

**GRADE 12 LEARNERS' NARRATIVES OF CAREER CHOICE AND GUIDANCE
AT A SOUTH AFRICAN HIGH SCHOOL**

By

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DECLARATION

Student Number: **35288353**

I hereby declare that “*Grade 12 learners’ narratives of career choice and guidance at a South African high school*” is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Sharonrose Sefora

February 2016

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the late, Tebogo Ezekiel Morudu,

*My partner, friend, supporter, father of my child; whose 12 years of loving me unconditionally will
be remembered till we meet again.*

(28 December 1982-28 February 2016)

*“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “Plans to prosper you and not harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future” Jeremiah 29:11*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current research was to explore the narrative career experiences of Grade 12 learners as well as the constructs of the Life-Career Rainbow. Knowledge of how these constructs relate to one another added to the career literature as it relates to Grade 12 learners' experiences of career guidance/development and served as a guide for the career guidance/counselling process. The main findings indicated that the past experiences of learners relating to subject choices highlighted that there is dissatisfaction with certain subjects not being included in the schools' subject choices for Grades 10 to 12. At this phase, learners were found to be uncertain about their future plans. The learners' present experiences in career crystallising indicated that they are in the process of exploring and crystallising their career choices. In terms of future employment options, learners indicated interests that fitted within most career types while other learners were undecided about their future aspirations. The career types included sports, entertainment, financial, the military and medicine/nursing. The findings demonstrate consistency with previous national research on adolescents' occupational aspirations. Influences which were found to be prominent were personality, interests and abilities, parents, friends, teachers, schooling experiences, financial support, availability of jobs, work experience, and opportunities to work overseas.

Key words: Career guidance; Career development; Donald Super; Grade 12 learners; Life-Career Rainbow; Narrative analysis; Narratives; South Africa

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DBE	-	Department of Basic Education
FET	-	Further Education and Training
GET	-	General Education and Training
HEI	-	Higher Education Institution
HESA	-	Higher Education South Africa
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NYDA	-	National Youth Development Agency
OECD	-	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PACE	-	Postsecondary Adult and Continuing Education
SAQA	-	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	-	Sector Education and Training Authority
UNISA	-	University of South Africa

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	
DEDICATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
TABLE OF DEFINITIONS	xiv
CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND	5
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT	8
1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	13
1.4.1 Overview	13
1.4.2 Objectives.....	13
1.4.3 Research Questions	13
1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS	14
1.5.1 Overview	14

1.5.2	Population and study case	15
1.5.3	Case size and selection of a case	16
1.5.4	Data collection.....	17
1.5.5	Data analysis strategies	19
1.6	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	19
1.7	MY NARRATIVE	20
1.8	SUMMARY	23
1.9	OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION	24
	CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	25
2.1	INTRODUCTION	25
2.2	BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CAREER GUIDANCE	25
2.3	CAREER GUIDANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA	28
2.4	CAREER GUIDANCE THEORIES.....	33
2.4.1	South African perspective	39
2.5	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	40
2.5.1	Super’s Life-Career Rainbow.....	40
2.6	CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS.....	43
2.6.1	Life-Span.....	43
2.6.1.1	Growth.....	45
2.6.1.2	Exploration	46
2.6.2	Life Space.....	48
2.6.3	Self-Concept.....	49

2.6.4	Career maturity.....	53
2.7	COCHRAN’S NARRATIVE APPROACH.....	58
2.8	SUMMARY.....	60
	CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS.....	62
3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	62
3.2	OVERVIEW.....	62
3.3	RESEARCH APPROACH.....	63
3.4	POPULATION AND STUDY CASE.....	65
3.4.1	Population and study sample.....	65
3.4.2	Case size and selection of a case.....	65
3.5	ENTERING THE FIELD.....	67
3.6	DATA COLLECTION.....	68
3.6.1	Focus group interviews.....	69
3.6.2	Narrative essays.....	70
3.6.3	Field notes.....	72
3.7	DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGIES.....	73
3.7.1	Data management and analysis.....	74
3.8	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	77
3.9	MEASURES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	79
3.10	SUMMARY.....	83
	CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS.....	84
4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	84

4.2	FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS.....	86
4.2.1	Introduction	86
4.2.2	Future aspirations	86
4.2.3	Inspiration of dreams.....	97
4.2.4	Influences	101
4.2.5	Subject selection.....	120
4.2.6	Information and planning	126
4.2.7	Employment opportunities in South Africa	132
4.2.8	Ways to improve career guidance	135
4.3	SUMMARY	138
	CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS OF NARRATIVE ESSAYS.....	139
5.1	INTRODUCTION	139
5.2	NARRATIVE ESSAYS.....	139
5.2.1	Dancer Girl/Learner F	139
5.2.2	Street Rapper/Learner U.....	143
5.2.3	The Writer/Learner I	147
5.2.4	The Family Man/Learner A.....	150
5.2.5	Cricket Player/Learner G	152
5.2.6	Soccer Star/Learner H	154
5.2.7	Soldier Girl/Learner Q	155
5.2.8	The Apple and the Tree/Learner D	158
5.2.9	The Netball Captain/Learner N	162

5.2.10	Baby Sister/Learner B	165
5.2.11	Caged Bird/Learner W	167
5.3	SUMMARY	172
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.. 174		
6.1	INTRODUCTION	174
6.2	CONCLUSIONS OF OVERALL FINDINGS	175
6.2.1	Life-Span.....	176
6.2.1.1	Self-Concept	178
6.2.1.2	Future Aspirations	180
6.2.1.3	Subject selection	182
6.2.2	Life Space.....	183
6.2.3	Career maturity.....	185
6.2.4	Information and planning	189
6.2.5	Employment opportunities in South Africa	189
6.3	LIMITATIONS.....	190
6.4	RECOMMENDATIONS	191
6.4.1	Recommendations for future research.....	191
6.4.2	Recommendations for career development interventions in high schools.....	192
REFERENCES		195
ANNEXURE A.....		215
Ethical Clearance of a research project involving human participants.....		215
ANNEXURE B.....		216

Grade 12 Learners’ narrative experiences of making career choices: Focus Group discussion guide	216
ANNEXURE C.....	218
Grade 12 Learners’ experiences of career guidance: Narrative essays.....	218
ANNEXURE D.....	219
Grade 12 Learners’ narrative experiences of making career choices: Narrative Essay Transcription	219
ANNEXURE E.....	221
Grade 12 Learners’ narrative experiences of making career choices: Focus Group 1 Second stage analysis transcription	221

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Steps in Career Guidance	3
Figure 2.1: Parsonian approach to selecting a career	27
Figure 2.2: Super's Life-Career Rainbow	41
Figure 2.3: Key assumptions of the Life-Career Rainbow	42
Figure 2.4: Career maturity dimensions	55

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Summary of Career Guidance theories	37
Table 2.2: Developmental tasks in the Life-span segment	45
Table 3.1: Summary of application of trustworthiness in this study	80

TABLE OF DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Grade 12 learners	Learners in the final year of high school, also known in South Africa as Matrics. The average age is 17 to 18.
Career	A pattern of work experiences comprising the entire life-span of a person and which is generally seen with regard to a number of phases or stages reflecting the transition from one stage of life to the next (Weinert, 2001).
Career development	Beginning early in life and proceeding along a curve until late in life, thus a life-long process. Career development enables individuals to convey who they are and how they want to be perceived in their career choices; it also enables implementation of the self-concept (Ohlsen, 1974).
Career guidance	“The process of helping a person to develop an integrated and adequate picture of himself and of his role in the world of work, to test this concept against reality and to convert it into a reality, with satisfaction to himself and benefits to society” (Super, 1988, p. 357).
Career maturity	What an individual can bring to his/her encounters with reality on the one hand, and the reality demands on the other. A person with career maturity is thought to be emotionally stable and to have the ability to make good vocational choices (Bholanath, 2007).

TERM	DEFINITION
Self-concept	“Pictures” which individuals have of themselves and the value they attach to themselves. “How I see myself, what my characteristics are, how I judge myself in the areas of appearance, ability, talents, motives, goals, ideals and social interactions and relationships” (Meyer, Moore, & Viljoen, 2003, p. 366).
Life-Span	“The life course of a person encountering a series of developmental tasks and attempting to handle them in such a way as to become the kind of person he or she wants to become” (Super, 1990, p. 225-226).
Life Space	Roles played by individuals as they progress through career developmental stages, such as child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker or parent, and pensioner lead to achievements and affect other role dimensions (Super, 1980).
Narrative	A narrative or story is any report of connected events, actual or imaginary, presented in a sequence of written or spoken words, or still or moving images (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000).
Narrative Analysis	Narrative analysis uses field texts, such as stories, autobiography, journals, field notes, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, photos (and other artefacts), and life experience, as the units of analysis to research and understand the way people create meaning in their lives as narratives (Mishler, 1986).

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT STUDY

Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.

Mandela, 1995, *Long Walk to Freedom*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of career guidance has been used widely since the early seventies, although only lately has it insisted on a comprehensive approach of managing career during the entire lifetime (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). In this study I seek to document the narrative experiences of career guidance for Grade 12 learners in South Africa, as far as their career development is concerned. In order to achieve this, Donald Super's (1980) Life-Career Rainbow Theory and Cochran's (1997) Narrative Approach provided useful frameworks for conceptualising career guidance over the life-span. An in-depth discussion of the topic will be outlined in Chapter 2; the discussion pertaining to it here is therefore brief and introductory.

The concept of career guidance can be understood by its simplest definition of helping people choose work in which they will be happy and content, where a person's aptitude, interests and personality are required (Vaughan, 1970). Similarly, Drummond and Ryan (1995), define career guidance as activities that are used to work with people who are exploring careers, planning for and making decisions about their careers in relation to their environments. Career guidance definition can even be taken a step further and stated that it

involves the idea of guiding an individual towards a career that will be almost completely absorbing, to a life that will be fulfilled by work. The OECD, the European Commission and the World Bank, provide the following much quoted definition:

Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self-awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services (OECD, 2004, p. 10).

The definition reflects that career guidance encompasses all those interactive activities intended to support and facilitate career planning. In a study conducted by Langley (1990), eleven steps with reference to career guidance were identified, as illustrated in Figure 1.1 below.

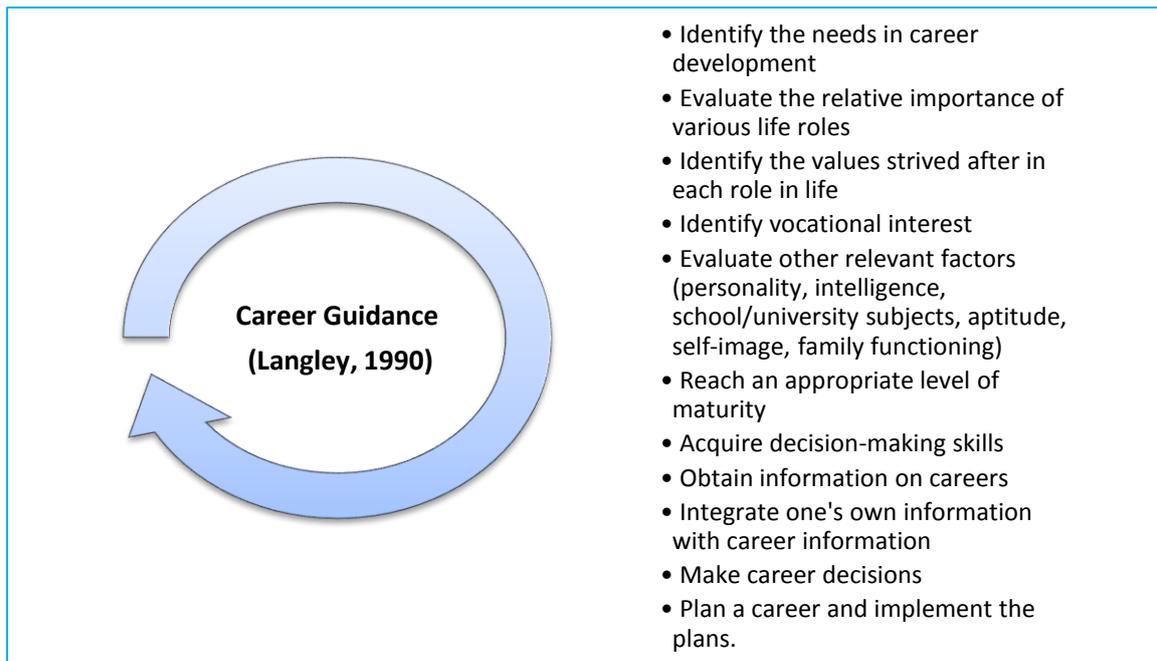


Figure 1.1: Steps in Career Guidance

(Source: Langley, 1990)

The approach suggested by Langley (1990), entails the aim of regarding the learner as a whole as far as mastering career developmental tasks is concerned. Furthermore, it aims to determine what relevant developmental areas in the learner's achievement are inadequate, so that the necessary support can be provided to bring the learner up to the same level of career development as that which can generally be expected of the life stage of the group to which he/she belongs (Bholanath, 2007). The development of Super's ideas about self-concept and vocational adjustment resulted in a re-definition of vocational/career guidance as: "the process of helping a person to develop an integrated and adequate picture of himself and of his role in the world of work, to test this concept against reality and to convert it into a reality, with satisfaction to himself and benefits to society" (Super, 1988, p. 357). This definition will be adopted for the purpose of this study.

Super's (1980) Life-Career Rainbow suggests that when a person makes a transition from career growth and exploration stages to establishment and maintenance stages, his or her roles of child and student are transformed into that of worker and home worker, with the roles of leisurite and citizen crossing over all stages. Thus, career transitions may happen as the person needs to move on to the next phase of his or her life. Super's (1980) theory suggests that career maturity is reached gradually as an individual progresses through a number of life stages. The concept of career maturity assumes that children pass gradually from an immature view of careers towards an adult appreciation, in keeping with the evolution of their personalities from childhood towards career maturity (Super, 1957). This continuous, life-long process of career guidance can be seen as an individual's career development, beginning early in life and proceeding along a curve until late in life (Super, 1957). Career development enables individuals to convey who they are and how they want to be perceived in their career choices; it also enables implementation of the self-concept (Super, 1988). This does not only include career aspects, but takes note that an individual's ability to make or reach career decisions is affected by his/her background as a whole (Super, 1988).

When an individual chooses a career, we assume that the person is making a decision as important as choosing life-long friends, a spouse, whether to have children or not, or even a way of living (Drummond & Ryan, 1995). The choice of a career remains one of the most difficult decisions that the late adolescent will have to make in his or her lifetime (Bernard-Phera, 2000). Miles (2008) highlights that it is a process that requires a number of cognitive and behavioural activities that can be utilised for obtaining information about the persons themselves and the environment. Moreover, a meaningful and productive career is the single

most effective psychological way to attain and maintain contact with reality and also provides an economic means to effect significant social change (Crites, 1981).

1.2. BACKGROUND

As suggested in the introduction, career guidance is a complex process that could be concerned with an individual's choice of subjects at an early stage in school, as well as with the later stage of transition from higher education to the world of work (Vaughan, 2003). Transition periods, as highlighted by Drummond and Ryan (1995), occur for learners at the beginning of adolescence, when they are moving from Grade 9 to Grade 10 and are required to make decisions about their subject choices. In this transition, career guidance is needed to assist these learners to explore and plan for their futures. The same learners go through another transition when they reach Grade 12, where they now have to make decisions about whether they want to further their studies at tertiary level or go into the world of work (Drummond & Ryan, 1995). During this latter transition period, learners could also be aware of opportunities in the workplace and career opportunities offered through studies at Further Education and Training Institutions and Higher Education (Van de Venter, 2006).

Drawing from the above, Super (1980) highlights that career development enables a person to implement his or her self-image. His theory on developmental psychology assumes that career development is influenced by the maturation of an individual's abilities, interests, attitudes, his/her opportunity for reality testing and his/her self-concept (Ohlsen, 1974). Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (2003) define self-concept as a "picture" which individuals have of themselves and the value they attach to that "picture". According to Rogers' (1959) self-concept theory, the self-concept is not "a little man in the head" who controls a person's behaviour; Rogers (1959) in Meyer et al. (2003) rather sees it as representing the person's

conscious experiences of himself or herself; only the conscious experiences which are included into consciousness are allowed in the self-concept (Meyer, et al., 2003). The self-concept theory assumes that an individual's self-concept is flexible and changeable through the continuous integration of changing self-perception. The discussion leads to the "ideal self", which is that self-concept that an individual desires to have, and which provides guidelines for growth and development as it reveals the characteristics and ideals to which the individual strives (Meyer, et al., 2003).

In addition, Super's (1988) theory suggests that a person's mental and physical growth, as well as his or her environment, influences his/her self-concept. Quinn (1992) identifies a crucial aspect of career decision-making: if the individual's self-image is low, it is possible that he/she will not be able to plan his/her future independently. O'Hare's (1990) findings support this assumption that all the theories of maturity emphasise the importance of self-concept resulting from a positive, congruent, realistic self-image, in one way or another. In O'Hare's (1990) findings, study habits and positive study and work orientation have been found to be associated with career maturity. Low career maturity was assumed to be typically associated with high-school dropouts (Legum & Hoare, 2004).

I have made two assumptions which will be verified by the findings of the current study. Firstly I, assume that the Grade 12 learners in the current study chose their subjects in Grade 9 in relation to a "picture" that they had of themselves at that stage, and also that implementing their "ideal self" directed them to strive for their desired goals. Secondly I also assume that they did not choose subjects that were not congruent with their "ideal self" (Meyer, et al., 2003). In Grade 12, where these learners are now, they are in another transition period where they have to make career choices (Drummond & Ryan, 1995). The self-concept

theory also plays a part, as their self-perceptions have directed their current self-concepts, which change over time and with experiences. In this last transition phase I have made another assumption that will also be verified by the findings that the learners' self-concepts and career development have changed or matured from Grade 9 to where they now are in Grade 12 (Meyer, et al., 2003).

