Fortunately there was space in the Business Management faculty and so *my parents* told me *I* should take that option and *I* did. When I had finally been registered for Human Resource Management in the Business Management field *my family* was very supportive. They encouraged me to try to achieve good academic results and financially my mom was very keen to pay for my studies.

Notsikelelo: Changing from Chemical Engineering to HR, that is a big change.

Sandile: Well yes, it was. *I* didn't (emphasis) have a choice; *my parents* wanted me to study anything as long as I was getting an education.

Sandile's extract shows how the voice of 'I' did not have much influence in his career development; however his parents played a dominant role in his career. The participants spoke more about what their families wanted them to do, and some spoke of wider societal factors that also took precedence over the voice of 'I'. One voice reflects the career interests of the participants and the other voice reflects family expectations and influences of wider societal factors. The second voice (family expectations and influence of societal factors) seemed to dominate over the voice of 'I' in all the participants. It seemed that the 'I' was socially mediated by wider societal factors. The findings are supported by the social constructionism theory which states that knowledge is fabricated through interactions between people (Burr, 2003). The above findings support the holistic and multidisciplinary view of career development by both theories, which includes intrapersonal, interpersonal and as well as other wider contextual influences. The above results also show how the self is negotiated within the wider context (Collin & Young, 2000; Burr, 1995). Across all the participants, personhood seemed to reside within the relationships with wider

societal factors as the ‘other’ voice had much influence than the voice of ‘I’ (Mkhize, 2005). As most of the participants were from a collectivist culture, it was evident that sense of selfhood was derived through the relationships they had with their families (Watson & Stead, 1993).

4.5 Reading 3: Reading for relationships

This reading allowed the researcher to see how significant interpersonal relationships influenced the career development of the participants (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). All of the participants were located in webs of interpersonal relationships. The relationships which appeared the most important were that of their families.

4.5.1 Family

According to Urdan, Solek and Schoenfelder (2007) family contributes significantly to the individual’s career decisions. It has been suggested that individuals follow a career path based on the feedback that they receive from their family. According to Stead (2002) the role that family plays in career choice and career development cannot be underestimated. Family involvement has been viewed as the most significant predictor of career choice, especially within gender dominated occupations (Stead, 2002). The following extract highlights the role of family in career development.

Amanda: Okay, So when was the first time you thought about a career?

Ned: The first time I thought about a career was when I was 15 years old; I was in high school [Oxford Secondary in Verulum]. At the time and I wanted to be a nurse or a radiographer. My parents did not approve of my choice for nursing because my aunt was a nurse and she always said how overworked and underpaid she was; therefore my parents said nursing was a definite no-no. The choice of radiography became too far-fetched for my parents; I think because it was not such a popular profession and the fact that they earned too little, and so my parents thought it would be difficult to pursue. So at that age my parents influenced a lot of my career/choice of study decisions because they were going to pay for my studies and they were very strict especially my mom.

Ned's narrative shows how her career development was shaped by her family rather than an inherent personality preference. Her initial choice was to become a nurse or a radiographer, however her parents did not approve and she then chose a career that her parents felt was suitable for her. On the next extract Ned continues to talk about how her career choice became influenced by her family's divorce situation and how she was discouraged from studying Law by her family.

Ned: I quickly got over that [personal career preferences] because it was what my mother had wanted so I decided to look for other career choices. The option of Law was influenced by my personal background, especially family law where I would get the opportunity to work with families. I wanted to deal with custody cases and family disputes like divorce cases. I come from a divorce situation and I watched my parents' divorce. No one spoke to us about the process or asked us how we felt throughout the process. I wanted to pursue family law because I wanted to provide support for the families throughout divorce processes. Unfortunately I was told that my personality would not fit with the profession and I somewhat believed that. I was very shy when I was young; I was even placed in a programme that was developed at school where they tried to teach us on how to be confident and not to be shy.

Amanda: You say 'you were told that your personality would not fit with the profession of law', if I may ask told by whom?

Ned: My family told me that especially the older working members; they told me that in order to be a lawyer you should not be shy.

Ned's extract shows how the influence of family influenced her career development. She was discouraged from studying Law as it was believed that she would not succeed in the field because of her introverted personality. We see here that there is an interpersonal level of influence and as well as an intrapersonal level influence (Young & Collin, 2004), Ned's self-concept has been influenced by what her family has said about her, which she internalized and believed was true. In a study on careers, Shumba and Naong (2012) found family to play a very influential role in the career development of individuals. Similarly, in this study parents played an indirect role as

participants reported that parents had influence in terms of providing support and guidance. These findings challenge the assumptions of career development as influenced mainly by intrapersonal factors (Holland, 1996).