According to Vaughan (2003), little research has been done where young people's experiences are placed at the centre and she suggests that career guidance's "research and policy is structured by quite particular concepts of youth, adulthood and transition" (p. 1), which have been generated by adults. She also suggests it is not so much what pathways young people choose, or where they go to after school in a traditional tracking research project that counts, but rather how they navigate these pathways (Vaughan, 2003). Two studies were found where learners' experiences were placed at the centre of researching career guidance. Repetto (2001) found that learners' readiness and maturity should be considered within career guidance and also what is being delivered. A second study conducted by Bullock and Wikeley (2001) in the United Kingdom, found that Year 9 learners involved expressed concern that they were being pressured to make subject decisions that they did not feel ready to make and they realised their thoughts about the future were likely to change, so they felt career guidance irrelevant and a waste of time. In light of the findings by Repetto (2001) and Bullock and Wikeley (2001), the current study also sought to explore whether indeed learners' readiness to make career choices should be considered within the formal career guidance received in school and the subject choices available to learners. In addition, it would be interesting to explore whether the Grade 12 learners in the current study felt that career guidance was irrelevant.

In support of Vaughan's (2003) suggestion, Patton and McMahon (2006) suggest that by consulting learners, we can understand their personal situations better, what affects their career decision-making, and what career guidance and support is relevant to ensure successful life-long learning in an ever-changing and dynamic world of work. To develop a holistic understanding of career experiences, it is therefore necessary to explore not only the complex process of career guidance, but also how young people navigate their way through this complex process of career guidance. The context above requires that I draw a framework for the current study. The following section explores the problem statement with specific reference to the South African context.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT, WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Unemployment and the accompanying poverty rates are some of the major problems that South Africa as a developing country faces (Du Toit, 2005). "As unemployment levels and other indicators change from month to month and from quarter to quarter, there is still no significant improvement", highlights the Solidarity Research Institute (2013). Currently, the official unemployment rate in South Africa is 25.2% (Statistics SA, 2015). With this rate being so high, it could mean that people will accept whatever work they can secure and not necessarily look at their preferred career choices. Unemployment is generally high, and even higher among young people. The youth could be especially vulnerable in this unemployment equation (Du Toit, 2005; Solidarity Research Institute, 2013). In a report written by the Solidarity Research Institute (2013), it was found that matriculants do not seem to do much better in the labour market than their fellow learners who left school at an earlier stage. A matric certificate has shown to not really offer a good preparation for the modern working environment, one of the reasons being that a very small number of matriculants achieve good

results in key subjects such as Accounting, Mathematics, Life Science and Physical Science every year (Solidarity Research Institute, 2013). The group of matriculants taking the mentioned subjects constitutes the group of matriculants who do not want to enter the labour market straight after school, preferring to further their education (Solidarity Research Institute, 2013). As in previous years, those with some form of tertiary qualification, even if it is only a diploma or a certificate, do indeed do much better in the labour market than those who only have matric (Solidarity Research Institute, 2013).

Despite the many positive changes that have occurred in South Africa, South Africa still experiences high levels of unemployment (Du Toit, 2005). The official figure released by Statistics South Africa indicates formal unemployment levels of 25.5% for the third quarter of 2015 (Statistics SA, 2015). The official unemployment rate increased by 0.5 of a percentage point in Q3:2015 compared to Q2:2015. Levels of education below matric were observed in larger proportions (over 58%) among the unemployed coloured and black African population groups. Employment increased by 95 000 in the formal sector compared to Quarter 2:2015, and in Quarter 3:2015. The sector recorded large employment gains in the Construction (59 000), Trade (47 000) and Manufacturing (31 000) industries. During the same period, formal sector jobs decreased in four Industries – large decreases were recorded in the Finance and Community and social services industries (24 000 and 10 000 respectively) (Statistics SA, 2015).

Yet, despite the availability of workers, one constantly reads of shortages in certain sectors of the economy (Adcorp, 2014). A logical conclusion would appear to be that those skills and training that are required by the economy are not being supplied in sufficient quantities, hence the shortages (Horn, 2006). On the other hand, the high unemployment figure could

lead one to deduce that there are skills and training available that are not required by the economic sectors (Adcorp, 2014). The output of our learning and training institutions needs to focus on the needs of the economy, which would ensure a reduction in the unemployment figures (Horn, 2006). One of the ways in which these problems is addressed is by ensuring that school leavers are equipped with adequate and sound career guidance information that will ensure that they enjoy a lifetime of employment in careers that will satisfy the needs of the economy, while at the same time ensuring the optimum use of their skills and aptitude (Bernard-Phera, 2000; Horn, 2006; Muribwathoho, 2003).

A study conducted by Watson, McMahon, Foxcroft, and Els (2010), shows that guidance teachers and parents are the most important sources of career information for black African high school learners. Most black African parents generally advise their adolescents to take on careers that would provide them with a steady income and status. “This is perhaps not surprising as a large number of African parents have difficulty moving beyond the status of unskilled or semi-skilled worker, largely because of the apartheid-placed restrictions on their educational and career development” (Stead, 1996, p. 2). Historically, the work done by black African people has either been viewed as of a demeaning quality or, if its equivalent existed for whites, of less value and competence than the particular categories of work done by whites (Du Toit, 2005).

Bholanath (2007) conducted a quantitative study on ‘*The effects of career guidance on grade 9 learners*’. The aim of this study was to determine if Grade 9 learners who were given career guidance would be in a position to make more informed career choices, as compared to the control group who received no career guidance. Prior to the intervention stage, both the experimental and the control groups highlighted similar issues (Bholanath, 2007). The

concerns of the learners centred on a lack of parental support, lack of funding for tertiary studies, indecisiveness about a career choice, and a lack of career educational support at school (Bholanath, 2007). The current study highlights the point that learners' choices were influenced by their backgrounds, social economic status, environments and family pressures. Some learners could not pursue further studies after Grade 12, as they lacked parental support, particularly when the parents had made other plans for their post-school years such as supporting the family business or finding a job in order to support their families (Bholanath, 2007).

In addition to the lack of parental support, financial constraints for tertiary education, as well as a limited choice of subjects in schools, influenced the career choices of these learners (Bholanath, 2007). From Bholanath's (2007) and the current study, it can be concluded that considerable effort goes into making subject choices. As Super (1980) highlights, career development is not only influenced by an individual's personality or interests, but also by that individual's current situation and environment. There are other dynamics that could influence career choices and development over which a learner could have no control and might also not be aware of, such as technological developments, changes in the economy, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse (Du Toit, 2005).

In a study entitled, '*Grade nine learners' experiences of career guidance in schools*', conducted by Van de Venter (2006), three case studies were selected from three different schools and different socio-economic backgrounds. The study used focus group interviews to explore the experiences of Grade 9 learners in making informed subject and career choices. The study concluded that learners lacked knowledge of the skills required for various careers; they were aware of the high unemployment rate in South Africa but did not

have the knowledge and skills to ensure that they could secure employment (Van de Venter, 2006). In addition, the learners were not fully informed and guided by the curriculum to make subject choices; they were also still uncertain about making subject choices due to a lack of excursions to promote career development, and they were further not aware of the different options available to make career choices (Van de Venter, 2006).

Most learners from the economically challenged school were under the impression that “glamorous” employment entails being an actor or a musician (Van de Venter, 2006). Due to the qualitative nature of the study by Van de Venter (2006), the findings of the study will not be generalised for the proposed study but will be transferred to enable comparisons and to provide answers in the context of the present study (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). The present study attempts to address the gap in the literature where learners’ experiences were placed at the centre of researching career guidance. I will attempt to address the gap by asking the learners directly what influences their career decision-making, to help understand their individual frames of reference and experiences of career guidance. Against this background, the present case study aims to explore, develop an in-depth understanding and describe the experiences of Grade 12 learners who are directly affected by career guidance and who have to make career choices. My aim is not to evaluate the teaching method of career guidance in schools, or the availability or lack of career guidance in schools. I aim to hear the voices of the learners, to explore and understand their experiences in choosing careers, from choosing subjects in Grade 9 to finally making career choices in Grade 12. I will explore these experiences based on what the learners are exposed to, taking into account the Life-Career Rainbow posited by Super (1980) on developmental psychology. The learners’ narrative career development, career maturity, and self-concept

will be taken into account, in addition to the formal career guidance they receive within the school.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 Overview

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative case study was to explore and describe the experiences of career choice and career guidance for Grade 12 learners at a South African high school.

1.4.2 Objectives

The following objectives guided the study:

1. Describe the past experiences of learners making subject choices;
2. Describe the present experience of learners in crystallising their career choices;
3. Describe the future aspirations of learners; and
4. Explore learners' recommendations to improve career guidance in high schools.

1.4.3 Research Questions

The overall question guiding this study is "What are Grade 12 learners' experiences of career choice and career guidance at a private school in Pretoria West?" The research question represented the departure point for the study and was unpacked into a number of sub-questions:

1. What were the learners' experiences in making subject choices in Grade 9?

2. What influenced their subject choices?
3. What are the learners' experiences in crystallising their career choices?
4. What influences their career choices at present?
5. What are the learners' future aspirations?
6. What do learners see as ways to improve career guidance in schools?

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

1.5.1 Overview

An in-depth discussion of the research design and research methods will be given in Chapter 3; the description pertaining to it here is therefore brief and introductory. This study followed a qualitative, narrative case-study approach to enable the researcher to make sense of the experiences and social situations of the learners in their real world and natural setting (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006). Case stories were gathered and analysed through narrative inquiry methods (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The "case story" approach used in this research provides descriptive knowledge which must be understood in context.

A case study is an inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon (learners' experiences) and context (a predominantly black, private high school) are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009). Case-study research brings a researcher to an understanding of a complex issue or object, which in this study is the experiences of a group of Grade 12 learners. It can extend experience or add strength to what is already known about learners' experiences of career guidance through previous research. It will further emphasise contextual analysis of the conditions of these learners' experiences and their other relationships (Soy, 1997).

A design issue in a case study is to select a case or cases. In thinking “case”, one is thinking of an entity such as a community, a school, a company, a family, a person or even an event which one wishes to study. In looking at the research question, “What are Grade 12 learners’ experiences of career choice and guidance in a South African high school?”, the case in this study was defined as Grade 12 learners in the school in which the study will take place (Seale, 2012).

The focus group interviews were conducted using a narrative inquiry process, which yields history, literature and myth, and because it is central to the development of social and personal identity (culture self) (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Stake, 1988).

1.5.2 Population and study case

The South African Schools Act (SASA), Act 84 of 1996, established a national schooling system and two categories of schools were recognised: public and independent (Basic Education Laws Amendment Act, Act 15 of 2011). The difference between the two categories is that public schools are government-controlled and independent schools are privately governed. All private schools were included in the independent school category (Basic Education Laws Amendment Act, 2011).

The current study took place at a private school in an urban area just outside the capital city of South Africa, Pretoria. Pretoria is a city in the northern part of Gauteng Province, South Africa. Pretoria is one of the country's three capital cities. Pretoria is divided into five regions, namely Eastern, Southern, Central Western, North West and North East. The school is specifically located to the Central Western region of Pretoria, neighbouring on the city centre, Pretoria West suburb and Atteridgeville Township, where most of the learners reside.

The population of the school consists predominantly of learners from the black african race group, with a minority from the coloured and indian race groups. It caters for learners from Grade R to Grade 12. As this study will follow a case-study approach, participants in the study will be limited to learners from this school.

The study focused on Grade 12 learners, since they are in a transition period where they have to make decisions about whether they want to further their studies or go into the world of work. The expected average age of the learners will be 17 to 18 years. There is one (1) Grade 12 class in the school, consisting of 30 learners in total. The majority of the learners come from middle-income families.

1.5.3 Case size and selection of a case

In selecting my cases, I wished to pick a school that would firstly be convenient for me to travel to and also one that would give me as much information as possible. The composition of the learners had to be diverse, meaning the learners had to be a mix of genders, mix of races as well as a mix of geographical areas (township and urban). An in-depth discussion of case selection is found in Chapter 3.

In order to identify case stories of the experiences of career guidance for Grade 12 learners, three focus group interviews were conducted with twenty-five (25) learners (ten boys and fifteen girls). The research approach allowed learners to tell their own unique stories. The reason for this smaller group was to allow all learners to participate and to allow the researcher to capture a variety of stories on the research topic. Both male and female learners were included in the research population to ensure that the findings reflected the gender

diversity at the school. The method of this study and the selection of the case were designed to ensure that the learners met certain criteria in order to participate in the study:

- Aged 17 to 18;
- In Grade 12;
- Attend school regularly; and
- Be willing to participate in the study.

1.5.4 Data collection

As this study followed a narrative, case-study approach, it was appropriate that I use multiple sources of data. The word "story" is used interchangeably with "narrative" throughout the study. Narrative essays, focus group interviews, and field notes were used as data collection methods. These sources were expected to provide a case that is extremely rich and detailed (Yin, 2009).

Firstly, focus group interviews were conducted with three groups of learners. The unit of analysis was the group of learners rather than one learner telling his or her story. I chose focus group interviews as a data collection method due to its approach of interviewing not only several learners at the same time, but rather of:

- Exploring the formation and negotiation of the experiences of learners within the group context; and
- How these learners will define and discuss their experiences as a group through social interaction (Seale, 2012).

I used the assumption underlying this method that the learners' opinions, attitudes and accounts of their experiences are socially produced through their interaction with one another (Seale, 2012). In addition, the group context makes visible how learners articulate and justify their stories in relation to one another (Seale, 2012). A short topic guide was used for discussion, but open-ended questions were also used, which allowed any new topics not initially incorporated into the study to be added to the topics discussed (Patton, 1990).

Secondly, I collected data by means of narrative essays. Learners were asked to write a narrative, which would be an account of a non-random sequence of events that would convey their action and movement of their career development through time. The sequence of these events would be made non-random with the help of a "plot" (the events that make up a story) that would create a meaningful connection between them so that prior events would inevitably lead to later ones. In a sense, their life experiences influence their status of being in Grade 12 and of having to make career choices. Narrative essays were expected to act as a tool for learners to tell the story of their backgrounds, environment, family, dreams, and aspirations, which would all fit into their need to make career decisions now (Seale, 2012).

In addition, I relied on field notes as a data collection method. Field notes consist of concrete descriptions of social processes and their contexts that will set out to capture their features (Seale, 2012). Field notes were compiled soon after events occurred, for instance after interviews and the narrative essay exercise. The field notes were made relevant to emerging concerns, and were also detailed and contextual. Speech was recorded verbatim and non-verbal behaviour was recorded in precise terms in order to capture emerging concerns as well as detailed and contextual field notes (Seale, 2012).

1.5.5 Data analysis strategies

Narrative analysis

In order to analyse the learners' stories (focus group interviews and narrative essays), I used a narrative framework that serves as a screen through which the stories of the learners may be examined. I used the theoretical writings of Mishler (1986, 1999), and Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2000) to analyse the learners' words into something meaningful. The stories of the learners' experiences are not works of art, rather they reflect "a kind of life story" which enabled me to study "how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 14).

Central in narrative inquiry is the work done by Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2000) in the field of education research. They claim that much of what is known in education comes from people relating their stories of educational experiences. Riessman (2002) argues that the purpose of narrative analysis is to see how participants impose order on the flow of experience as a way of making sense of actions and events in their lives. For the purpose of the study, I utilised thematic narrative analysis to explore the stories of the Grade 12 learners' experiences of making career choices. Thematic narrative analysis, according to Riessman (2008), is the most widely used narrative analytic strategy. The strategy focuses on the content, the "what" is said, keeping the story intact while interpreting it. I will discuss the process of analysis further in the Chapter 3.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were based on the principles guiding research ethics as postulated by Terre Blanche et al. (2006). An in-depth discussion of how I ensured the ethical considerations will be outlined in Chapter 3; the discussion pertaining to it here is therefore

brief and introductory. Ethical principles are described in terms of respondents' rights, being the right not to participate, the right to withdraw, the right to give informed consent, the right to anonymity, and the right to confidentiality. Ethics is also described in terms of the researcher's responsibilities, these being no unnecessary intrusion, behaving with integrity, and following appropriate professional codes of conduct (Oates, 2006, p. 55-61). I firstly requested permission from the school's governing body and the principal before commencing with data collection. It was explained to the school that the findings of the study would be made public, while still assuring the school of anonymity. I communicated the aims of the study to the participants prior to obtaining informed written consent from them to participate in the study. As some of the participants might still be under 18 years of age, the parents or guardians were also briefed on the study and were requested to sign informed assent letters.

1.7 MY NARRATIVE

In light of the discussion above on the conceptual and theoretical theory, the career development overview and in line with the narrative inquiry, I believe it is important for me to be reflexive about my past, present and future narrative, thus making explicit my own life roles and career choice experience. Firstly, I initially thought about titling my dissertation; "Career Guidance Experiences of Grade 12 learners in South Africa". The inspiration came from my experience of working firstly in my undergraduate student role as a volunteer at the Directorate of Counselling and Career Development at the University of South Africa. I began working there in my first year after completing Grade 12. My role as a volunteer transformed to that of working as an assistant student counsellor. I was in the directorate for years before moving on to working as a life coach facilitator for adolescent girls. The part I found most interesting about both my work experiences was what was not being captured,

the anecdotes and stories learners had about their journeys in making career choices sometimes around issues that had not been addressed in the counselling/ facilitation sessions. The stories for me had potentially valuable information that could be uncovered to better understand and support learners in high school.

During my role as a worker, I was also a student, studying for a qualification in Psychology. I graduated for my undergraduate qualification in Psychology as well as my Honours in Psychology. In 2011, I applied to study for a Master's qualification in Psychology, which I was selected for, not fully comprehending the journey. At the time of applying for a Master's qualification, I fell pregnant and gained another role: to be a parent and homemaker. I could not anticipate the challenges that awaited me in both my academic and personal life. One of the learners in this study referred to her journey as a rollercoaster and that aptly describes my personal experience. I have had many wonderful and not so wonderful times with my supervisor, but I am grateful for the lessons learnt and meeting the learners who shared their stories with me.

There are specific characteristics of my story: My past experiences; at the time of starting my course work for my Master's I was the mother of a 3-month old baby. In my theatre I played the role of a mother and student above all the other roles of being a daughter, partner, a friend, a community worker and worker. My present experience; I currently work full-time, I am a full-time student and of course a mother to a now 4-year old. What I did not realise in the early years was that my multiple roles could lead to a sense of disconnection from my study and it could take a while to refocus and become re-motivated after each break. I am reminded from my research journal how I have worried about the lack of clarity, the shifts and the confusion that have so often coloured my experience of the research process.

At times I felt envious of fellow students who did not have so many roles to play and who seemed so sure and clear about the routes they were taking, who proposed well-defined research questions at the outset of their studies and appeared to be guided by them throughout the study, and who safely reached the end points they had been aiming for all along.

However, my journaling also reminds me how convinced I have been that the methodological choices I have made and the stance I have taken were the right ones for this study. I was constantly in conversation with my supervisor about my methodological choices. We moved from thematic analysis to thematic network analysis to finally selecting narrative analysis. The many moves made me reflect on the process and journey between me and my supervisor and whether the choice I made to not have a structured analysis in my proposal could be the reason for the movements. I entered the world of the narrative without a compass, so to speak. However, working with my supervisor, and reading, writing and thinking about the narrative inquiry and analysis, led myself and my supervisor to make the connections that enabled a constructive, creative and considered analysis of the narratives. A narrative inquiry approach has enabled me to explore the way in which high school learners interpret their lives and make sense of their experiences through narrative, and it has also allowed me to take a reflexive stance in exploring my own involvement in the research process.

I explored how narrative research is valued as a methodological stance, as well as how it is fraught with difficulties and dilemmas as is reflected throughout my dissertation. My study involved conducting focus group discussion with 25 Grade 12 learners. I was able to receive 11 stories; each story is individual in its own right, contextualised by the time and space in which it is written. But there are commonalities in issues raised, difficulties faced and

obstacles overcome. Persistence and resilience shone through in many instances and the learners' stories inspired me to continue and also to reflect on my own career journey.

In conclusion, it is my intention to focus on understanding the narrative experiences of the Grade 12 learners in this dissertation. I hope to gain depth of insight into how Grade 12 learners make career choices and how career choice identities are constructed in the context of Pretoria, South Africa.

1.8 SUMMARY

The first chapter gave a brief introduction to career guidance and aspects that influence career guidance. The aim was to provide a detailed overview of the context in which the career development takes place. The chapter also aims to orient the reader to the theoretical framework that underpins the research study and to situate the research within this framework. The chapter includes the motivation for the study, the problem statement of the study, its aims and questions that the study hopes to find answers for. In presenting the rationale for the study, I draw attention to the lack of research available on Grade 12 learners' experiences of career guidance in the South African context. A definition of each of the key concepts is provided, followed by an outline of the remaining chapters.

1.9 OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 2 will provide a literature review of the research topic as well as the theoretical framework that will be guiding the overall study.

Chapter 3 will provide the research design and methods of the study and will include the description of the research design, data collection instruments and data analysis, ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the data.

Chapter 4 will present the findings and a discussion of the research from the focus groups interviews.

Chapter 5 will present the findings and a discussion of the narrative essays.

Chapter 6 will discuss and conclude the study, refer to specific limitations of the study and will also include recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The reading of all good books is indeed like a conversation with the noblest men of past centuries who were the authors of them, nay a carefully studied conversation, in which they reveal to us none but the best of their thoughts.

Descartes, 2012, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background to this study. In order to understand the concept of career guidance in context, it is necessary to explore related concepts in both a global and national context. This chapter begins by giving a brief history of career guidance as well as theories underpinning career guidance. It further explores conceptual foundations of Super's (1980) Life-Career Rainbow of developmental theory as well as the narrative approach to career guidance.

2.2 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CAREER GUIDANCE

The concept career guidance is studied and has its root within the context of Career Psychology, which is a specialised sub-field within Applied Psychology. Savickas (2002), a renowned vocational psychologist, views career psychology as a discipline concerned with conducting research on career behaviour among all groups of workers including individuals within the school-to-work transition phase. A major focus of career psychology is the study of career development through an individual's life-span. The terms career counselling, career development and vocational/career guidance have distinct meanings (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Vocational/career guidance was the original term that was first used in the United States of America (USA) and later throughout the world at the start of the

development of the guidance movement (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Terms that came into use in the 1950s through the work of Super (1957), were career counselling and career development (Herr, 2001). These terms were institutionalised when the name of the National Vocational Guidance Association (1913-1983) was changed to National Career Development in 1984 (Herr, 2001). According to Patton and McMahon (2014), career guidance paved the way for career development counselling. Career guidance and career development will be used interchangeably for the purpose of this study.

Brewer (1942) in Herr (2001) highlights that one of the important accounts of the rise of career guidance in the USA was the identification of four conditions that were seen as major influences: the division of labour, the growth of technology, the extension of career education, and the spread of modern forms of democracy. Herr (2001) notes that other observers expounded on the connections between the redirection and actual rise of career guidance and counselling during the past 100 years and the effects they have on particular political or social phenomena: “legislation, national crises, shifts in social values, the civil rights and women's liberation movements, and economic conditions” (p. 2).

Early approaches to career guidance had their emphasis on career assessments, providing occupational information and also providing advice as to how occupational choices offered occupational success (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). The work of Parsons (1909), from which these approaches evolved, has provided a systematic plan for career guidance that has endured to this day (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013; Zunker, 1998). In response to Parsons' feeling that many people, especially the immigrants from Europe, were being fruitless, both economically and socially, because of the random way in which they entered the specialised world of the factory, Parsons focused his attention on industrial education and vocational

guidance (Herr, 2001). He attacked public schools for specialising in book learning and promoted that "book work should be balanced with industrial education; and working children should spend part time in culture classes and industrial science" (Parsons, 1909, p. 39). Parsons' (1909) paper entitled '*Choosing a Vocation*' was published in 1909, which had a tremendous impact on the career guidance movement in providing a conceptual framework for individuals to select a career (Parsons, 1909). This Parsonian approach is based on three assumptions:

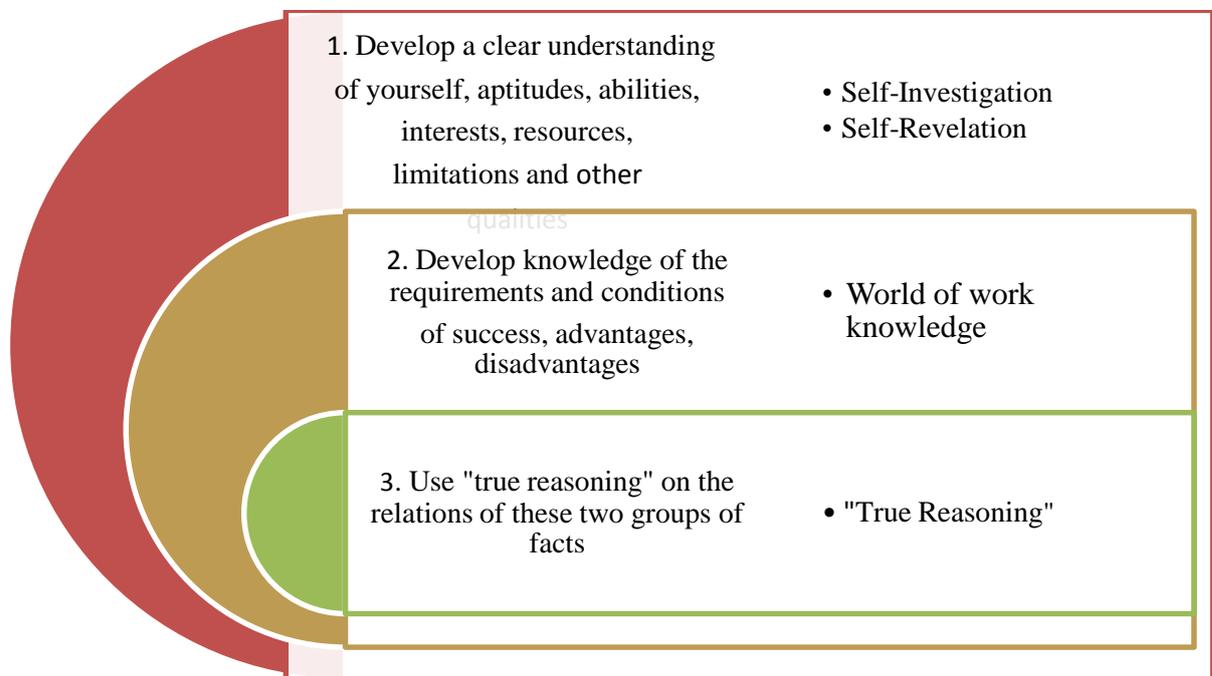


Figure 2.1: Parsonian approach to selecting a career

(Source: Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013)

Based on these assumptions of the Parsonian approach, traditional career theories were developed to address challenges they found in the approach, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Recent developments in career development/career guidance and career counselling have shifted from pre-defined services to a kind of "one size fits all" approach

(Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, Van Esbroeck, & Van Vianen, 2009). Rather than emphasising a singular truth and objectivity in a client's career development, there is a move towards helping clients to interpret and shape their career development (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). The implication of this move for this study is that this research study should also attempt to interpret the experiences of the learners by appreciating their multiple realities and perceptivity.

2.3 CAREER GUIDANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

In order to understand the Grade 12 learners' experiences of career guidance, it is important to conduct an overview of career guidance in South Africa. Legislation prior to 1994 required white learners to receive career guidance lessons for half an hour per week, while there was no provision for black learners to receive any career guidance support (Setshedi, 2003). The educational separation between the races dates back to 1920 with the introduction of the "native education system" which was designed for black people (Nicholas, Naidoo, & Pretorius, 2006). This education system ensured that the differences between white and black children were accentuated; this system trained white children to be intellectually superior to black children (Nicholas, et al., 2006). In 1948, the National Party legalised apartheid, reinforcing and entrenching the previous legislation regarding race and careers (Setshedi, 2003). The low social and career status of blacks was made more noticeable (Naicker, 1994).

Subsequently, legislation was passed in the form of the Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953, reinforcing the already unequal education system between races (Mathabe & Temane, 1993; Stead, 1996). This Act served as both educational and job market regulator (Mathabe & Temane, 1993; Stead, 1996). "The Vocational Education Act 70 of 1955, amongst others, barred Africans from attending technical colleges in South Africa" (Mathabe & Temane,

1993, p. 26). Career guidance in South African schools was for many years compromised by the apartheid ideology, a lack of teacher training in school guidance and counselling and under-resourced schools (Nicholas, et al., 2006). Since the advent of democracy in South Africa, in order to address these inequalities in career guidance and education, new legislation has been passed, such as the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997. Similarly, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 was legislated to redress employment discrimination against previously disadvantaged people (Dekker, 2004, in Nicholas, et al., 2006).

Linked to the above, in the 21st century career guidance has become an essential component of education in South Africa. A key challenge for South Africa is the paradox of skills shortages in the workplace and high levels of unemployment. A mismatch has been found to exist between the types of skills that are available and those demanded by the economy. These skills shortages underpin many of the challenges that government faces with regard to service delivery and the expansion of decent work for a rising proportion of the population. In South Africa, the framework for career guidance is based on the premise that career guidance is of national importance for several reasons, one of which is explained below (SAQA, 2012).

Firstly, career guidance is linked to human rights in terms of learning, working and social justice. The Bill of Rights, contained in the South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996, stipulates that everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education and further education, which the State, through reasonable measures, must progressively make available and accessible (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Chapter 2: Bill of Rights, 1996, p. 5 - 19).

There are different terms for career guidance that are used in South Africa by the various sectors that offer career guidance-related services. Activities related to career development in the secondary schools are described as careers and careers choices, which are found in a term called “life orientation” (SAQA, 2012). Life orientation in the National Curriculum Statement is defined as “the study of the self in relation to others and to society. It addresses skills, knowledge, and values about the self, the environment, responsible citizenship, a healthy and productive life, social engagement, recreation and physical activity, careers and career choices” (Department of Basic Education, 2012, p. 7).

The terms “student counselling services” and “student support services” are used in the post-school, tertiary sector to cover activities such as personal counselling career, and curriculum (SAQA, 2012). The Department of Labour uses the term “employment services” in the labour market sector and includes career guidance, employment counselling and employability enhancement as a function. At the enterprise level, “career management” is used, which refers to self-management of career planning. Currently in South Africa, a preference for the term “career development” has been adopted by several sectors, possibly due to its association with lifelong learning and work (SAQA, 2012). South Africa, similar to other countries, has a history of career guidance services being distributed under different ministries and jurisdictions across various sectors (SAQA, 2012). Career guidance services are offered at the following institutions in South Africa:

1. Schools (GET and FET);
2. FET colleges;
3. Higher education and training institutions (universities and universities of technology);

4. Public employment services;
5. SETAs;
6. Statutory bodies;
7. Non-governmental services; and
8. Private services.

Learners make initial decisions regarding career choices at the end of Grade 9 when they select the subject fields to be studied in Grades 10, 11 and 12. At the end of Grade 12, learners are required to make decisions regarding further study or work preferences. In the foundation, intermediate and senior phases, the National Curriculum Statement Grades R to 12 makes provision for the subject called “Life Skills” (Department of Basic Education, 2012). This subject consists of the following themes: beginning knowledge (only in the foundation phase); creative arts, physical education, and social and personal wellbeing (in all the phases). Grade 9 is a critical stage in terms of career guidance. Experience has shown that although Grade 9 learners are assisted to select subjects, the reality is that in many of the poorer schools, the subjects offered are very limited (Van Deventer, 2009). A major problem is the huge shortage of mathematics and science teachers. As a result, only a limited number of learners are able to take these subjects, and only those that have achieved good grades in these areas are allowed to study these subjects (Van Deventer, 2009). The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for Life Orientation Grades 10 to 12 provides the framework for career development during the last three years of school (Department of Basic Education, 2012). Career development is one of six topics (called “Careers and Career Choices”) in the subject “Life Orientation”. A total of two hours per week is allocated to Life Orientation. This means that over a period of a year, 66 hours are available for the teaching of Life Orientation in Grades 10 and 11, and 56 hours in Grade 12. The annual

teaching hours for the topic Careers and Career Choices are 11 hours in Grade 10, eight hours in Grade 11, and eight hours in Grade 12.

In the final year of school (Grade 12), the themes are the following:

1. Commitment to a decision taken (locate appropriate work or study opportunities in various sources);
2. Reasons for and impact of unemployment and innovative solutions to counteract unemployment;
3. Core elements of a job contract; and
4. Refinement of portfolio of plans for life after school (Department of Basic Education, 2012).

Learners are supposed to have access to a variety of career events outside of school, according to the Department of Basic Education (2012). The provincial offices of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) take responsibility for organising career events for Grade 12 learners outside of school hours. These usually take the form of career exhibitions and career talks by people working in a particular field. Other stakeholders, such as higher education and training institutions, SETAs, Higher Education South Africa (HESA), the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private companies take responsibility for providing career talks and organising career events and exhibitions (SAQA, 2012). Career events and exhibition events are usually more accessible to schools in urban areas and learners from rural areas are often neglected (SAQA, 2012). Schools in the more affluent areas use the services of registered psychologists and have established career guidance practices in place. However, research has found that many

schools have Life Orientation teachers who have insufficient knowledge and experience regarding career guidance (Bholanath, 2007; Van Deventer, 2009; Van de Venter, 2006). In order to address this problem, the provincial offices of the DBE provide support to Life Orientation and guidance teachers by visiting schools to provide assistance to the teachers to develop learning materials and to provide accredited training through private companies such as PACE (a one-day course) (SAQA, 2012). Another major challenge which is highlighted by the DBE is access to reliable career- and labour market-related information (SAQA, 2012).

2.4 CAREER GUIDANCE THEORIES

According to Savickas (2002), theories either emphasise “individual differences” related to occupations (viewed as describing how people can find their fit within occupational structures) or “individual development” related to careers (viewed as how people express career behaviours over time). Career guidance theories differ in their coverage of the career development process versus the career decision-making content (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013).

Developmental theories (Gottfredson, 1981; Super, 198;), highlight the expression of career over time, while person-environment theories (Holland, 1985) address the essential ingredients for choosing an occupation (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). The work of Parsons (1909) and later trait-factor theories (an emphasis on the identification of a person’s relevant trait or characteristics, through the use of standardised tests) as mentioned in the history of career guidance, are intertwined with the historical roots of career guidance. The work of Parsons (1909), Williamson (1972) and Dawis and Lofquist (1984) highlights the importance of considering the interactions between the person’s traits and factors in the work

environment in career decision-making. Building upon the discussion of the Parsons Model and trait-factor approaches, it is necessary to branch into traditional career theories.

First, Super's (1980) theory provides a useful framework for conceptualising career development over the life-span. His theory acknowledges the various personal and situational determinants that influence career development (Super, 1980). Super's theory puts work in the context of multiple roles played in life. It also addresses helping people to clarify, articulate and implement their life role self-concepts (Super, 1980). Expanding on the situational and personal influences on career development, Roe's (1957) career theory points to the importance of early life experiences in career development (Roe, 1957). Her theory draws upon Maslow's needs theory, which contends that needs not satisfied become important motivators in the occupational choices people make (Roe, 1957).

Gottfredson's (1981) theory of circumscription, compromise and self-creation describes the process leading to the formulation of occupational aspirations in childhood and adolescence (Gottfredson, 1981). Her theory offers a developmental and sociological perspective of career development which focuses on the note that people distinguish occupations according to dimensions of masculinity-femininity, occupational prestige and also the field of work (Gottfredson, 1981). A theory which has generated more research than any other career theory is Holland's (1985) theory (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Holland's typology provides a useful framework for understanding and predicting individual behaviour within work environments (Holland, 1985). The theory applies his typology through the use of assessment instruments to help individuals clarify and implement their career identities (Holland, 1985). In cases where individuals need assistance in developing beliefs that are

more useful in making effective career decisions, the work of Krumboltz, Mitchell and Jones (1976) provides a framework for learning theory of careers (Krumboltz, et al., 1976).

A number of theories have emerged since the theories mentioned above were initially developed. The recent theories tend to focus explicitly on diverse populations and on the complexity involved in career decision-making (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Specifically, the social cognitive career theory developed by Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994, 2002) is closely linked to Krumboltz et al.'s (1976) learning theory. The social cognitive theory builds upon the assumption that cognitive factors play a role in career decision-making, in which variables such as interests, abilities, and values interrelate with the specific paths by which person and contextual factors influence career outcomes. The cognitive information processing theory developed by Peterson, Sampson, Reardon and Lenz (1996), and Peterson, Sampson, Lenz and Reardon (2002), is rooted in the three-factor Parsonian approach (self-understanding, occupational knowledge and bringing the two together), which emphasises that career decision involves the interaction between the cognitive and affective processes.

While Savickas' (2007) and Savickas et al.'s (2009) career construction theory focuses on the assertion that individuals construct their careers by imposing their career behaviour and occupational experiences, Pryor and Bright (2011) offer a theory that speaks to the new realities of the 21st century, such as technological innovation, the speed of communication, lifelong learning, globalisation. The complexity of the abovementioned factors influencing career development highlights the need to avoid traditional approaches to explain career behaviour in terms of one factor influencing another factor. The integrative life-planning model developed by Hansen (1997) addresses diversity issues related to gender, race, socio-

economic status and spirituality; the aspect is on integrating the mind, body and spirit and that multiple aspects of life are interrelated in career behaviour.