4.5.2 Gendered relationships

The influence that gender plays in career development is also apparent in the study. Gender role socialisation continues to play a huge role in promoting a gendered occupational world. Family and society has influenced and perpetuated gender role socialisation by dictating which careers are best for which gender. Females often encounter more barriers than males in career development (Steyn & Hay, 1999). Gender discrimination is an important source of career barriers; most females are discouraged from pursuing non-traditional career paths (Steyn & Hay, 1999). Family responsibilities and child bearing are more emphasised when it comes to females and these often play a role in terms of being career barriers (Perrew & Nelson, 2004). The social constructionist view of identity suggests multiple selves in career development, in which individuals are constantly creating their identities in their context; thus no identity is ever static as career identities are constructed in the interactive moment. According to Young and Collin (2004:380), a “career represents a unique interaction of self and social experience”. Through the interaction with the environment a career identity is created over time within his or her context. The following extract shows the role that gender plays in the career narrative of Anonymous (2).

Thokoza: So would you say gender had an impact at all in your career aspirations?

Anonymous (2): mm..of course yes, I observed that when I was doing my Masters degree..especially in the Department of Science. Most of the professionals there are male. And to get support..really that you need..is not easy.. really..I think it had that gender implication..but fortunately for me, the kind of supervisor I got, they really supported me..a lot..but I did sense that.. “ya..you are a black female”.. difficult for me to pursue..study further..

Anonymous (2): It's a stumbling block that you cannot do anything about it because you need at the end of the day to have our families.. That is why I think these days, males are better educated than females..you find that if you are looking at professionals, most young males have masters or doctorate degrees as compared to females..so to be a female, and pursue your study further is difficult.. So it's better to do your study early and focus in family life later.

Anonymous (2) felt that her gender had an influence on her career choices as she did not receive any support from male colleagues in her field. She was, however, fortunate to find a supportive male supervisor, which highlights the various ways in which masculinity can be enacted. This could have been due to the fact that science was believed to be and still is believed to be a male-dominated field which is more suitable for males. Anonymous (2) also felt that being a female came with its own constraints and duties. She felt that it was hard to pursue a career as a female because there are so many responsibilities. This highlights the role that gender socialisation and gender discrimination still plays in career development.

In a study by Mutekwe et al. (2011) gender was found to play a role in career decisions. The study discovered that career aspirations of females and males differed on the grounds of society and gender role expectations, and that family and cultural expectations play a crucial role in female career choices and aspirations in terms of discouraging males and females from pursuing non-traditional career paths (Mutekwe et al., 2011). Similar to Mutekwe et al. (2011), a study based on a Zimbabwean sample, this study also shows that gender influences career development in terms of dictating which careers are deemed appropriate for the participants. Anonymous (3) felt that it was difficult to pursue studies as a female as being a female came with a lot of expectations and responsibilities. The above findings highlight the role that gender plays in career development and shows how gender is mediated by familial and societal expectations. This is contrary to Western theories which assume intrapersonal factors to be contributing factors in one's career development (Holland, 1997, Mau, 2000).

4.6 Reading 4: Placing people within cultural contexts and social structures

This final reading focuses on how individuals experience the particular social context from within which they are speaking. In this fourth reading, the respondent's accounts and experiences are

placed within broader social, political, cultural and structural contexts. In this reading the researcher was able to see the social structures and social institutions that form the social worlds that the participants live within and experience (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). This reading enabled the researcher to recognise how structural and ideological forces such as restrictive legislation, deprivation of resources, and opportunities act as forces that constrained or enabled career development.

All the participants seemed to have been influenced by institutional relationships at some point of their lives. Low school marks, lack of access to higher education institutions influenced by poor quality education were evident in the following extracts.

4.6.1 Institutions

Thokoza: What would you say were the challenges or obstacles you experienced throughout your career development?

Anonymous (1): mmm... The initial challenge that I experienced which forced me to be where I am today was the responses from the University. Getting the responses late from Medunsa..really..made me to be where I am because if I go the acceptance earlier than the University of Zululand, definitely I was going to do my Optometry degree..so it means maybe today I would be maybe one of the doctors in the medical profession.. So that was the first stumbling block..

Anonymous's (1) career choice would have been different if he had not experienced any systemic or institutional obstacles throughout his career development. Thulile who is an office administrator also experienced institutional problems in her career development.

Notsikelelo: So did you end up taking a career in teaching?

Thulile: No I couldn't because I did not have enough marks that were needed in order to register for a Bachelor degree in Education. My marks were below average. That explains the rocks and boulders that I drew in the picture..

Notsikelelo: Okay, so your marks have been an obstacle for you?

Thulile: Yes... they were an obstacle at the time. I could not study what I wanted to study

Thulile did not have access to quality education and this resulted in her getting poor school results which prevented her from registering for her Bachelor of Education degree. In this way, educational institutions can be seen as having a long term impact on individuals' career development. This was mostly influenced or caused by socio-political factors of the time which subjected her to Bantu education. The school that she went to had less resources and less qualified teachers. It is important to note here how socio-political factors link to other spheres in Thulile's life, such as education and career. This illustrates the influence one system has on other systems, and the interrelated manner in which these different systems operate. This also shows how contextual factors in relation with other factors in the social environment influence the making of the career decisions as suggested by systems theory framework (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2005).

In the above extracts, lack of access to adequate education resulted in poor marks for the above participants. A student with a poor education background is clearly going to have a more difficult time achieving the results required for entrance into a degree. A study conducted by Stead & Els (2004) also found lack of access to tertiary institution and low marks to be a barrier in one's career development.

4.6.2 Culture

Culture is an important factor in career development (Vondracek et al, 1986). Attitudes towards career development are in part determined by cultural values and constraints (Vondracek et al, 1986). Culture seems to play a role in male participants' career development more than in females' career development. The following extract highlights the role of culture in career development.

Sandile: Right after passing matric, my major challenge was money. My father could no longer finance my studies, he said I was now a grown man and should start financing myself.

His only responsible at the time was financing my sisters and looking after my mother. As a man I had to start making big decisions for myself as it was the only manly thing to do.

Notsikelelo: What do you mean when you say it was the only manly thing to do?

Sandile: Well.... In my culture, as a male I need to be a provider and be independent, and not depend on my family as that is unmanly in my culture, I have the responsibility of providing for my family. I had to follow my father's footsteps.

From the above extract it is clear that Sandile's career has been informed by his culture and cultural notions of manhood. A career for him is not just determined by intrapersonal factors but by interpersonal factors such as culture. For him a career defines his manhood. A study by Reid-Van Niekerk and Van Niekerk (1990) on black technikon students found that culture played a role in career development, as the study revealed that black technikon students were more oriented towards community roles and occupations than white students. Black students emphasised social conformity, collective decision making that conformed to familial and social expectations. Similarly, this study also reveals that culture plays an important role in career development. For Sandile, his career choice had nothing to do with his career aspirations but was influenced by what he perceived to be best for his family and culture. It is suggested that cultures which conform to collectivism appreciate interdependence and conforming to family expectations (Urdan et al, 2007). Sandile views himself as an individual whose responsibility as a man is to provide for his family. Individuals that hold beliefs of collectivism often feel indebted to the family due to the sense of duty and ubuntu (Urdan et al, 2007). Social constructionism theory assumes that people are a by-product of their environment, therefore career choice is conceptualised as constructed within relationships (Collin & Young, 2000). This illustrates how career choice is socially constructed through discourse and is embedded contextually as informed by social constructionism theory (Stead, 2004).

4.6.3 Political factors

The following extracts illustrate how the participant's career development has been affected by the changing political context. The below findings challenge the traditional notion of a linear, rational,

and smooth career path that most traditional theories hold. Most professionals in this study had multiple career narratives, with most having been forced into specific occupations due to a number of contextual factors. Respondents were often forced into opportunistic careers due to political factors such as apartheid. Thulile's extract shows the influence of political factors on career development.

Researcher: So did you end up taking a career in teaching?

Thulile: No I couldn't because I did not have enough marks that were needed in order to register for a Bachelor degree in Education. My marks were below average. That explains the rocks and boulders that I drew in the picture..

Notsikelelo: What made you consider a job in office administration?

Thulile: The main reason why I chose office administration is because it was a quick fix for me.

Notsikelelo: What do you mean when you say quick fix?

Thulile: it was a quick fix because everyone that did a Diploma in office administration got a job quickly than others who did other diplomas. There were a lot of opportunities available at the time... I needed money to be able to provide for my family. My mother was unemployed and I was the only person who could provide for the family. After getting my twins, my financial situation got worse, so I needed something that would guarantee me a job.

Thulile finished school during the apartheid years. The school that she attended was poorly resourced and as a result she could not obtain good marks in her high school career. She thus turned to an opportunistic career as a 'quick fix'. This contrasts with Holland's (1996) theory which assumes that individuals choose careers that are aligned to their personality types. For Thulile a career was a means to enable her to provide for her family.