These recent theories are each an example of the theories that have evolved to address cognitive and mean-making processes that people use to manage their careers effectively within a global and mobile society (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Postmodern approaches to career development address people-subjective experiences of career development (Cochran, 1997; Young, Valach, & Collin, 1996). In line with a postmodern worldview, the narrative-hermeneutic, social constructionism and constructivism theories have been suggested as a paradigm to inform both the research and practice of career counselling and development (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013; Patton, 2005). Each of these emerging theories draws upon a foundation of research support. Table 2.1 below summarises the theories mentioned in the discussion above.

Table 2.1: Summary of Career Guidance theories

THEORY	THEORISTS	ORIENTATION	KEY CONSTRUCTS	RESEARCH SUPPORT	MULTICULTURAL EMPHASIS
Work Adjustment	Rene Dawis, Lloyd Lofquist	Trait-factor Career choice/adjustment	Satisfaction, Person-in-an-environment, Correspondence	Moderate	Low
Life-Career Rainbow	Donald Super	Developmental	Life-span, Career stages, Career development tasks, Life space, Self-concept, Career maturity, Career adaptability	High	Moderate
Personality Theory of Career Choice	Anne Roe	Personality Theory/ Psychodynamic	Early childhood experiences, Needs hierarchies	Low	Low
Circumscription, Compromise, and Self-Creation	Linda Gottfredson	Developmental/sociological Career choice/development	Circumscription Compromise	Low	High

THEORY	THEORISTS	ORIENTATION	KEY CONSTRUCTS	RESEARCH SUPPORT	MULTICULTURAL EMPHASIS
Career Construction Theory	Mark Savickas	Differential, developmental and dynamic perspective of careers	Vocational personality, Life themes, Career adaptability, Career style interview	Moderate	High
Integrative Life Planning	L. Sunny Hansen	Contextual career choice/ adjustment	Social justice, social change, connectedness, diversity, Spirituality	Low	High
Postmodern	Richard Young, Ladislav Valach and Audrey Collin; Vance Peavey; Larry Cochran	Action-theory; Constructive; Narrative	Context, Joint action, Career project, Interpretation Meaning making Career problem, Life history	Low Low	High High
Chaos Theory of Careers	Robert Pryor and Jim Bright	Self-organisation and change; phenomenalism	Attractors Patterns Patterns and fractals	Moderate	Low

2.4.1 South African perspective

There have been several perspectives (De Bruin & Nel, 1996; Stead & Watson, 1998, 2002, 2006; Watson & Stead, 2002) provided on the history of career psychology in South Africa (Watson, 2010). In Watson and Fouche's (2007) review on the history of career psychology in South Africa, it is stated "our past has been more closely scrutinised than our present or future" (p. 153). Watson (2009) agrees and highlights that what is common to all perspectives of career psychology in South Africa, is the recognition of the negative impact of the apartheid system on the career development of the majority of South Africans. There has also been international recognition that career counselling and career education in South Africa have historically focused both on a white elite population and a trait-factor approach (Watts, 1996).

There has been an ongoing debate in recent decades that career theory, practice and assessment have been dominated inappropriately by adopted western, individualised approaches and models (Kuit & Watson, 2005; Naicker, 1994; Nicholas, et al., 2006; Watson & Kuit, 2007). This has led to several suggestions for the future direction of career psychology in South Africa, one of which has been the call for the development of indigenous career models or the practical use of contextually sensitive approaches (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Stead & Watson, 2006; Watson, 2006). In recent times, the use of qualitative narrative storied approaches has been advocated as more sensitive to the diverse contexts in which South African career development takes place (Eloff, 2002; Fritz, Beekman, & Maree, 2007; Maree & Molepo, 2006).

Two traditional career theories that have found favour with most South African career researchers and practitioners are those of Donald Super (1980) and John Holland (1985).

Both theories provide visual conceptualisations of their theoretical constructs. In general, the debate in South African career psychology and the suggestions offered for a way forward are consistent with the international trend to develop theories, practices and research that are informed by the constructivist worldview (Watson, 2010).

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories that will be used to inform this study will be Super's (1980) Life-Career Rainbow and Cochran's (1997) Narrative Approach, a postmodern approach. Savickas (2002) notes that theories emphasise either individual differences or individual development related to careers (viewed as describing how people can find their fit within occupational structures) or "individual development" related to careers (viewed as how people express career behaviours over time). As the purpose of the study is to explore and describe the experiences of Grade 12 learners' career choice/guidance, individual development will be the focus, using the expression of narrative career behaviour over time. The assumption underpinning this study is that the Life-Career Rainbow and Narrative Approach are ways of addressing intricacies related to career guidance experiences over the life-span. The argument is not to view these two approaches as the only conclusive approaches in dealing with such complexities, but rather to propose their value as deserving some attention in this regard.

2.5.1 Super's Life-Career Rainbow

The leading developmental approach is Donald Super's Life-Career Rainbow "life-span, life-space" theory (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Although Super's theory is primarily a developmental one, he characterised it as a "differential, developmental-social-phenomenological career theory" (Super, 1969). In describing the career development process over the life-span, Super drew on the research of Bühler (1933), Miller and Form

(1951), and Havighurst (1953). Super's (1980) life-space theory segment merges with his self-concept and life-span theory segments to create a career development theory that embraces heterogeneity and variability in career development (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). A visual conceptualisation of the theoretical construct is depicted in Figure 2.2 below.

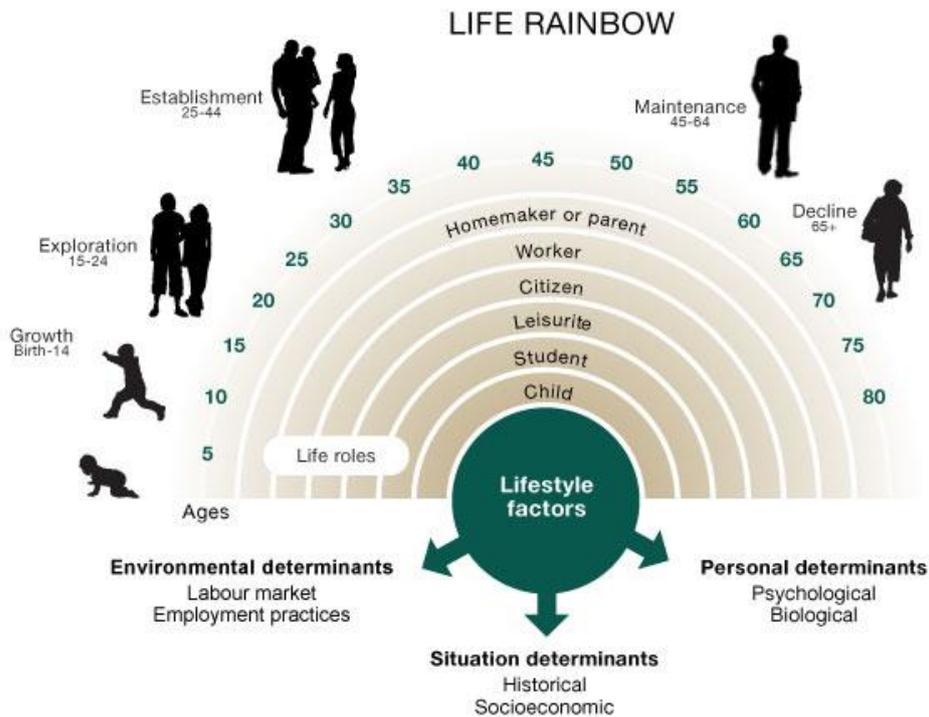


Figure 2.2: Super's Life-Career Rainbow
 (Source: Brown, Brooks, and Associates, 1990)

Super (1961) found some weaknesses in the theories and work of his colleague Ginzberg (1951), which he wished to address. He extended Ginzberg's (1951) life and career development stages from three to five stages; including sub-stages (see Figure 2.2). Ginzberg (1951) and his contemporaries contended that a career follows a developmental process. Although Ginzberg's and his contemporaries' work focused only on early vocational development for adolescence, and the theory itself has been regarded as incomplete, its developmental view toward the individual life-career process appears to have not only

historical but also current implications for understanding the evolving and dynamic nature of an individual’s career (Chen, 1998; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). However, rather than developing a unified theory, Super developed his theory segmentally, meaning, “There’s no Super’s theory, just the assemblage of theories that I have sought to synthesise. In another sense, the synthesis is a theory describing three key aspects of career development: (a) life-span, (b) life space, and (c) self-concept” (Super, 1990, p. 199).

The Life-Career Rainbow builds on key assumptions which are applicable to this study and stated as learners:



Figure 2.3: Key assumptions of the Life-Career Rainbow

(Source: Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013)

In this section, I acknowledge the limitations and criticisms of Super’s theory, as Krumboltz et al. (1976) note that theories are useful even with their limitations. The fragmentation of Super’s theory was identified as the most serious criticism of the theory (Niles & Harris-

Bowlsbey, 2013). Osipow and Fitzgerald (1996) state that, although this weakness of the theory had been addressed by subsequent refinements, it was too general to be of much practical use, with its conceptual value being limited by its sweeping style. It has been argued that a particular weakness is the failure of the theory to integrate economic and social factors that influence career decisions (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). This concern was echoed by Sharf (1997) and Brown et al. (1990), who proposed that Super's theory does not adequately address the particular challenges with which women and ethnic groups are presented.

Brown et al. (1990) also specifically criticises the theory for its failure to account adequately for the career development of persons from lower socio-economic groups. However, Brown et al. (1990) acknowledge that despite weaknesses, Super's theory "occupies stage centre, along with Holland's thinking. There seems to be no reason to doubt that it will continue to be of considerable importance in the future" (Brown, et al., 1990, p. 356). It is with the above in mind that this study has adopted Super's Life-Career Rainbow as a theoretical framework to highlight the process of Grade 12 learners' career development over the life-span. The conceptual foundations of this theory follow.

2.6 CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

The conceptual foundations (life-span, life space, self-concept and career maturity) found in the Life-Career Rainbow that will be used to inform this study, are outlined below:

2.6.1 Life-Span

In describing the process of career development over the life-span, Super conceptualised career as "the life course of a person encountering a series of developmental tasks and attempting to handle them in such a way as to become the kind of person he or she wants to

become” (Super, 1990, p. 225-226). He proposed a life stage developmental framework with the following stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement (see Table 2.2 below). In each stage one has to manage career developmental tasks that are socially expected of persons in the given chronological age range successfully (Miles, 2008). Specific to this study, in the stage of exploration (Grade 12 learners: 14-24 years), an adolescent has to cope with career developmental tasks of crystallisation (a cognitive process involving an understanding of one’s interests, skills, and values, and has to pursue career goals consistent with that understanding) and specification (specific career choices) (Leung, 2008).

Table 2.2: Developmental tasks in the life-span segment

LIFE-STAGE	ADOLESCENCE 14-25 YEARS	EARLY ADULTHOOD 25-45 YEARS	MIDDLE ADULTHOOD 45-65 YEARS	LATE ADULTHOOD 65+
Decline	Giving less time to hobbies	Reducing sports participation	Focusing on essentials	Reducing working hours
Maintenance	Verifying current occupational choice	Making occupational position secure	Holding one occupational position secure	Keeping what one enjoys
Establishment	Getting started in a chosen field	Settling down in a suitable position	Developing new skills	Doing things one has wanted to do
Exploration	Learning more about opportunities	Finding desired opportunity	Identifying new tasks to work on	Finding a good retirement place
Growth	Developing a realistic self-concept	Learning to relate to others	Accepting others	Developing and valuing non-occupational roles

(Source: Brown, Brooks, and Associates, 1990)

The life stages of Growth and Exploration will be discussed in more detail as they are pertinent to this study of highlighting the process of Grade 12 learners' career development over the life-span.

2.6.1.1 Growth

Learners in this study have passed through this life stage of growth. Children aged 4 to 13 years are confronted with career developmental tasks of developing a sense of self and a

basic understanding of the world-of-work (Super, 1980). They progress through the sub-stages of fantasy, interest and capacity by using their innate sense of curiosity, from engaging in occupational fantasies to exploring their environment (e.g. home, school, parental, and peer relationships) (Super, 1980). Moving through this stage, children begin to realise the importance of starting to plan for the future.

2.6.1.2 Exploration

Moving from the stage of developing a sense of self-awareness, adolescents aged 14 to 24 years turn to planning for the future. Particularly relevant for this study of Grade 12 learners is that they are expected in this stage within the domain of career development to address the tasks of crystallisation and specifying occupational choice (Super, 1980). The process of crystallisation builds upon occupational and self-information acquired during the growth stage (specifically from choosing subjects in Grade 9), and requires clarification of what work they would enjoy (Super, 1980). Using this information, learners should be focusing on acquiring more occupational information to explore whether the desired work will allow them to implement their self-concept (Super, 1961). “The process of specifying occupational preferences requires the ability to make decisions by choosing from among the occupations being considered” (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013, p. 51).

According to Ginzberg (1972), a career decision is not an irreversible process, but rather can be modified as time proceeds and life circumstances change. These predictable life stages have been influenced significantly by the changes in the world of work (Beukes, 2010). According to Feldman (2002), in the information age, where some young people get so caught up with information gathering, referred to as hyper-vigilance, it can be assumed that they have no psychological energy left to analyse their options in thoughtful and realistic

ways. In the research findings of Feldman's (2002) study of antecedents and consequences of early career indecision among young adults, it was found that young adults (18 to 24 years) do not adopt strategies for focused information gathering and dissemination.

In South Africa, Dullabh (2004) on the career development of adolescents in a children's home presently in the process of exploring and crystallising their career choice, fitting well within Super's (1990) theoretical career stage of exploration. The study showed that the majority of the adolescents indicated that their present career situation involves making choices regarding schools, subjects, and participation in activities. Influences which were found to be prominent were personality, health, interests and abilities, parents, friends, teachers and reading, financial support, location of universities, availability of jobs, and opportunities to work overseas. Watson, Creed and Patton (2003) also from South Africa, found that grade, gender, and the interaction of grade and gender impact on the developmental progression of career decision behaviour. Grade 12 learners in this study showed the most indecision in their respective samples. There is recognition that career decision behaviour may fluctuate between decisiveness and indecision during adolescence (Vondracek & Reitzle, 1998).

Shumba and Naong's (2012) findings on factors influencing career choice and aspirations among South African learners (15 to 30 years), showed that the family, the ability of the learner to identify his/her preferred career choice, and teachers were significant factors that influence the career choice and aspirations of learners. Factors which were found to be significant for post-secondary learners' perceptions of selected influences on their career development and planning were: 1) positive influence in the form of support from parents, teachers, peers, and learners' academic experiences and self-efficacy; and 2) negative social

events in the context of having friends in trouble with the law, addictions, teen pregnancy, indifference to schooling, dropping out of high school, and deaths of friends (Grygo, 2006).

Mmema (2010) examined the career choices of black Grade 12 learners in order to determine whether learners at this level have broadened their career choices to include scarce areas such as Science, Mathematics and Economics Management Science. The study found that the general career choices of both males and females had changed by the time they reached Grade 12, seen against career studies done at primary school level (Mmema, 2010). Watson et al. (2010) describes the occupational aspirations (in terms of typology and status level) of black South African upper elementary school children of low socio-economic status. The findings revealed that most children aspired to social and investigative type occupations, with over 80% aspiring to high status occupations. The research sample falls into Super's (1990) and Super, Kowalski and Gotkin's (1967) growth stage of career development. In this stage, children begin to identify with key figures in their environment. In this regard, several of the favourite ranked occupations would be visible in the children's environment, such as doctors, teachers, social workers, police officers, traffic officers, and nurses. Within the communities where these children live, individuals who work in these occupations are accorded a certain level of prestige (Watson & Stead, 1993).

2.6.2 Life Space

According to Super (1990), an individual's life-span consists of roles that one needs to play in domains such as family, school, community and workplace. A person performs different roles within the life-span, i.e. child, student, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent and pensioner (Super, 1990).

Super's (1990) Life-Career Rainbow suggests that when a person makes a transition from growth and exploration stages to establishment and maintenance stages, his or her roles of child and student are transformed into that of worker and home worker, with the roles of leisurite and citizen crossing over all stages. This model is relevant to the Grade 12 learners' holistic description of career development as it caters for the multiple roles they engage in throughout their life-span (Osipow, 1983).

The importance of each role will differ at each stage in a person's life and, furthermore, one or more roles could be more developed while others are neglected or overlooked. The unsuccessful integration of different roles could lead to interpersonal conflict as, for example, in the case where parents expect more from the child in respect of certain roles with which the child is unable or unwilling to comply (MacKenzie, 1996). Intrapersonal conflict may also result from the adolescent trying to play too many roles simultaneously (Langley, 1990).

2.6.3 Self-Concept

The major figure in leading the shift from guidance to counselling was Carl Rogers (1959), who advocated the view that people are competent to direct themselves (Savickas, 2007). Rogers' theory emphasises that only conscious experiences and experiences that are allowed into consciousness are found in the self-concept. Career psychology's developmental paradigm views self as a subject and calls this sense of personhood a "self-concept" (Savickas, 2007).

For Super (1961), self means "what a person is" (p. 17). According to Savickas (2007), a person becomes aware of self through perceptions of the self or self-percept. Over time,

these self-percepts acquire meaning and cohere to form a self-concept (Savickas, 2007). Accordingly, Super (1988), views the self-concept as a picture of self, that is, a perceived self with accrued meanings. Rogers' self-concept theory addresses the ideal self, congruence and incongruence (Meyer, et al., 2003). An individual can be seen to have a self-concept that is flexible and changeable, but also consists of a stable pattern of integrated perception (Meyer, et al., 2003). Bandura (1982), in his self-efficacy theory, and Markus and Nurius (1986), in their theory of possible selves, also argue that self-concepts are not stable, generalisable, and an average. Instead, they conceptualised the self as multi-faceted and composed of numerous images, schemas, and prototypes. Meyer et al. (2003) further argue that self-perceptions are organised as a whole; therefore a modification in one part of the self-concept influences the entire image. Savickas (2007) highlights that the conceptual meanings by and large arise in some role or set of relationships, which, for Super (1957), concentrated on self-concepts in occupational roles.