The participants' extracts highlight the extent to which career narratives have been moulded by or shaped by the historical circumstances of South Africa, which was dominated by gross inequalities. The apartheid legislation denied and limited the career development of most of the participants and limited their access to resources. This illustrates the systemic influences on career development as stated by the systems theory (McMahon & Watson, 2007). Anonymous (2) extract below illustrated how his career narrative was shaped by political circumstances:

Thokoza: And what about the system of Apartheid.. Some would argue that as time went by the laws grew weaker and more opportunities were available, and some not.

Anonymous (2): Ya.. during our days, Apartheid had a lot of...how do I put it..they had a lot of stumbling blocks on our way.. it was not easy as the opportunities are at the present moment.. so that is why you had to apply to those specific Universities because there were some other places that were not open for us.

Anonymous (2) extract shows how the legacy of apartheid enacted segregation on a majority of black South African's. Anonymous (2) was denied access to certain universities due to the apartheid legislation. The above extracts show how different systems, such as legislation and individual factors, are interdependent and how changes in one level of influence brings about changes in other levels. These findings confirm that career development is an outcome of an individual's embeddedness in a particular socio-cultural and socio-political context. Systems theory framework provides a means to understand contextual issues affecting the career development process.

The above findings also confirm the non-directional nature of career development. The results illustrate the influence of chance events and planned happenstance. Planned happenstance is defined as transforming events that are unplanned into career opportunities (Mitchelle et al, 1999). The role of chance events and planned happenstance in the above extract is evident as Thulile was

driven by a contextual influence to an opportunistic event. She did not plan to do Office Administration; her career goal was to do a degree in education but because of many constraints that she faced she turned to an opportunistic career. A study on the role of contextual and unplanned factors on career decision making by Bright et al (2005) revealed that unplanned and serendipitous events play an influential role in career development. Similarly, this research also found chance events to play a significant role in the career development of participants. Systems theory acknowledges the role of chance and its influence on career development. According to this theory career development is perceived as a dynamic process depicted through its process influences. One of the process influences is the influence of chance. This theory recognises the role that chance plays in career development (Patton & McMahon, 1999).

Closely related to planned happenstance is positive uncertainty. Positive uncertainty is defined as having a positive attitude towards obstacles. An attitude of positive uncertainty enables one to be positive in the face of uncertainty and inconsistency (Gellat, 1989). Many participants in the study faced a lot of challenges in their career development and yet still remained positive despite these challenges. The following extracts illustrate the influence of positive uncertainty on the participants' career development.

Sandile: When I went to apply for a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering at a nearby college, I was denied entrance.. The only choice I had was to apply for a bridging course. For me to do a bridging course, I had to pay an amount for registration. At the time I didn't even have money to register, never mind the fees to pay for the bridging course.

Notsikelelo: So....what happened next?

Sandile: A friend of mine told me that they needed people at the local market to pack goods.. So I applied and I got the job as a packager. My job was to package goods. I did that job for two years but I did not like it. I worked long hours and I was always tired and the pay was extremely low, but it was better than nothing. On my second year of working as a packager, a learnership programme was offered at work for people that had matric and I applied and I got accepted.

Notsikelelo: What kind of learnership was it?

Sandile: It was a learnership for stock merchandising and people management. The learnership programme was for a period of 24 months. I was paid good money during my learnership programme. However, I couldn't finish my learnership...

Sandile:I think I was on my 18th month into the learnership programme when I felt ill. I could no longer work. I later found out that I had Aids. I remember that I stayed at home for a full year and could not provide for my family..

Sandile: A few months later, I got well and got back on my feet and started working again. My sisters went back to school and everything went back to normal. I was so motivated to work harder this time around. I applied for a bursary and a diploma in management studies. I got accepted at the University of Zululand and I also got the bursary that I applied for.

Sandile's extract shows how, despite the fact that he was denied access to university he still pursued his career objectives and did not lose hope. He mentioned that at one time he fell ill and was diagnosed with AIDS, however this did not stop him from having a positive attitude. HIV/AIDS has been found to play a constraining role in the career development of many young South Africans (Bozalek, 1997, cited in Frizelle, 2002). Similar to the finding of this study, a study by Frizelle (2002) found positive uncertainty plays a positive role in the career development of black professional women. Most women held a positive and flexible attitude despite obstacles that they faced in their career development, and this positive attitude positively influenced their career development.