The ideal self is the self-concept the individual would most like to have (Rogers, 1960, p. 200 in Meyer, et al., 2003). The ideal self is realistic, attainable and in sync with the self-concept in a psychologically healthy person, whereas in an unhealthy person, the ideal self and self-concept do not correspond (Meyer, et al., 2003). "The ideal self apparently represents extreme forms of the ideals set by others for the person, and is not in tune with the real potential of the person" (Meyer, et al., 2003, p. 367).

Super, in his *Psychology of Careers* (1957), states that, "The choice of an occupation is one of the points in life at which a young person is called upon to state rather explicitly his concept of himself, to say definitely 'I am this or that kind of person'" (Super, 1957, p. 191). This implies that a learner in this study is not only viewed in the process of finding out "what

goes” in the adult world and then adopting those behaviours; rather the learner should be seen as what he/she brings, what she or he sees, tries, how well she or he likes it, how well she or he succeeds depends upon her or his self as well as upon her or his culture.

Super (1957) argues that people are born with certain behaviour potentials; as a child’s range of interpersonal experiences and relations widens, so her or his identifications vary and diversify. A development of the concept of self as a distinct person emerges as self rather than as other (Super, 1957). He further highlights that ideas of characteristics, this concept of self, may not be realistic, but as the adolescent goes through life she or he tries out these ideas of her- or himself on various people and activities. Aspects of the self-concept which bring satisfaction are retained, while those which do not bring gratification are rejected in due course and replaced by traits and behaviours which stand the test of reality (Savickas, 2007). Some of the components of the self-concept are mutually compatible, while others may prove to be incompatible with each other (Super, 1957).

Similarly, Rogers’ (1960) humanistic theory speaks of congruence and incongruence, which Meyer et al. (2003) define as follows: congruent functioning is when an individual’s self-concept corresponds with her/his potential, while incongruent functioning is when the individual’s self-concept does not correspond with her/his potential. The interpretation of this for the learners in this study is that they chose subjects in Grade 9 that were compatible with their future careers. In addition, they will be making career choices that are congruent with how they see themselves and their abilities. They might try out ideas or characteristics of the self in different settings, first in the home and neighbourhood, then as the horizons and the scope of activities broaden, in the school and church, and then in the community activities.

The curriculum of the early high school and college could be viewed as exploratory in much of its content and purpose (Super, 1957). Part-time and holiday jobs are primarily a means of earning money for most high school and college learners. This could have important exploratory values, which could provide the Grade 12 learners with opportunities to develop mature work habits such as regularity, punctuality, responsibility and meeting deadlines (Super, 1957). Super (1957) highlighted that if part-time work experience has some bearing on the career aspirations and plans, it also provides opportunities to test aptitudes, skills and interests and to find out whether or not one likes the kind of work and whether or not they can do it to the satisfaction of others and themselves. Studies on the career aspirations of adolescents during self and occupational exploration have been reported as inconsistent and relatively meaningless, and consistent and meaningful by others (Super, 1957).

Research on self-concept and career behaviour is complicated by the variety of definitions of self-concept and also the variety of measures that researchers have used (Betz, 1994), and even confusion between self-concept dimensions, e.g. intelligent, athletic, and meta-dimensions, e.g. self-esteem, self-efficacy (Super, et al., 1967). Nevertheless, self-concept has been found to be an important variable in occupational preference (Osipow, 1983). Studies have investigated the relationships between the self-concept meta-dimension of self-esteem and vocational behaviour (Creed, Prideaux, & Patton, 2005; Helbing, 1984; Janeiro, 2010; Watson, et al., 2003) and between the self-concept meta-dimension of self-efficacy and vocational behaviour (Creed, et al., 2005). Findings of a study looking at a relationship between self-concept and career awareness revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between self-concept and career awareness among learners (Nasir & Lin, 2013). The study also showed that learners with a higher self-concept or those with a more positive

outlook had higher levels of career awareness. Cabral and Salomone (1990) found that well-developed self-concepts enabled individuals to process information that had been unforeseen. This same information would be confusing to learners with negative schemata or self-concepts about their own career potential (Cabral & Salomone, 1990).

2.6.4 Career maturity

Career maturity is one of the prime constructs of the career development theory and allows one to assess both the rate and level of an individual's development in career planning. The construct of career maturity is particularly relevant for this study of Grade 12 learners in South Africa, as it answers the question that is of direct concern to high school learners, i.e. "How do I deal with expectations about preparing for and participating in work?" Initially, called "vocational maturity", the construct now known as "career maturity" was proposed nearly six decades by Super (Super, 1957). Career maturity is used to signify the degree of development, the place reached on the continuum of career development from exploration to decline (Super, 1957).

Career maturity is central to a developmental approach to understanding career behaviour, and involves an assessment of an individual's level of career progress in relation to his/her career relevant development tasks (Patton & Creed, 2001). Vondracek and Reitzle (1998) criticised the career maturity construct's focus on the individual, its ties to developmental stage models, and its lack of inclusion of contexts of time and culture. Acknowledging that learners in this study make a series of preliminary choices (e.g. choice of school subjects in Grade 9) resulting in the elimination of some options, retention of others, and a narrowing down of alternatives leading to an initial vocational choice, Super (1957) questioned the readiness of young people to make the career choices required of them and proposed the

concept of vocational maturity, which later became known as career maturity. Savickas (2002) replaced career maturity with the constructs of vocational maturity to signify a degree of vocational development and career adaptability to represent a capacity to adapt to an environmental context and to cope with vocational development tasks. In recent career development research, several terms have been used to refer to the capacity to cope with vocational development tasks during adolescence, including career adaptability (Hirschi, 2009; Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005), career choice readiness (Hirschi, 2011), and career maturity (Birol & Kiralp, 2010; Janiero, 2010). The term career maturity will be adopted for this study.

In 1951, the longitudinal Career Pattern Study commenced (Super, 1957) and followed the process of vocational development of a sample of 100 males for more than 20 years. Data were first gathered from the boys when they were in Grade 9, aged 14 to 15 years. Data were subsequently collected and analysed when the participants were 12th grade high school learners, and in their adult years at ages 25 and 36 (Super, 1988; Super, et al., 1967). The early stages of the Career Pattern Study clarified the structural dimensions of adolescent career development and career maturity. The Career Pattern Study developed a rationale for its measurement, highlighting dimensions which should be applicable during adolescence because the participants were in their teens. Definitions and dimensions developed as they grew older and went through the various stages of career development. As discussed in the life-span segment, characteristics postulated in the exploratory stage of viewing adolescence were:

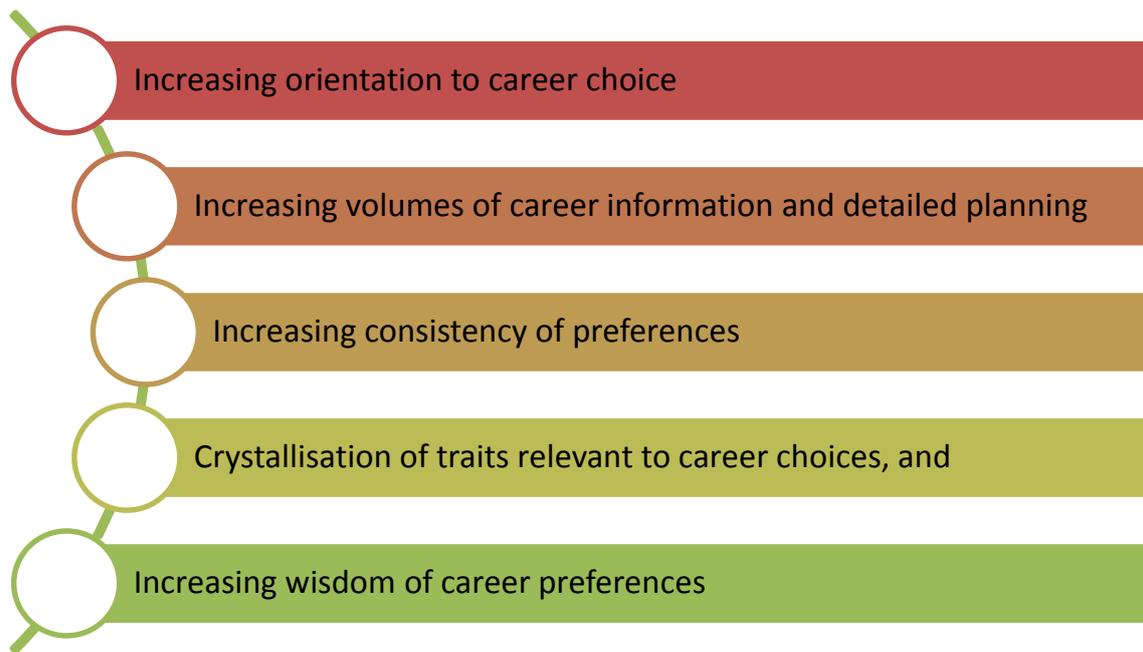


Figure 2.4: Career maturity dimensions

(Source: Patton & Lokan, 2001)

Implications of the career maturity dimension for the learners in this study, as assumed by Super (1957, 1980), will be as follows:

1. Orientation to career choice

A learner who is concerned with making choices is more likely to be ready and able to choose when called upon to do so, than a learner who is not concerned with choice.

2. Information and planning

Different types of information and planning are appropriate at different stages. Super (1957) argues that, in contrast with the learner in Grade 12 who knows nothing about occupations and has no career plans, the experienced worker has a substantial volume of information about jobs and has made and carried out career plans. Learners in this study are expected to be gathering information and plans concerning occupational preparation and entry.

3. Consistency of vocational preferences

Greater maturity for the learners should result in a narrowing of goals, in the elimination of the less attractive preferences and in the crystallisation of preferences which have stood the tests of exploration and trial.

4. Crystallisation of traits

The more highly developed and integrated the learner's ability and trait system, the greater his/her readiness to cope with the developmental tasks of career choice and adjustment. Maturity may be perceived as the degree to which abilities and traits have taken shape, providing consistent individual bases for action.

5. Wisdom of career preferences

This dimension of career maturity has been viewed as one of the most complex and most difficult to manage, but at the same time conceptually satisfying of all the dimensions of career maturity (Super, 1957).

Despite the restriction of career maturity to adolescent populations, there has been controversy in recent years about its relevance to the contemporary world of work where career patterns are changing, employment is less secure, and universal transition points are increasingly difficult to define (Savickas, 2007; Vondracek & Reitzle, 1998). Thompson and Lindeman (1984) concluded that career development appears to be influenced by experiences, which may increase or decrease the level of career maturity. Patton and Lokan (2001) highlight that different transition points might contribute to irregularities in career maturity. This can include subjects curriculum-imposed by different educational systems

and variation in the provision, nature and quality of career development programmes that are implemented to help learners make career-related decisions.

A study by Miller (2006) shows inadequate levels of career maturity among previously disadvantaged South African high school learners. Another study by Gordon and Meyer (2002), assessing the nature of career indecision (which is a dimension in the measurement of career maturity) amongst Afrikaans- and English-speaking prospective university learners, reveals that career indecision and the lack of career information and planning are prevalent among these learners, thus suggesting a lower level of career maturity. As a result, Gordon and Meyer (2002) suggest that prospective university students may benefit from an intervention aimed at improving career maturity-related skills through career counselling. Dybwad (2008) states that career uncertainty is an important aspect of career maturity, since it may function as a proxy for dropouts and poor progression through high school.

Findings which were similar to Gordon and Meyer's (2002) suggesting that Grade 12 learners should benefit from career counselling to improve career maturity were that of Sirohi (2013). The study examined the career maturity of secondary school learners; analysis of data revealed learners at private schools showed higher career maturity attitudes as compared to learners at government schools. Learners in schools with career guidance and counselling provisions showed high career maturity in self-awareness and occupational information as compared to those from schools which are deprived of these provisions; similarly, in choosing a job, the learners who are privileged to be exposed to the guidance and counselling programmes show much higher career maturity than their underprivileged counterparts. However, Pieterse (2005) found that learners from disadvantaged schools are most focused on the future, while learners in advantaged schools are least focused on the

future. The implication of this on the present study is to explore the findings and to see whether learners will be least focused on the future as they are from an advantaged school.

In investigating Grade 12 learners' career goals and conceptions of the school education and career maturity, Fleihan's (2011) findings suggest that few learners had definite career goals, while the majority still had not yet decided on a particular future major. Most of the learners had low career maturity scores on the Career Development Inventory. Bearing the above in mind, it is important to highlight, as Vondracek and Reitzle (1998) noted, that multiple personal and contextual factors may increase the likelihood that some learners will gain greater career maturity, and some will gain less career maturity over time. It was found that contextual factors, such as conversations about careers with parents, relationships with parents, teachers, and friends, parents' educational level, parents' income, and private education expenses, are found to play an important role in either increasing or decreasing adolescents' career maturity (Yon, Joeng, & Goh, 2012). This is important for this study to explore and describe the career maturity of Grade 12 learners.

2.7 COCHRAN'S NARRATIVE APPROACH

Cochran's (1997) Narrative Approach contends that career guidance theories should provide accounts of how individuals become agents rather than victims of circumstances regarding career. The aim of career guidance/counselling is to enhance agency regarding career (p. 209). The implication of this approach to this study is that emphasis on the learners' experiences should be exploring and articulating the main character (individual learner) to be lived out in a specific career plot (career guidance experience). Through the personal narratives of these learners, we can come to see movement through life more clearly and can understand career decisions within a greater life context (Cochran, 1997).

Cochran (1997) identified several ways in which narratives help to make meaning out of life experiences of the learners in this study:

- Narratives help to provide a sense of personal continuity across time (i.e. a beginning, middle and an end; as a learner becomes aware of how the past has influenced the present, he/she can make decisions about the future).
- A narrative helps to give meaning to the plot of a learner's story; each story contains examples of behaviours and decisions that help to paint a portrait of who the learner is relative to engaging in the world.
- According to Cochran (1997), within each story line there is a "moral to the story", for example a learner in this study could say "if I work hard and succeed, I learn that hard work pays off and I am likely to work hard and succeed".

Narrative is considered an important feature of interpretation (Young & Collin, 1992). Interpretation becomes possible when events and situations occur in varied context; subjective career is about interpreting what has happened and is going to happen in one's life career enactment (Chen, 1998). Meanings can be interpreted from what already exists, i.e. the past stories, but meanings can also be yielded from these events and situations for anticipating the future plan (Chen, 1998).

Young et al. (1996) mark several points in identifying narrative's relationship to career and action:

- Firstly, narratives do not only serve to construct and facilitate intentional, goal-

oriented action, but can also unify separate, unrelated actions into a coherent and continuing flow of meanings.

- Secondly, narrative renders a guide for action. While career is constructed within the present narrative frame, enactment and meaning-making provide implications for future career direction and endeavour.
- Thirdly, people do not live completely in narratives. That is why action has to be stressed in everyday life; action consists of both practical measures in dealing with objects, and symbolic demeanour to encounter signs and symbols over one's life career span (Chen, 1998).

Career theorists and practitioners such as Bujold (2004), Cochran (1990, 1997), Young and Collin (1992), Mkhize and Frizelle (2000), Peavy (1992), and Savickas (2007), suggest a narrative approach as a method of providing a holistic understanding of the individual career (Rehfuss, 2009).

2.8 SUMMARY

The current literature review looked at the history of career guidance, both internationally and nationally. A review of the theories underpinning career guidance was explored as well as the South African perspective. Super's (1980) Life-Career Rainbow and Cochran's (1997) narrative approach framework that will be used for this study were reviewed. Research regarding the constructs of the Life-Career Rainbow was reviewed (life space, life-span, self-concept and career maturity), two of which are commonly researched (life-span and career maturity) in various areas. However, no research has looked at all four constructs (especially life space and self-concept) as they relate to the career development of Grade 12 learners in South Africa. Little research was found on the narrative approach framework.

The purpose of the current research was to explore the narrative career of Grade 12 learners as well the constructs of the Life-Career Rainbow. Knowledge of how these constructs relate to one another will add to the career literature as it relates to Grade 12 learners' experiences of career guidance/development and will serve as a guide for the career guidance/counselling process.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Never assume the obvious is true.

Safire, 1980, *The Great Permitter*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, I gave a description of the theory as well as relevant research findings specifically related to career guidance, namely the life space, life-span, self-concept, and career maturity themes found within the Life-Career Rainbow framework. In Chapter 3, I provide an in-depth description of the research methods used to explore the aims of the study, the pros and cons of such methods, the sampling method, a description of the measures used, how the research was conducted, the data analysis procedures that were employed, as well as ethical considerations and trustworthiness of data.

3.2 OVERVIEW

High-school learners will often have different experiences of career guidance and eventually making career choices (Basham, 2011b; Bholanath, 2007). The current study aimed at exploring and describing the experiences of Grade 12 learners with regard to making a career choice in a South African school. The following objectives guided the study:

1. Describe the past experiences of learners making subject choices;
2. Describe the present experience of learners in crystallising their career choices;
3. Describe the future aspirations of learners; and
4. Explore learners' recommendations to improve career guidance in high schools.

The overall question guiding this study is “What are Grade 12 learners’ experiences of career choice and guidance at a private school in Pretoria West?”

The following sub-questions were addressed:

1. What were the learners’ experiences in making subject choices in Grade 9?
2. What experiences influenced their subject choices?
3. What are the learners’ experiences in crystallising their career choices?
4. What experiences influence their career choices at present?
5. What are the learners’ future aspirations?
6. What do learners see as ways to improve career guidance in schools?

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the current study followed a qualitative, narrative case-study approach to enable me as the researcher to make sense of the experiences and social situations of the learners in their real world and natural setting (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006). I followed a narrative case-study approach in order to represent the views and perspectives of the Grade 12 learners participating in the study. Central in narrative inquiry is the work done by Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2000) in the field of education research. They claim that much of what is known in education comes from people relating their stories of educational experiences. Narrative inquiry is concerned with critically analysing stories we hear, read and tell on a personal level, as well as the larger societal narratives embedded in our social interactions (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative approaches have often been used in educational settings to help learners and teachers to understand their own teaching and/or learning processes and experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

I used a "case story" approach in this research to provide descriptive knowledge which must be understood in context. I had hoped that the case-study inquiry would allow me to explore Grade 12 learners' narrative experiences of making career choices in a predominantly black African, independent high school (Yin, 2009). Case-study research brings a researcher to an understanding of a complex issue or object, which in this study is the experience of a group of Grade 12 learners. Case-study research can extend experience or add strength to what is already known about learners' experiences of making career choices through previous research. It will further emphasise contextual analysis of the conditions of these learners' experiences and their other relationships (Soy, 1997).

A design issue in a case study is to select a case or cases. In thinking "case", one is thinking of an entity such as a community, a school, a company, a family, a person or even an event which one wishes to study. In looking at the research question, "What are Grade 12 learners' experiences of making a career choice in a South African high school?" the case in this study was defined as Grade 12 learners within another case, which is the school in which the study took place (Seale, 2012).

The focus group interviews were conducted using a narrative inquiry process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Stake, 1988), which yields history, literature and myth, and because it is central to the development of social and personal identity (culture and self). I wanted to see how the learners impose order on the flow of experience as a way of making sense of actions and events in their lives as a unit (Riessman, 2002). The use of a narrative inquiry and the development of case stories offer multiple perspectives in understanding experiences of learners in making career decisions. Giving voice to the learners means that as a researcher,

I value the experiences related by my participants – their beliefs, views, perspectives, and opinions (Hatchell & Aveling, 2008).

3.4 POPULATION AND STUDY CASE

Below I briefly discuss the study sample and sampling methods which I employed.

3.4.1 Population and study sample

The population for the study was the learners who were in Grade 12 in a South African private school. The study sample consisted of 25 learners. The sampling procedure utilised was purposive sampling. The learners who participated form part of a larger group of learners at the school that I identified as a viable location for me. As I indicated in Chapter 1, the learners were selected by virtue of them being in Grade 12 and being at a phase where they need to make career decisions.

The learners are from surrounding townships and suburbs in Pretoria, namely Atteridgeville and Soshanguve, which are predominantly black townships. The term “township” is commonly understood to refer to the underdeveloped, usually (but not only) urban, residential areas that during Apartheid were reserved for non-whites (Africans, Coloureds and Indians) who lived near or worked in areas that were designated ‘white only’. Other learners reside in Proclamation Hill, Pretoria city centre and Laudium, which are suburbs near the school.

3.4.2 Case size and selection of a case

Convenience sampling was used for the purpose of the study as the school met certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy

accessibility, or the willingness to volunteer. In selecting my cases I wished to choose a school that would firstly be convenient for me to travel to and also one that would give me as much information as possible. I began to search for schools around my area. I found a school in the west of Pretoria exiting Atteridgeville, the township, and near Pretoria city centre. Atteridgeville is part of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality; it is a township located to the west of Pretoria, South Africa. It is bordered to the west by Saulsville, to the east by Proclamation Hill; to the south by Laudium and to the north by Lotus Gardens. The school is centred in the middle of the township and suburbs mentioned.

The learners were recruited by firstly asking the principal for permission to interact with the learners, as I would be conducting the focus groups discussion at the school. Diversity was sought in terms of age, cultural and linguistic background, as well as geographical area. However, it must be acknowledged from the outset that as this is a case-focused study, it was impossible to cover every possible permutation of cultural and linguistic background, gender, race, within the scope of this study.

The method was designed to ensure that the learners met certain criteria in order to participate in the study. Firstly, they had to be in Grade 12 and aged between 17 and 18 years. Secondly, the learners had to agree willingly to participate in the study to ensure ethical compliance.

After setting the establishment criteria, it was found that the learners did not meet the age requirement of 17 to 18 years. The age range was 17 to 21; I then had to include all learners as they still fit Super's (1957) crystallisation task of age 14 to 24. As per the human subject review requirements, a recruitment letter was sent to all the parents of the Grade 12 learners

in the school. I visited the class to explain the study and to recruit participants from the learners. All the learners (30) were willing to participate in the study.

However, on the day of the interviews, five (5) learners were absent; the number of participants in this study was therefore 25 Grade 12 learners (out of the population of 30 learners who made up the class). The learners were between ages 17 and 21 years. All learners were asked to attend and to participate in the focus group interviews. The learners were provided with pseudonyms and were referred to using letters from A to Z for purposes of confidentiality and anonymity.

3.5 ENTERING THE FIELD

Gaining access to research participants is a critical part of the research process as one has to get become immersed in the context of the participants in order to get access to the information. Gaining access required me to have a key set of interpersonal skills which include, but are not limited to:

- having conversations; with the principal before, during and after the interviews with the learners without compromising confidentiality;
- keeping commitments; being on time for the focus group discussions as I was given the Life Orientation period which ran for 45 minutes;
- relating to others, the Life Orientation teachers and the learners; and
- keeping confidence within the entire research process and conveying appreciation (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003).

Site selection was an important aspect of entering the field and generating data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This specific school was chosen because it is a co-educational setting with a diverse composition of learners from various communities. The school was founded in 1993, registered with the Gauteng Department of Education. The school aims to keep class sizes small (between 20 and 30 learners), with an opportunity for teachers to offer learners individual attention. The teachers are from various ethnic origins and the school takes pride in not classifying them according to racial categories. The teachers' ages and years of experience range widely, with the average years of experience being 21 years.

Upon gaining access to the school, I conducted one interview with the principal. No resistance was evident from the principal as the gatekeeper to the school. After presenting the information from the research proposal and application to the UNISA ethical committee, a thorough explanation was given on the possible benefits their participation could have for the school. After the first meeting, permission was granted to proceed with the research.

3.6. DATA COLLECTION

The choice of a case-study approach was also intended to ensure that there were multiple sources of information that could corroborate the evidence (Seale, 2012). Focus group interviews, narrative essays and field notes were used as data collection methods. The use of these multiple sources will provide a case that is extremely rich and detailed and, furthermore, will allow the researcher to address a broader range of historical and behavioural issues (Yin, 2009). The quotes drawn from the data are presented unedited and unaltered. The brackets {6:20} next to each quote indicate the document number and line within the document that the quote was drawn, from document one, which is the earliest

transcription in this study, and is contained in line 1 of the transcription from which the quote is drawn.

3.6.1 Focus group interviews

As a start, focus group interviews were conducted with three groups of learners. Eleven (11) learners participated in the first group, nine (9) learners in the second group, while the third group had five (5) learners. The unit of analysis is the group of learners rather than one learner taking part in the discussion. The purpose of the focus group is to gather information from participants about the topic of interest (Litchman, 2006).

The main advantage of the focus group is the opportunity to observe a large degree of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time (Morgan, 1993). I chose focus group interviews as a data collection method, not only because of its value of interviewing several learners at the same time, but also because of two other factors. Firstly, I wanted a method that would explore the formation and negotiation of the experiences of learners maximally within the group context. Secondly, I wanted to explore the various ways in which the learners define and discuss their experiences as a group through social interaction. In line with the theoretical approach taken in the study, I followed the assumption that the learners' opinions, attitudes and accounts of their experiences are socially produced through their interaction with one another (Seale, 2012). Moreover, the group context highlights how learners articulate and justify their ideas in relation to one another (Seale, 2012).

Three focus groups were conducted because of the learners' timetable, and were recorded. The focus groups were conducted on different days. I followed the procedure recommended by Morgan (1993) for an effective focus group. At the beginning of the focus group, the

participants/learners were welcomed, they were provided with a brief explanation of the study, introduced to the focus of the discussion and the group was allowed to set the ground rules (Morgan, 1993). It was emphasised to all participants/learners that the comments made during the focus group session would be kept confidential but, at the same time, it was made clear that it was impossible for the researcher to promise that participants would not repeat comments outside the group at some time in the future. To avoid breach of privacy, I ensured that the information provided in the research would only be used in furthering research and not for any other purpose. Only those participants who consented to this arrangement were interviewed.

I started the focus groups with an ice-breaker question relevant to the research question of “When I grow up I want to be a...?” I followed up on the answers by asking learners to elaborate on their experiences of planning for their future careers, the sources of information they used, the information they have about available job opportunities in South Africa, and they were then asked to give specific examples. Learners were further interviewed on their understanding of the relationship between their subject choices and their desired careers. All learners were asked about their educational or vocational plans and their conception of career goals, career planning and career exploration. A question about the different people who influence the learners’ career decisions was also asked, finishing off with what more the learners thought could be done to improve their career guidance experiences.

3.6.2 Narrative essays

Following up on the focus groups described above, data were collected by means of narrative essays. Learners were asked to think and write about themselves. Writing the narrative essays enabled learners to tell their stories. Narrative essays are often told from a defined

point of view, in this case, a Grade 12 learner. Storytelling is viewed as consisting of feeling as well as specific and often sensory details provided to get the reader involved in the elements and sequence of the story. The verbs are vivid and precise. The learners' narrative essays were found to make certain points and those points are often defined in the opening sentence, but were also found as the last sentence in the opening paragraph. The essays included all the conventions of storytelling: plot, character, setting, climax, and ending. The narrative was a tool for them to tell the story of their backgrounds, environments, families, dreams, and aspirations, which would all fit into their need to make career decisions now (Seale, 2012)

Storytelling, Savickas (2007) points out, crystallises what learners think of themselves as they articulate their patterns and progress. He further highlights that their stories impose meaning and purpose on events and experiences that may otherwise be viewed as random (Savickas, et al., 2009). The stories explain the past, orient them to the present, and guide them as they move into their futures (Seale, 2012). The stories further identify and name the values by which these learners live and through which they preserve life (Savickas, 2007). Identity stories therefore attempt to reveal the learners' constitutive concerns and locate the individual in the social space of values that matter (Savickas, et al., 2009).

Learners were given the narrative essay task after the focus group interview, and were asked to take time and write their life stories. The narrative essays were then collected after all the focus group interviews were completed. This exercise took two weeks to complete. However, not all learners handed in their narratives; of the 25 learners only 11 handed in their narrative essays.

3.6.3 Field notes

In addition to focus group discussions and narrative essays, I relied on field notes as a data collection method. Field notes consist of descriptions of social processes and their contexts that will set out to capture their features (Seale, 2012). I made field notes soon after the focus group interviews and the narrative essay exercise. The field notes were made relevant to emerging concerns and are detailed and contextual. To achieve this, speech was recorded verbatim and non-verbal behaviour was recorded in precise terms (Seale, 2012).

There are four major parts of field notes, which I kept distinct from one another in some way when I was writing them:

1. Jottings: brief words or phrases which I wrote down while at the school; I recorded these in a small notebook. Jottings are intended to help us remember things we want to include when we write the fully-fledged notes.
2. Descriptions: this entailed describing everything I could remember about the school, learners, sequence of events, mood, etc. The information helped in writing a general description of the school and specifically the focus group discussion later. The process also helped me to link related themes to one another or to point to useful research directions later.
3. Analysis of what I learned in the setting regarding my guiding questions. This process included themes that I began to identify regarding my guiding question.
4. Reflection on what I learned of a personal nature. This included what was it like for me to be doing this research. What I felt comfortable with for being in the site and what felt uncomfortable. In what ways did I connect with the learners and in what ways did I not?

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGIES

Riessman (2008) proposes a typology of the four main types of narrative analysis: thematic, structural, dialogic and visual. She notes that the boundaries between these four groups can sometimes be blurred. Thematic narrative analyses differ, for example, in the extent to which they attend to the structural features and language of the narratives as well as to the content (Riessman, 2008). Thematic narrative analysis, according to Riessman (2008), is the most widely used analytic strategy. Its focus is on the content, “what” is said. Alternatively, structural analysis attends to “how” a story is told, which is the sequencing, specific words and metaphors. Riessman (2008) argues that the thematic and structural approaches are the two foundations of narrative analysis, and that the dialogic and visual methodologies build on these. Dialogic analysis is a broader interpretive approach to oral narrative that investigates how talk between speakers is produced and performed interactively as narrative (Riessman, 2008). Visual analysis focuses on how people communicate using images, either through telling a story with images or telling a story about images (Riessman, 2008).

For the purpose of the study, I utilised thematic narrative analysis to explore the stories of the Grade 12 learners’ experiences of making career choices. The focus was on what content the narratives communicated. As Riessman (2008) carefully points out, thematic narrative analysis only appears straightforward and intuitive. The analysis of the narratives is methodical, focused and detailed, while still retaining a sense of the “whole” story. There is in the study, however, some focus on the “telling” of the story. I attend to sequencing, specific language, pauses and emotion (particularly laughter) which strengthen the analysis of each case.

A thematic narrative analysis approach is suited to the data of my study; “it can generate case studies of individuals and groups, and typologies”, which in my study is data from focus groups and narrative essays (Riessman, 2008, p. 74). I have, in this study, carefully explored not only the themes of the learners’ stories, but also the way in which they told the stories. The pauses, silences, points of rupture, affect, language and metaphors, among other aspects, enabled the whole story to be explored. However, the main focus is on content and themes within each learner’s narrative rather than a detailed discourse analysis. Riessman (2008) notes that narrative analysis seeks to preserve the “wealth of detail contained in long sequences” (p. 74). I specifically chose to use thematic narrative analysis as it preserves the sequencing, keeping the story intact while interpreting it.

Following Riessman’s (2008) criticism that the researcher’s role in constructing the narratives which are subsequently analysed is often obscure, I detail below the specific steps taken in the focus group process, transcription and subsequent “cleaning up” of the transcripts. As noted earlier in this chapter, this is not a detailed discourse analysis and therefore some cleaning up of the text was undertaken. This attention to detail will help the reader to better understand both the data that are being analysed and my role in the construction of the narratives and following analyses.

3.7.1 Data management and analysis

Transcription process

The first transcription of the focus group discussions was verbatim, including all utterances by both the learners and myself as the researcher. Most of these were non-lexical utterances such as “uh huh”, “mmmm”, “yeah”, etc., to encourage the learners to continue with their stories and to indicate that I was following what they were saying (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Places where the learners sighed, laughed or paused were also noted. Narrative analysis involves immersion in the transcripts and I considered that this would be aided by undertaking the transcription myself, thus I undertook all transcriptions of the three focus group discussions. Although a lengthy process, this enabled me from the beginning to get a sense of the learners' stories and how they were told.

This method of verbatim transcription resulted in lengthy transcripts. One original transcript, for example, was 10 pages with single line spacing. I made a point of also letting the learners know that names (of themselves, their friends and teachers) would be removed in the final version of the transcript and no identifying information would be left in. Possible identifying information that was removed included the learners', teachers' and friends' names, and the name of the school.

I created pseudonyms for the learners. I ensured that the pseudonyms did not start with the same letter of the alphabet or have any resemblance to their original names. Where a teacher was referred to by name, I removed the name and inserted (Ms) or (Mr) in its place. The text was left in blocks relating to the event or topic about which they were talking, unless there was a significant pause. The sequencing was preserved.

All the transcripts were transferred into the ATLAS.ti program for processing. ATLAS.ti allows for the analysis of text, graphic and audio data and aids the researcher in managing and retrieving data codes within a corpus of texts (Archer, 2012). The texts were not edited for grammatical correctness nor spelling errors corrected in order to preserve the idiom used by the learners.

Thematic narrative analysis

When the second version of each transcript was completed, I read it closely. Some sections of the narratives relating to the over-arching themes of Super's Life-Career Rainbow, being self-concept, career maturity, life space and life-span, were apparent during the focus groups and narratives and/or during the transcription process. Inductive analysis was used which incorporated immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover the important categories, dimensions and interrelationships (Patton, 1990). This first stage of analysis resulted in blocks of text from each case that related to the themes.

The second stage of analysis involved deductive deeper immersion into the focus group excerpts or blocks of text relating to sub-themes relating to the research questions, namely future aspirations, inspiration of dreams, information and planning, influences, subject selection, employment opportunities and ways to improve career guidance. The same deductive analysis was conducted for the narrative essays, where immersion brought themes of family, community, friends, school and work. Excerpts were shortened, where necessary, to exclude unnecessary discussion, repetition, digressions and examples shared by the learners.

The page numbers for each excerpt were included to show where within each story an excerpt was located and as further verification when a learner returned in his/her narrative to pick up an earlier point on a theme.

The third stage of analysis involved looking for commonalities and differences between the cases in relation to each theme. As Hatchell and Aveling (2008) note, in this way the "text allows the reader to re-experience the events in question, coming to see the truth of the

narratives that contain them”. I closed off with integration for each theme and each case classified according to the way the learners represented the theme in their stories.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa. Ethical considerations were based on the principles guiding research ethics as postulated by Terre Blanche et al. (2006). Respect for the privacy and anonymity of the learners, teachers and the school was considered. Permission was requested from the principal before commencing with data collection. It was explained to the principal that the findings of the study would be made public, while still assuring the school of anonymity. The aims of the study were communicated to the participants prior to obtaining informed written consent from them to participate in the study. Two of the participants were under 18 years of age, and the parents/guardians were briefed on the study through an information letter which the participants took home and requested the parents/guardians to sign the informed consent letters.

I could not ensure full confidentiality and anonymity, as the participants in the focus groups knew each other. However, the shared responsibility of the participants and the researcher to ensure that confidentiality and respect were maintained at all times, was highlighted and agreed upon. Participants were also assured that their responses would be kept anonymous by using appropriate coding and that they would not be able to identify themselves from the coding and the resulting analysis of the outcomes. They were also assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation implies participants' voluntary decision to participate in the study without coercion or undue influence (Admur & Bankert, 2011). Learners were informed of their right to withdraw their participation during any stage of the research process without penalty.

Informed consent

Informed consent means that participants understand the important implications of the decision to participate in research and they actively agree to such participation (Admur & Bankert, 2011). Learners who were willing to participate in the study were requested to sign an informed consent form.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality pertains to the treatment of information that an individual has disclosed in a relationship of trust with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure without permission (Oliver, 2010). Confidentiality was ensured by treating learners' information with high confidence; access to participant's data will be obtained by the researcher and the supervisor.

Anonymity

Anonymity implies that participants should be offered the opportunity to have their identities hidden in a research report (Oliver, 2010). The general research findings will be provided to the school; for publication; presentations during seminars and/or workshops will ensure anonymity by NOT revealing the identity of the learners. In cases where the biographical information was included, pseudonyms (A-Z characters) were used to replace learners' actual identities.

Non-maleficence

Due to the nature of this study, physical or emotional harm was not anticipated.

3.9 MEASURES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

The narrative inquiry approach inevitably leads to questions about the credibility of the narratives told by participants, including the question of whether or not they represent memory reconstruction versus “facts” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2011). The social constructionist perspective is that all “narratives sit at the intersection of history, biography, and society” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 132); they are dependent on the context of the teller and the listener; and are not intended to represent “truth”. I made use of Guba’s (1981) model for verifying the trustworthiness of qualitative data. Guba (1981) proposed four criteria that could be considered by qualitative researchers in pursuit of a trustworthy study. Guba’s (1981) constructs correspond to the criteria employed by positivists:

- a) Truth value/Credibility (in preference to internal validity);
- b) Applicability/Transferability (in preference to external validity/generalisability);
- c) Consistency/Dependability (in preference to reliability); and
- d) Neutrality/Confirmability (in preference to objectivity).