4.6.5 Community

Anonymous (2), a lecturer, reveals the influence of community on her career development. Her career aspiration was influenced by her desire to contribute to her community and to empower her community.

Thokoza: And what do you think your career means to your community?

Anonymous (2): It means a lot..it means a lot because they will benefit and they are benefiting from my knowledge of mathematics.. I am at the present moment helping some students, especially from rural areas with mathematics..I'm helping students from my family who struggle with mathematics, they always come with some questions. I'm also helping my kids, so ya..

Thokoza: And what did you feel your career choice would enable you to accomplish? Personally or externally..

Anonymous (2): you know..initially I said I wanted to study medicine, but, because of love of mathematics, that is why I decided to do teaching..so..furthering my studies in teaching mathematics, I think is what I like, because I want to see as many mathematicians as..I don't know..I want people to be enlightened in mathematics.. And especially at the present moment if you look on the statistics, students are very struggling in mathematics, I think/thought by furthering my studies I will come back and accomplish my dreams of helping as many people as I can in understanding this subject better.

Anonymous (2) believes that her career will assist her community in terms of equipping or assisting people with knowledge. Anonymous (2) shows a desire to help her community with her knowledge and be a role model in her community. This reflects a deeply felt sense of connection to her community and identification of the self in relation to the other (Dlamini, 1983). This further illustrates the sense of selfhood that is derived through the relationships with the wider community and family (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). The above extract suggests Anonymous's (2) career motivation is driven by tenets of collectivism. Anonymous's (2) extract reveals the influence of interpersonal factors in her career development and suggests that a deep sense of commitment to community influenced her career development. Anonymous (2) also shows her love and interest for mathematics based on her individual interest in the subject.

The above findings illustrate how individual factors in tandem with wider contextual factors influence the making of career decisions. A study by Mhlongo (2009) found that student career decisions were influenced by community engagement. The participants in the study expressed their

career choice as a means by which they could empower their communities and be role models for the younger generation. Similar to Mhlongo (2009) this research also shows that community does play a significant role in influencing individuals' career choices.

A central assumption of systems theory framework is that each system is an open system meaning an individual system is subject to influence from the outside, with this interaction called recursiveness (Patton & McMahon, 2006). The above extract shows recursiveness through the influence of a wider societal factor (community) on the individual factor (personal interest) in Anonymous's (1) career development.

4.7 Summary

The interpretation and analysis of the narrative data has been discussed under each section of the main themes that emerged from the primary data. The analysis is guided in general by the research questions. The interpretation has shown that a number of contextual factors may significantly influence the career development of the black South African professionals of South Africa. Numerous intersecting factors were identified which informed the career choices of participants in the study. Various factors such as gender, religion, planned happenstance, positive uncertainty, socio-economic, socio-political and cultural factors were identified as playing a role of directing the career development of black professionals. In addition, it has been shown that a qualitative postmodern approach to career research, career development and counselling will be able to explore contextual factors in career choices.

Individuals in the study emphasised the need for social conformity, collective decision making and conforming to familial expectations when it comes to career decision making. These findings challenge traditional theories' assumption of a career as solely determined by intrapersonal factors (Holland, 1996). These findings demonstrate the fact that other factors, such as family and culture, play an important role when it comes to career choices. It also enlightens us to the interplay of family and culture that has largely been ignored within career research.

Perseverance is also a common theme amongst the participants. Despite the restrictive laws due to apartheid that existed when participants were growing up, the participants never lost hope. Despite

the challenges that the participants experienced, they persevered regardless of socio economic, political and structural barriers.

Gender also plays a role in the career development of participants as it was perceived as a barrier to career development. Females in the study found their gender to be an obstacle to career development because of the expectations and responsibilities that come with being a female. Many females were discouraged from pursuing male-dominated occupations by their families. The findings illustrate how females compromise their career development because of their gender. Women found themselves torn between two worlds; one world where they were embedded in a collectivist culture which values interdependence and conforming to familial expectations, and the other world which values independence. Women had to constantly negotiate their career position with their families. It is however important to note that, for males in the study, gender played more of an enabling role, in that career defined their manhood. Many male participants in the study believe that providing for their family was manly and it was expected from them to be providers in their cultures. Thus, culture and family can be both enabling and can be experienced as a constraint. The study shows intersectionality, where the social axis of power of gender, culture and familial discourses intersect in powerful ways in determining one's career development. Political factors also affected career development of many South Africans; not only did it deny them rights but it also affected the quality of education that they could attain. The participants related how they could not register with Universities because of the poor matric results they had. The poor results were affected by the quality of teaching, which was in turn influenced by the socio-political factors of the time.