Below I summarise the four constructs into a table where I give the measure of each and show how I addressed them.

Table 3.1: Summary of application of trustworthiness in this study

<p align="center">MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS</p>	<p align="center">EXPLANATION OF STRATEGY EMPLOYED IN THE STUDY</p>
<p>The truth-value (credibility)</p>	
<p>Determines how confident the researcher is that his/her findings are a true and accurate account of the phenomenon that was studied.</p>	<p>Ensured that the information gleaned from all the participants was recorded and analysed accurately.</p>
<p>Prolonged Engagement</p>	<p>Prolonged engagement was achieved by conducting a detailed literature review to provide a solid foundation for analysing the findings.</p>
<p>Triangulation</p>	<p>Relevant policies, practice guidelines, articles and Master’s and Doctorate dissertations relating to career guidance were identified and used to discuss and interpret the findings.</p>
<p>Applicability (transferability/thick descriptions)</p>	
<p>Indicates the extent to which the findings from the study apply to other settings, contexts or groups.</p>	<p>Descriptive information was presented in this study that may be of use in future research. Chapter 3 describes the analytical constructs to provide details of the coding process. In addition, the participants’ quotations are provided to enrich the findings.</p>

MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS	EXPLANATION OF STRATEGY EMPLOYED IN THE STUDY
Consistency (dependability and confirmability)	An audit trail is available as appendices to this study. The audit trail includes the reference list. It also includes interview guides and a sample of focus group transcription as well as a sample of a narrative essay.
Refers to whether the findings will be consistent with future studies of the same kind, using similar contexts and the same subjects.	

Firstly, truth value/credibility seeks to establish whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings for the subjects or informants and the context in which the study was undertaken (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The value/credibility is usually obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) termed this *credibility*. As this study is exploratory and descriptive in nature, the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by participants were obtained, therefore creating truth value. There are many provisions that a researcher can use to increase credibility, among them is the use of a triangulation which may involve the use of different methods, especially observation, focus groups and individual interviews, which form the major data collection strategies for much qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). One of the provisions made to ensure credibility was the use of “reflective commentary”, which involved writing personal thoughts and feelings about the research process.

Applicability or *transferability* refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or with other groups (Guba, 1981). The purpose is to describe a

particular phenomenon or experience rather than to generalise. Shenton (2004) also highlights that “it is important that sufficient thick description of the phenomenon under investigation is provided to allow readers to have a proper understanding of it, thereby enabling them to compare the instances of the phenomenon described in the research report with those that they have seen emerge in their situations” (p. 70). The method was described in detail in Chapter 3 and the application was described in this chapter to provide details of the analysis process. The discussion of the findings also integrated quotations from the source documents and learners to provide weight to the argumentation.

Consistency/dependability, as the third criterion, considers the consistency of the data, that is, whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same participants or in a similar context (Shenton, 2004). This may be achieved through the use of “overlapping methods”, such as focus groups and individual interviews (Shenton, 2004). In this study, focus groups and narrative essays were the “overlapping methods” used. According to Duffy (1985), qualitative research is centred on learning from the participants rather than from controlling them. Variability is expected in qualitative research and consistency is defined in terms of dependability (Guba, 1981). In relation to this research, several strategies were employed to enhance dependability. Firstly, the exact methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation of this qualitative research process were described. Such dense description of methods provides information as to how repeatable the study might be or how unique the situation is (Shenton, 2004). Another means that was used to increase the dependability of the study was to conduct a code-recode procedure on the data during the analysis phase of the study. After coding a segment of data, I waited at least two weeks and then returned and recoded the same data and compared the findings.

The fourth criterion of trustworthiness is neutrality or *confirmability*, that is, the freedom from bias in research procedures and findings (Guba, 1981). According to Shenton (2004), the concept of confirmability is the qualitative researcher's comparable concern to objectivity. "Confirmability requires steps to be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher" (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). Neutrality refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations, and perspectives (Guba, 1981).

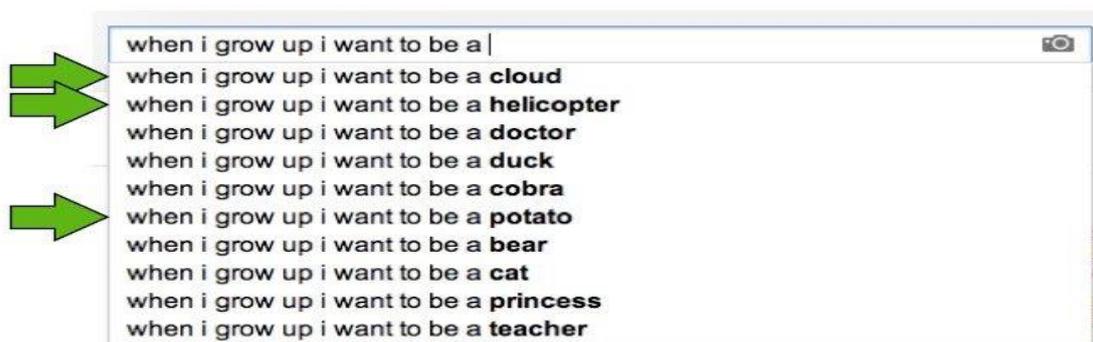
3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the research methods employed in this study. The sample of participants was selected from one particular private high school in Pretoria West. The qualitative measures used in this study were focus group interviews and narrative essays. A discussion of the measures used was provided. I utilised thematic narrative analysis to explore the stories of the Grade 12 learners' experiences of making career choices. The focus was on what content the narratives communicated. Furthermore, Guba's (1981) model was employed for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative data. The next chapter provides the findings and an in-depth discussion of the findings. The findings and discussion will be presented in accordance with the aims of the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.

Angelou, 1969, *I know why the caged bird sings*



4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the study and is structured according to the research questions of the study. The overall question guiding this study is “What are Grade 12 learners’ experiences of career choice and guidance at a private school in Pretoria West?”

The following sub-questions were asked:

1. What were the learners’ experiences in making subject choices in Grade 9?
2. What influenced their subject choices?
3. What are the learners’ experiences in crystallising their career choices?
4. What influences their career choices at present?

5. What are the learners' future intentions?
6. What do learners see as ways to improve career guidance in schools?

In order to analyse the learners' stories (focus group interviews and narrative essays), I used a narrative approach framework that served as a screen through which the stories of the learners were examined. Using the analytical work of Mishler (1986, 1999) and Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 2000), I integrated the individual narratives of learners into a coherent meta-narrative which contained the details of each story, while building a link across individual contexts. As I indicated in Chapter 3, I used thematic narrative analysis to explore the stories from the focus groups and narrative essays. I specifically focused on the content which was voiced and, subsequently, written. I attended to sequencing, specific language, pauses and emotion (particularly laughter) which strengthen the analysis of each case.

I have also explored not only the themes of the learners' stories, but also the way in which they told the stories. The pauses, silences, points of rupture, affect, language and metaphors, among other aspects, enabled the whole story to be explored. Below is the "re-telling" of the focus group narrative followed by the narratives. In the process of the "re-telling", I also deductively interpret the learners' narratives using Super's (1980), Life-Career Rainbow theory.

4.2 FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

4.2.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 3, focus group discussions were conducted with three groups of learners totalling twenty-five (25) learners. The focus groups discussions were conducted on three (3) different days. The transcription length of each focus group ranged from nine (9) pages to eleven (11) pages. The following section provides an overview of the analysis of the focus group discussions using Super's (1980) theory. I have chosen to present only the integration of the emerging themes from each of the focus group discussions. This section is structured according to overarching themes following the sequence of the focus group discussion.

Where an extract of a learner's narrative is used more than once in separate sections, it is due to the richness of the narrative and the degree to which the particular narrative extract describes experiences in more than one theme. Due to the nature of focus groups, some learners had more opportunity to fully describe their ideas while others were either cut off or struggled to articulate themselves within the group setting. The consequence of this is that some narratives in the focus groups are richer, more descriptive and therefore provide more information for analysis.

4.2.2 Future aspirations

According to Webster dictionary, aspiration can be defined as a "strong desire for realisation of ambition", ideas or accomplishment (Aspiration (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary* (11th ed). Retrieved from <http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/aspiration>). Future aspirations for learners can be conceptualised as the educational and vocational 'dreams' they have for their future work lives (Sirin, Diemer, Jackson, Gonsalves,

& Howell, 2004). Sirin et al. (2004) further indicate that learners' future aspirations, in the areas of career, education and family, significantly impact their later life experiences. Under future aspirations, learners in Group 1 indicated an interest in becoming an economist, business man, financial analyst/advisor and a psychologist, while Learners J and H were uncertain about their future aspirations. I found that the common future aspiration from learners in Groups 1 and 2 was being an economist/financial analyst, joining the navy and being in the military. The learners in Group 3 also indicated an interest in being a chartered accountant and lawyer, while Learners W and Y were undecided about their future aspirations. Below I discuss the different types of future aspirations as sub-themes, substantiated by extracts from the learners which I have summarised above.

Sports

Learners who highlighted sports as their future aspiration chose not to indicate it when asked about their future aspirations. However, the theme came up in other sections of the focus group discussions. I chose to highlight it here in the future aspirations, but discuss it further in the relevant sections to follow.

Military

I found that the common future aspiration from learners in Groups 1 and 2 was joining the navy or being in the military. However, only Learners O and Q expanded on the aspiration.

Learner O: I'm O and when I grow up I will like to join the navy. The reason why I would like to join the navy is that, I fear nothing, I fear no man so I would like to stand up for my country and protect them {15:15}

Learner Q: *When I grow up I would like to be in SA military or human resource, Uuhm, it's like what O said, I fear no one and I also love money...ya, that's why I said navy, I'm not sure about human resource {15:23}*

Learners O and Q share a similar inspiration of 'fearing nothing', while Learner O further highlights that he wants to protect his country. Learner O places his character of not fearing anything or anyone as the driving force of wanting to go into the military. Military culture is viewed as being authoritarian and rooted in the masculine 'warrior' image (Burk, 1999; Coker, 2007; Hall, 2011). A review of the literature indicates that the core values of military culture are obedience, discipline, subordination to authority, cohesion and teamwork, and loyalty (Dyer, 1985; Osiel, 1998; Burk, 1999; Dandeker & Gow, 1999; Dorn, Graves, Ulmer, Collins, & Jacobs, 2000; Coker, 2007). Learner O's closing narrative of wanting to protect the country can be associated with the military culture of masculinity and the 'warrior' image. Learner Q on the one hand indicated a second option, which is human resources, which indicates that her choice of going into the military was not rooted in the same values (warrior, protecting the country) in which Learner O positioned himself. Learner Q further goes to state that she 'loves money'.

Medicine/Nursing

Learner W from the third focus group was uncertain of her future career aspirations. I asked the learner about the reasons for her uncertainty. Learner W narrates that she wanted to be a doctor but, unfortunately, she was failing subjects required to become a doctor. She further narrated that she is still going to be a doctor; she is going to take Biology as an extra subject to meet the requirements for entry into medical studies. Her story can be found in the section

on 'not clear or uncertain'. Learner R indicates that she wants to go into the nursing field; below is her story:

Learner R: *I would like to be a nurse. The reason I chose to be a nurse cos when I see my personality, okay, I love people and I mostly love children, I'm kinda socialising with people and it's not about money...oh and a lot of practical thingy, like working with my hands {15:16}*

In the narrative above, Learner R positions her personality and love of children at the centre of her aspiration to be a nurse. The narrative appears to link a clear need to be a caretaker with the field of nursing, which is typically seen as a caring field that emphasises empathic care for those who are sick or injured. The specific mention of children further emphasises the sub-text that those being cared for are vulnerable and in need of care. Learner R further states that money does not play a central role in her career decision, which indicates the perception that money aspiration does not align with the role of caregiver. Her closing statement in the narrative gives the sense of pride at working with her hands, an image that can be associated with hard work that is physically demanding.

Financial

The learners below indicated an interest in financial careers.

Learner G: *I want to be an economist {2:23-31}*

Learner I: *an economist {2:23-31}*.

Learner K: *When I grow up I want to be a businessman {2:23-31}*

Learner D: *Financial advisor {2:23-31}*

Learner L: *I'm L, and when I grow up I want to be an economist {17:2-11}*

Learner T: *I'm T and when I grow up I would like to be a financial analyst {17:2-11}*

Learner Aa: *When I grow up I wanna be a chartered accountant {17:1-5}*

I asked a follow-up question to explore what inspired the learners' future aspirations. Only Learners D, L and T discussed the inspiration of their aspirations. Learner D highlighted that he changed from wanting to go to the military to now wanting to be a financial analyst, which is seen in the quote below:

Learner D: *Well I'm actually at the beginning of the year, at the end of last year, I decided which career path I wanted to take and I wanted to go to the military, so fine I told my mom I wanted to go there ...when I told my older brother that I wanted to go there and he disagreed and everything. Since I'm the last born at home so that's how it happened that I chose financial advisor...cos he wanted me to go to university and my brother and my mother didn't mind, she's supporting me... {2:47}*

Learner D further narrates that she is the last born at home, and implies that it played a role in her decision to change her career direction. Learner D's narrative is consistent with Beauregard's (2007) assertion that the birth order of learners affects the career choice. This depends on the expectation placed on them by the family (Beauregard, 2007). Below Learner L indicates his reason of wanting to become an economist:

Learner L: *Well, lot of, uuhm okay, most of the people that I know, uuhm, how can I put this most of the economists I know have a lot of money as economists, then they become big business men, big people in the business world {15:13}*

Learner L's inspiration of 'money' is consistent with Super's (1980) theory that learners will identify with key figures in their environment. Learner L notes that he knows many people who are economists who have large amounts of money. Watson and Stead (1993) highlighted that within the communities where these learners live, individuals who work in these occupations are accorded a certain level of prestige, as seen by Learner L's quote. It was also interesting to hear that Learner T's inspiration of being a financial analyst was because of the fancy name implying a need for social prestige and recognition. Below is her story in her own words:

Learner T: *The reason I chose financial analyst is because I like the name, it sounds a bit fancy and the fact that there is financial, it means it has money inside of it so that's why I chose it and the thing is its money bra, money talks (laughter in the background)...ya so {15:25}*

It is worth noting that I later found out after the focus group discussion from Learner T that she is failing and struggling with all her subjects (including the subjects she requires to become a financial analyst). I could safely say that the international reviews of children's career research (Porfeli & Vondracek, 2008; Rojewski, 2007), would support the above narrative by pointing out that South African middle-class children aspire to more prestigious, high status occupations, as seen in the extract above.

Entertainment

Under the entertainment theme, Learner U aspired to be a rapper while Learner F aspired to be a dancer. The assumption that career interests are one aspect of personality and therefore

that a “description of an individual’s vocational interests is also a description of the individual’s personality” (Weinrach & Srebalus, 1990, p. 39) is seen in Learners U and F’s choice of aspirations.

Learner U: *I’m a rapper right now. Just hope that I would make it big* (laughter in the background) {17:2-11}

Learner F: *I always wanted to be a dancer* {2:43}

I was interested to find out what inspired the dream of being in the entertainment industry. I asked a follow-up question to explore what inspired the learners’ future aspirations. Below are Learners F and U’s stories on their inspirations.

Learner F: *Well at first, when I was growing up I used to go with my sister to dancing classes and stuff so I have this love for dancing, so by the age of 5 I started dancing with my sister. And then I grew up, I always wanted to be a dancer, but then at first my family thought I was joking, so now when I say, “Mom, you have to pay my fees, I’m going to university and I’m gonna do dancing”. They all like are you crazy, most dancers you have to be like this like that. They all have this image you know. And then from that negativity I just thought lemme change to something else, but then you always have that thing at the back of your mind that, maybe, I would have been something big something like this...but, because of what they say and all the kind of things, just discouraged me into doing dancing, that’s what happens* {2:43}

Learner U: *The reason I wanna be a rapper, I like music, I love music, I have talent and it would be a waste for me not to express my talent* {15:19}

The above extracts highlight similarities in the learners' choices. Learner U speaks of talent, skill and a love for rapping. Learner F's inspiration came from dancing at a young age with her sister, which echoes Super's (1980) assertion that career development begins early in life and continues until late in life. Learner F's narrative also indicates a certainty of her career path despite negative feedback from within her family system about the chosen career and intimations that she may not be the ideal choice as a dancer (*...most dancers you have to be like this like that...but then you always have that thing at the back of your mind...*). The confidence in her chosen career is still influenced by the feedback from her family system, as is indicated by the phrases where she states her doubts and consideration of other options. Within Super's (1980) framework, once career crystallisation is reached, individuals will hold to the career choice as part of their identity and any shifts in career would require a complex reflection and reconsideration of the identity as a whole. Learner U's bold assertion that he is a rapper can be seen as positive confirmation of the statement made by Super. He does not speak of the career as a musical entertainer as a task, but as an identifying a characteristic of himself which is linked to his love and talent for music, and closes his statement with the directive, bold assertion that it would be a waste (a loss to himself and others) if he did not express his talent.

Not clear or uncertain

While most of the learners indicated an interest in financial, medicine, entertainment aspirations, Learners J, H, W and Y were uncertain about their future aspirations.

Learner H: *not sure*

Learner J: *no idea {2:23-31}*

Learner W: *when I grow up I don't know what I want to be* (laughter in the background)

Learner Y: *I'm Y, I'm also, uuhm, I don't know what I wanna be when I grow up...
{17:1-5}*

I asked Learners J and H about the possible reasons they were uncertain about their future aspirations. Learner J narrates that in the past they knew what they wanted to be when they grew up, but are now restricted by what subjects they are offered in schools, so they cannot really venture into what they actually want to do. Learners H and B both nodded to the statement made by Learner J. Learner H narrated that, for him, it is because he wants to do a lot of things and now he is confused, while Learner B narrated after Learner H that she was restricted by her mother even though she indicated that she wanted to be an economist or financial analyst. The extracts below are Learners H and B's stories in their own words.