Closely linked to socio-political factors is socio-economic status which is evident from the findings. Socio-economic status was linked to historical factors such as apartheid in that, because individuals were deprived of quality education, they were only able to attain low skilled jobs with low pay. This affected the younger generation and also influenced the career development of the younger generation. It is also important to note that socio-political factors also indirectly influenced the career development of the participants. Most participants related how they sought career advice from parents; however, a large number of black parents had limited occupational knowledge due to apartheid and thus provided insufficient career guidance, further limiting their

child's career development (Stead, 1996). These findings link with and are supported by social constructionism theory and systems theory, which maintain that individual's career choices are socially, historically and culturally negotiated. The findings also confirm the non-directional nature of career development. The results illustrate the influence of chance events, positive uncertainty and planned happenstance. The findings also illustrate the influence of spirituality and religion on career development, as 'divine calling' was found to be a strong motivation for choosing a career.

Social constructionism was useful as a theoretical perspective in the South African context as it acknowledges that humans are social beings who construct meanings through interactions. It doesn't focus on individual factors but also takes the wider social influences that affect career development into account. Systems theory framework was also useful in the South African context as it examines how various institutions and systems influence the career development of the participants.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a brief overview of the research study and recommendations for future career research based on the study results. It also explores the limitations of the study which will be discussed in greater detail.

5.2 Study overview

The purpose of the study was to explore the contextual factors and interpersonal factors that influence the career development of black South African professionals. The study is a response to the modernist approach to career development which has led careers and career development to be perceived as being linear, stable and fixed (Maree & Beck, 2004). Rational, western career development and career guidance has been used in South Africa but has, however, not been applicable to the South African context as it has been largely influenced by values of individualism and under-emphasises the importance of context. Thus there has not been much research done that explores the influence of wider contextual factors on career development and the career development of black South Africans. This study highlights how a qualitative method of data collection and analysis has assisted in opening up for exploration the career experiences of black South Africans whose voices have historically been marginalised and silenced through career research and practices (Stead & Watson, 2006).

An important finding in this study is that many contextual factors are found to influence the career development of black South African professionals. These findings challenge traditional theories' assumption of a career as solely determined by intrapersonal factors (Holland, 1996). It is important to note that although intrapersonal factors do play a role, however the method of analysis has enabled a more nuanced understanding of the influence of the various contextual factors on intrapersonal factors and in particular the intersectionality of factors.

The study shows intersectionality, where the social axis of power of gender, culture and familial discourses intersect in powerful ways in determining one's career development. These findings

challenge the assumptions held by traditional theories; of individuals having autonomous control of their careers, demonstrating that most individuals do not have full control over their career development. The findings also confirm the non-directional nature of career development. The results illustrate the influence of chance events, positive uncertainty and planned happenstance.

5.3 Contributions of this study

It is suggested that one of the major contributions of this study is the use of a qualitative methodology to explore the impact of contextual factors on career development. Informed by social constructionism and a systems theory framework this study chose a qualitative design to collect and analyse data. It is argued that this research has demonstrated that the river of life exercise, narrative interview and the voice relational method of analysis collectively enabled the researcher to identify and open up for exploration a number of contextual factors that can impact on the career development of black South Africans.

In their article on the indigenisation of career psychology in South Africa Stead and Watson (2006, p 182) cite Sinha (1997) who defines the indigenous psychology approach as “those elements of knowledge that have been generated in a country of a culture and that have developed therein, as opposed to those that are imported or brought from elsewhere”. It is suggested that this particular study has, through the process of generating context specific knowledge, contributed, if only in a small way, towards what Stead and Watson (2006, p 181) refer to as the “indigenisation of career psychology”. Stead and Watson (2006) make reference to the work of Kim & Berry (1993) who identify six research strategies associated with indigenous psychologies. This study has made use of a number of these strategies and in doing so has illustrated the effectiveness of such strategies in collecting relevant data about the contextual factors that impact on career development, and more specifically the career development of black South Africans.

Stead and Watson (2006, p 183) identify strategy one as “psychological knowledge should be understood within various contexts”. It is suggested that this research project, through its use of an appropriate qualitative research method, was able to explore the way in which a number of factors specific to the South African context (but perhaps relevant in other contexts too) influence and impact on the career development of black South Africans’ career development and has,

therefore, contribute towards developing psychological knowledge that is context sensitive and specific. In this way this research has contributed, if only in a small way, to providing what Stead and Watson (2006, p 184) refer to as “informed descriptions of career development... for the benefit of South Africans”. It has done this by “making interpretations and meanings of career phenomena” that is “generated from South African data that may or may not be applicable to people in other countries”.

This research has also contributed to the value of qualitative research to foreground the experiences of an already disadvantaged group. As already discussed, it is argued that one of the main contributions of this study was the use of a qualitative design. In this way this study engaged with the fourth research strategy for the development of indigenous psychological knowledge: “variety of research methods” (Stead & Watson, p 185). Indigenous psychologies are said not to favour a particular research method. Stead and Watson (2006, p 185) argue that “the emphasis is on utilising *appropriate* methods”. They go on to highlight that within the South African context the oral tradition is valued by many cultures and participants are, therefore, likely to prefer interviews than quantitative methods. The participants in this study responded well to the river of life exercise and opened up in the narrative interview process. In this way the study illustrates the powerfulness of an appropriate research method that is responsive to the research context and its participants’ preferences. The choice of the research method was also informed by a particular theoretical model and conceptual framework that have already been discussed in detail. By considering a theory and framework that are alternative to the traditional theories and frameworks, this research also engaged with strategy five “variety of perspectives”.

This study has played a role in bridging the ‘knowledge gap’ in understanding the career experiences of black professional males and females in career research. In this way the study has engaged with research strategy three “multiple perspectives may be held by various cultures” (Stead & Watson, p 184). The researcher does not want the results of this study to contribute to a homogenous view of black South Africans, but to rather highlight that the factors that impact on people in various contexts may differ. Rather than making a statement about the culture of the participants per se, this study has highlighted that people from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds in South Africa will have to negotiate different contextual factors and will do so in

different ways. For example, if we consider the history of apartheid and its continuing impact on South Africans lives it is important to acknowledge that black South Africans will experience different constraints to white South Africans when it comes to their career development. In addition, a black South African from a rural background may be more influenced by family than a black South African from an urban setting.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings of this current study suggest that there is a need for more postmodern, qualitative approaches in career development research in South Africa which have an open attitude toward different races, cultures, religions, sexual orientation and that cater for diversity (Maree & Beck, 2004). South Africa is a diverse country, thus these approaches will allow researchers to determine the complex meanings that South African individuals give to career choices. As a qualitative study, the results of this study are not generalizable to other black professionals in South Africa. Thus, further qualitative research will be helpful in terms of further exploring some of the issues which emerged in the present study.

Researchers need to place increased focus on the contextual factors that are pertinent to the South African context, such gender, religion, culture and socio-political and socio-economic factors. In this way further research can contribute to a better understanding of the various factors that influence career development with the aim of developing appropriate interventions.

5.5 Limitations of the study

There were numerous limitations of the study. The first limitation is the limited sample size of six participants, the findings could not be generalised as these are not a general representation of all black professional men and women's careers affected by contextual factors. This study however did not seek generalizability, as meanings were variable across the context of human interaction, therefore transferability was achieved. According to Ulin et al (2002) the different meanings and factors affecting career choices can be transferred to new contexts in other studies to provide a framework to reflect on meaning and action that occur in new contexts. The goal of transferability

is to produce data that is conceptually rather than statistically representative of people in a specific context.

The second limitation is my personal subjectivity as a researcher. At some point during the interviews I found myself getting angry for the past injustices that the participants had been subjected to in terms of constraining and limiting their career development. My own emotions came into play as I sympathized with them and tried to place myself in their shoes. I was present with them during the interviews, in terms of their feelings and thoughts. It was as if we were re-living their experiences together. I also felt that I resonated with the participants' feelings. I think this could have been caused by the fact that we had a lot of commonalities such as race, class and gender. I sometimes found that I resonated more with the females than males, as I identified with them more because we were the same gender. To avoid subjectivity, confirmability was achieved. According to Ulin et al (2002:32), "Confirmability means a way of knowing that even as a co-participant in the enquiry, the researcher has maintained the distinction between personal values and those of the study participants". Throughout the study confirmability was achieved as distinction was maintained between my personal values and those of the participants, and I took care not to impose any of my values on any of the participants.

Lastly, there is a limitation because of the use three female interviewers (including myself) who interviewed participants around the same research questions. The limitation is the manner in which each interview could have asked the questions very differently, considering question structure, ability to probe appropriately, tone, body language, and the attentiveness of the interviewer. All of this could have affected the responses that the participants gave during the interviews.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the study and its main findings. It has attempted to highlight the main contribution of this study, highlighted areas for further research and identified its limitations.

The findings of this study indicate that Post-apartheid, the South African society is still characterised by the legacy of apartheid. There are still huge disparities that still exist. There is insufficient attention paid to contextual factors affecting career choices due to traditional theories which focus on individualistic factors. The advantages of using the Systems Theory Framework and Social Constructionism is that they emphasize contextual factors, which have been ignored in traditional approaches (Watson, 2009). The qualitative methodology used in this study allowed the researchers to capture the lived experiences of the participants in this study. There is a need for more qualitative approaches in career development in South Africa which will explore wider contextual factors and also be accommodative of diversity that exists.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Respondent introduction letter

A qualitative exploration of the career narratives of six South African Black Professionals.

University of KwaZulu-Natal



Dear Respondent

You have been selected to participate in a career research study of six black South African professionals. There has been scant research done in career development that explores wider contextual factors, that is qualitative in design and that will explore the meanings attached to career development among the black South African professionals. Most of the research that has been done has focused on the white samples. The aim of the research therefore is explore wider contextual factors affecting career development of black South African professionals. Insights gained from the study will extend the body of career research. The research will assist in identifying contextual and interpersonal factors influencing the career development narratives of participants. Therefore the research can contribute towards the aim of the Green paper for post-school education and training by the Department of higher Education and Training (2012) to explore and address those wider factors that impact on the career development of black South Africans. This study will also inform the government and the community of the career issues pertinent to South Africa such as unemployment, economic factors, career barriers and the role of culture in career choice.

The School of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College campus is the primary investigator. Notsikelelo Mzobe is the student that will be conducting the research. The co-researcher/supervisor involved in the study is Miss Kerry Frizelle.

You were selected because you met the criteria which is that you're a black female or male South African professional who is over the age of 35 and have been in your profession for a while which therefore have a work history and I also believe that you can tell us something interesting about the contextual factors that influenced your career development.

You will be asked to draw a river that reflects your career journey up to the present moment. I will then use the picture of the river that you drew to interview you. There are no foreseeable risks, discomforts, or costs (financial or otherwise) to the respondent. But however should you experience any discomfort or unhappiness, career counselling will be offered.

At any time during the study if you feel uncomfortable or do not want to participate anymore you are free to withdraw from the study at any stage. Your decision not to participate will not put you

at a disadvantage. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled to.

Anything that you say during the research and all the data/records that will be collected from you such as pictures, audio-recordings and transcriptions will be stored in a safe and secure place and will be treated as confidential and not made publicly available. The only people that will have access to it will be the researcher and the supervisor. If you do not feel comfortable using your real name or want to hide your identity you are welcome to use a false name.

Contact details for the co-researcher/supervisor involved in the study are as follows:

Telephone: (031) 260 3261

Email: Frizellek1@ukzn.ac.za

Researcher:

Cellphone: 076 525 7969

Email: Notsikelelo.sifeukzn@gmail.com

Should any respondent have any questions relating to the rights of the respondents they can contact Ms. Phume Ximba in the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on (031) 260 3587.

Appendix 2: Informed consent

CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have been informed about the nature, purpose, and procedures for the study which is titled 'A qualitative exploration of the career development of ten black South African professionals'. I have also received, read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and I consent to take part in the study.

Participant:

Signature:

Date:

Witness/Research assistant:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Opening Question:

Please will you tell me a story about how you arrived where you are now in terms of your career

Probing Questions:

- What influenced your career choice?
- Did any people have an influence on your career? (Family, friends, role models)
- How do you think apartheid may have influenced your career?
- Did your personality and personal interest have an influence in your career choice?
- Did your financial constraints/freedom have an influence?
- How much volition did you have when your chose your career choice?
- How do you think your attitude and motivation influenced your career choice?
- Did your engagement with your community have an influence on your career choice/
- Has your identity as male or female influenced your career choice?
- What does your career mean to you?
- What challenges did you face in the process of making your career decisions?
- What were the factors and people that enabled your career development?
- How would your career choice changed if the factors and people that were obstacles were not there?
- How did you overcome those factors and people that were obstacles?
- Do you feel content with your career choice?

Appendix 4: Research approval



08 January 2014

Ms Notsikelelo Mzobe (209526685)
School of Applied Human Sciences - Psychology
Howard College Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/1418/013CA
Project title: A qualitative exploration of the career narratives of six South African Black professionals

Dear Ms Mzobe,

Class Application – Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 06 November 2013, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully


.....
Dr Shemuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Ms K Frizelle
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor D McCracken
cc School Administrator: Ms Ausie Luthuli