Learner H: *when I was growing up I wanted to be a lot of things...yeh starters...you know I love I love sports. I wanted to be an athletic, like an athlete, I'm sorry. I wanted to play soccer. Now as I'm growing up I'm not sure anymore because I'm interested in being in the business field, you know, and uuhm, like I believe like I would, you know when you grow up you do something for a year, like a course, then you get bored of it, then you want to do something again so it's kinda confusing {2:38}*

Learner B: *"Uuhm, I wanted to be a political analyst, but then I didn't do history. My mom was against this whole thing situation about politics because she thought it was too risky, politics are being murdered an all so I had to change my career thoughts, that's when I got economics. It's not something that I actually wanna do; it's just that I don't have a choice. What I wanted to do was political analyst but my mom was against it these whole decisions, and my dad was okay with my career choice {2:39}*

The narratives above illustrate how varied the sources of confusion can be for learners. In the first narrative, Learner H appears to be inhibited by a lack of clarity arising from a wide range of interests. Of particular interest is the closing statement, where he remarks that he believed he would be able to grow bored of the study path within a very short space of time. The mention of boredom as a specific concern could have been elaborated on to unpack the specific concern underlying the fear of being bored. If I were allowed to speculate, the fear of boredom may be linked to a concern that, by selecting one career pathway, Learner H would miss out on the opportunities presented along the others. Drawing on the work by Super (1980), I could posit that Learner H requires assistance in settling on a current career choice so as to begin the exploration phase of the career development process.

Learners W and Y, from the third focus group, were also uncertain of their future career aspirations. I asked the learners about the reasons for their uncertainty. Learner W narrates that she wanted to be a doctor but unfortunately she was failing subjects required to become a doctor. Below is her story:

Learner W: Well, like when I was in grade uuhm from primary I think I always wanted to be a doctor. I did science in Grade 10, failed science, because of physics and maths but continued then failed again, I did Grade 10 twice then aah, I changed my subjects to economics then I don't know what I want to be {17:7}

Learner W further narrates that she is still going to be a doctor; she is going to take Biology as an additional subject to meet the requirements for entry into medical studies. Learner Y narrates that when she was in primary school she wanted to do “something in law”. When I asked her to expand on “something in law”, she narrates that:

Learner Y: *I don't know maybe a lawyer, forensics, something like that I didn't know I just wanted to do something in law, I don't know maybe it changed along the way, I don't know, maybe people discouraged me along the way, people would say being in law you have to read a lot, you won't have time to do other things, don't know, I just stopped having interest in it {17:9}*

The above narratives are consistent with Super's (1980) theory that suggests that children modify their initial fantasies of occupations as they become more aware of the world of work and that how they view themselves changes as they increasingly accommodate reality factors from the broader environment. In the life stage of growth, children aged 4 to 13 years are confronted with career developmental tasks of developing a sense of self. Sirin et al. (2004) suggest that aspirations comprise an important part of the self-concept, which organises the self in relation to the way one engages with the world, which is echoed in the learners' narratives of future aspirations. Below, I will explore the nuances being the influences of the future aspirations discussed above.

4.2.3 Inspiration of dreams

The inspiration of dreams theme was derived from the portions of the focus groups discussion that describe the reasons for learners choosing specific career paths. The inspiration of dreams theme described both positive and negative drivers for the learners in defining their current career identities.

Under the theme in Group 1, talent and passion were identified as a driver for choosing a specific dream. Birth order of learners was a second driver identified within Group 1. In her narrative, Learner C below also highlights how important the approval and support from her familial network is in her choice of career. While her narrative is cut short, it is apparent that the disapproval of her familial network plays an important role in mediating her passion for travel and, by implication, her career choice.

Learner C: The thing is neh...I like travelling. Ya. I like seeing people around...but my family neh they don't like uuhm they don't want to see, well they don't like the choice that I chose because uuuhm...(learner shakes her head unable to continue passes the recorder to someone else) {2:41}

Learner F: Well at first, when I was growing up I used to go with my sister to dancing classes and stuff so I have this love for dancing, so by the age of 5 I started dancing with my sister And then I grew up, I always wanted to be a dancer {2:43}

In the extracts above, we see how Learner F highlights the influence of her older sister in discovering a passion for dancing. Learner F's narrative also highlights the role of negative drivers such as family feedback in seeking an alternative career path. Negative drivers such as anxiety about job security, family or peer approval or performance in school subjects all

play a role in the decision to pursue a career path (Beauregard, 2007). Learner C describes her passion for travelling and meeting new people as her inspiration for pursuing a career as an air hostess.

Learner D: *Well I'm actually at the beginning of the year, at the end of last year, I decided which career path I wanted to take and I wanted to go to the military, so fine I told my mom I wanted to go there ...when I told my older brother that I wanted to go there and he disagreed and everything. Since I'm the last born at home so that's how it happened that I chose financial advisor...cos he wanted me to go to university and my brother and my mother didn't mind, she's supporting me... {2:47}*

Learner D, in the extract above, describes the role of her older brother in influencing her decision to join the military. In the narrative, the brother is seen to use birth order as an argument against Learner D joining the military by implying that as the youngest, she has an obligation to go to university to study in the financial field. The pressure from the brother can be contrasted with the clarity in the beginning of the extract from Learner D on her personal choice for a career. According to Beauregard (2007), family influence on career choice may manifest itself unconsciously, where individuals will tend to choose an occupation that enables them to satisfy needs that were unfulfilled by their family members and actualise dreams passed on to them by their family (Pines & Yanai, 2001), as can be seen in Learner D's case.

In the second focus group, inspiration of money was a common theme among learners. There was a learner who wanted to protect his country; his driving force was that he feared nothing. Talent and passion were also identified as a theme in the group.

Learner L: *Well lot of uuhm okay, most of the people that I know uuhm how can I put this most of the economists I know have a lot of money as economists, then they become big business men, big people in the business world {15:13}*

Researcher (indicated by SS): *So what inspired you is that the economists that you know are making money...*

Learner L: *yes, and I like money*

Learner M: *As I said before I would like to do something in business when I grow up, not really sure what exactly, what; but something to do with to market products. I actually got inspired by watching TV and I saw these adverts being advertised, products being advertised. I could also be one of those people who advertise products, attracting people to buy goods and stuff, other services that want to be bought by other people {15:20}*

Learner N: *The reason I chose this career is because of the profit, the money that they earn and the way they treat people, ya, that's all {15:21}*

Learner P: *The thing that inspired me about being marketing is that it's an easy job (laughs) ya, it's an easy job and it's also easy to make money {15:22}*

Learner S: *Nna, I chose this career cos I like money, that's the only reason {15:24}*

Learner T: *The reason I chose financial analyst is because I like the name, it sounds a bit fancy and the fact that there is financial, it means it has money inside of it so that's why I chose it and the thing is its money bra, money talks (laughter in the background)...ya so {15:25}*

Learner L's inspiration of 'money' is consistent with Super's (1980) theory that learners will identify with key figures in their environment. Money seemed to be a common inspiration

for the learners in the focus group, unlike the first focus group. It was also interesting to hear that Learner T's inspiration of being a financial analyst was because of the fancy name and that because it was financial it had to have money. I later found out after the focus group from Learner T that she is failing and struggling with all her subjects (including the subjects she needs to become a financial analyst).

Learner O: *The reason why I would like to join the navy is that, I fear nothing, I fear no man so I would like to stand up for my country and protect them {15:15}*

Learner R: *The reason I chose to be a nurse cos when I see my personality, okay, I love people and I mostly love children, I'm kinda socialising with people and it's not about money...oh and a lot of practical thingy, like working with my hands {15:16}*

Learner U: *The reason I wanna be a rapper, I like music, I love music, I have talent and it would be a waste for me not to express my talent {15:19}*

On the other hand, Learner O highlights that he wants to protect his country and that he fears nothing, while Learner R highlights that her inspiration came from talent, skill and a love for the aspiration of being a nurse. Learner U, who is one of the learners who submitted a written narrative, highlights his passion and love for music, coupled with a belief in his own talent as a primary driver for pursuing a career as a rapper.

Under the theme of inspiration of dreams, a possible explanation of the children's most favourite occupational aspirations was found in a broader classification of aspirations as reflecting the helping professions (Watson, & Stead, 1997). This explanation finds support in previous research that reported that most black South African adolescents aspire to the helping professions rather than to engineering, technical and information technology fields

(Cherian, 1991; Chuenyane, 1990; Nel & Mkhabela, 1987; Stead, 1996; Watson & Stead, 1997). In this regard, Munro (1984) hypothesised that traditional black African cultural value, such as the belief that individuals should live to help others, have influenced black children's occupational aspirations. The literature is echoed in the study, where most learners chose helping professions, like a nurse, doctor, protecting the country. Below, I explore the influences of the future aspirations discussed above.

4.2.4 Influences

Parental influence

Parental effects on learners are commonly described, measured, and reported almost exclusively in terms of positive and beneficial effects on teenagers (Middleton, 1993; Whiston & Keller, 2004). Parents often provide a valuable and positive influence in helping their children decide what to pursue in the work world. There may also exist, however, a negative aspect of parental influence when parental encouragement is overzealously applied and becomes pressurised demand for success (Grotevant & Cooper, 1988), as seen in learners from Group 1.

Below, Learner K expresses that his parents support his decisions. He mentions that he loves soccer but he cannot venture into it because he is the first born at home. I realised that indeed the birth order affects the career choices of learners. For Learner K, the expectation did not come from his family but more from him, in contrast to Learner D's story above. Below is Learner K's story in his own words.

Learner K: *Well me my parents will support me in anything I wanna do, so the choice is mine. Well, ya, and the other thing is that, I have a love for soccer, but because I'm*

the first born I can't go to sports, I have to go to University and so something else there....ya anything is fine for my parents {2:51}

Another learner who received support from his parents was:

Learner G: *“Well my parents are okay with me becoming an economist, cos growing up they always told me to follow my passion. So when I told them I wanted to become an economist, they told me it was fine with them, they will support me through it” {2:55}.*

Following on Learner G's story, Learner I nodded and said that: *“Uuhm, okay, I grew up being raised by a single parent, and it's a father and he always encourages me to become the best I can be so he's willing to support me in any career opportunity I choose so ya, for him is not a big deal {2:52}.*

In contrast to Learners K, G and I's stories about having supportive parents; Learner H indicates that for him it's the opposite where he is not receiving support from his father, as seen in the extract below.

Learner H: *Uuuhm okay, my dad is always asking me what do I wanna do and I will tell him, I don't know. And he will be like since you don't know how about you do this and this. Like nah dad what if I don't like it? No but still, just do this for us. And I believe it's about me not doing this for them, they just pressurising in doing things I don't wanna do, that's why I'm not sure {2:53}*

The above quote highlights that parents and family members can have a significant negative influence on learners' career direction as they seek to answer questions of identity and begin the transition to adulthood. In the case of Learner H, he feels pressured by his dad to make a career decision, which leads him to uncertainty about his career identity. Literature has found that, at times, parental encouragement may only focus on a prescribed range of acceptable alternatives and, as a result, hinder an adolescent's career exploration and choice (Middleton, 1993; Tillman, 2015).

In addition to the influence of parents on career choice, the effect of sibling relationships on the individual learner can be negative, as is seen in the quote below.

Learner A: Firstly, neh, I come from a family, neh, the kids in my family they all intelligent, each one of them that passed matric, they passed it with like distinctions and stuff. I'm always under pressure cos everyone expects me to meet their level, and it's not happening so and it kinda brings me down, cos they always comparing me like why can't you be like her or him, look at him he's gonna be successful. And, I told them it's not my thing; I don't like theory, I'm into practical things like soccer and stuff...ya that's how it is {2:56}

Learner A expresses a negative experience with regard to parental support, where he feels pressured to measure up to the intelligent siblings in his family. Parental influence is further mediated by such factors as sibling position, socio-economic status, and perception of parental influence as measured from the learner's point of view (Isaac, 2014; Whiston & Keller, 2004). Learner E below narrates that she does not have a relationship with her parents where they can have career conversations, unlike the other learners. Literature has found that

the absence of support, guidance, and encouragement can lead to "floundering", the inability to develop and pursue a specific career focus (Rani, 2014). Learner E's point of view is that her parents are too busy and are fine with whatever career direction she embarks upon. Below is her narrative on parental influence.

Learner E: *Well my parents are never home, we don't have that relationship where we can sit down, like mama I wanna do this, I wanna do that. She'll always tell me you can do anything, as long as you get fine life, and you can support yourself and everything...so ya..they always busy I don't know with what (learners laugh)...well like my dad works neh, and my mom tags along and stuff...they just fine with anything I do {2:58}*

Learners E's narrative could indicate a sense of non-involvement from her parents. According to Middleton (1993), parents of these adolescents most likely are unaware of what to do, how to help, or that their involvement is desired at all by their adolescent children.

As I was about to round off the discussion on parental influence, Learner J quickly jumped in and stated that he remembers the reason why he was uncertain about his future aspiration. His quote follows below.

Learner J: *Ya, well now I know the reason why I'm not sure (laughter in the background)... you see neh my dad is a financial analyst, and my mom is a thingy a lawyer, she's into law. You see now I've been discussing this issue with my parents, and my mom wants me to follow her path and my dad wants me to do his thingy there.*

So I don't know where I should go. Like my mom has her opinions and my dad has his opinions....

SS: So which opinions do you like more?

Learner J: Yoh, I'm not into those things, law and stuff {2:60}

Learner J above highlights that his uncertainty and career indecision is due to his parents wanting him to follow their own career paths. I also picked up that it could be that Learner J was not comfortable earlier in saying that his parents were confusing him. It could also be that he opened up after hearing other learners sharing their experiences. Certainly parents often provide a valuable and positive influence in helping their children decide what to pursue in the work world. There may also exist, however, a negative aspect of parental influence when parental encouragement is overzealously applied and becomes pressurised demand for success, as seen in Learners J, H and A's experiences (Isaac, 2014; Middleton, 1993; Rani, 2014).

Parents and family members can have significant influence (positive or negative) on learners' career direction as they seek to answer questions of identity and begin the transition to adulthood. The common experience of parents supporting the learners and wanting good marks from their children came across in Group 2, as seen in Learners T and Aa's narratives. It was at this point that I realised that the literature was correct and that the strength of parental influences shone through in the positive and at times negative experiences from the learners. Learners need to believe they can explore their career options and develop their identity. The process of exploration must be supported by parental figures in order to maintain a sense of connection (Isaac, 2014; Middleton, 1993; Rani, 2014). A sense of parental connection, along with challenge and support, all play a role in the motivation that

adolescents will develop when making plans for their future (Isaac, 2014; Middleton, 1993; Rani, 2014).

Learner T: *uuhm, like when it comes to my parents right, one of the things that they told me is that I can do anything as long as it can benefit me at the end. When I'm here at school I have friends in my class, they always talking about school, in a way when they talk about being this I kinda look if I like it, but, then is it good for me? And when they started talking about being a financial analyst, it's one of the things that I really it's like I can't go around, it's like they can ask me, 'what do you wanna be?' I say 'financial analyst', it's one of the things it comes in mind, talking about it and in a way I like it cos my parents told me I can do anything that I want {17:22}*

Learner Aa: *Okay, uuhm, with me, like, she said they want good marks, whatever you do is fine. Uuuhm well for now I think that's important for me, the school kinda like decided to give me a bursary in a way so I can study mo skolong [at this school] and ya, that's it. At home everything is fine, as long as I go to school its okay, so they wanted me to go into nursing whatever, I said I don't want to do it...*

SS: *Mmmh, and they okay with your decision?*

Learner Aa: *No, no, they forcing me to do it (laughter in the background) ... {17:1-5}*

Learner T highlights that her parents told her she can “do anything she wants” {17:22}. It is implied that for Learner T, a positive influence is drawn from her experience, even though her parents do not have a direct influence in her making a career choice. The strength of parental influence shines through in the positive and at times negatives experiences from Learner Aa. On one hand, she indicates that her parents are fine with whatever career she wants to pursue. She also highlights that she got a bursary from school and that could be the

reason her parents are fine with her entering into any career, “*Uuuhm, well, for now I think that’s important for me, the school, kinda like, decided to give me a bursary in a way*” {17:1-5}; however, a negative experience is drawn from the same breath where she highlights that her parents are forcing her to go into nursing, but it seems Learner Aa has made a decision to be a chartered accountant irrespective of the coercion from her parents.

The findings above are consistent with Maier (2005), who found that support and challenge from parents affected an adolescent's educational values. Learners who experienced high levels of support in the home were more likely to form short-term educational values such as earning good marks (Maier, 2005). On the other hand, learners who experienced a sense of challenge within the home were more likely to aspire to long-term educational values, such as aspirations to further their studies after matric (Maier, 2005).

Friends as influences

The narratives in the focus groups highlighted that friends play a major role in career decision-making; they demotivate, motivate or support career choice. The learners’ discussion highlighted the effects of social isolation and the contrast between the positive and negative view of friends on their career choices. Some learners preferred to be socially isolated, while other learners had a positive view of friends where they found that friends were a positive influence in their lives.

A word that came up constantly when the learners spoke about individual friends was “supportive”. The group shared similar experiences where they had supportive and encouraging friends. Learner A enthusiastically took the recorder and started the discussion

on friends. He narrates that he has supportive friends that encourage him to be successful, as seen in the quote below.

Learner A: Yes, Ya, my friends; they very supportive. Most of them are older than me, they already in the working field, they always telling me to push, whatever I wanna do, I must do it well and get....so they supporting in everything I wanna do... ya so I wanna be successful no matter what I do, as long as I can take care of my family, cos I wanna be a family man {2:63}

Research by Grygo (2006) found strong support for the significant role that friends provide in terms of emotional resources and relevant role modelling in terms of career. Learner F below identifies herself with friends who also dance. She indicates that her boyfriend is very supportive of her dancing career. She also highlights that not all of her friends know her dancing side; below is her story.

Learner F: Well, my friends, my friends at home, they supportive cos some of them also dance and stuff. Well, my boyfriend is the one that's very supportive ... (Learner says sweet in the background)...I know... (Laughs) well he also dances but he studies medical stuff at University. But he also does dancing on the side, so he's very supportive of my career. As for my school friends, they don't know much 'bout my dancing, they just know she can dance and that's all, they don't know much about me dancing. Learner A found out that, he read on my, A found out, he saw this stuff I was writing for LO, and then he looked at me in a way, like what you can dance. That's why I don't like telling people that I can dance, cos I don't know how they will react to the whole thing cos, we just know each other for two years, one year and a half and

stuff so they don't know much about me so I don't talk about it when I'm with my school friends {2:64}

From the above it could seem that Learner F finds emotional resources from friends who share and support her dancing identity. The description of the experiences indicates that friends play a major role in career decision-making; they demotivate, motivate or support career choices. Below are narratives of learners who commented about their friendships and career choice. Learner C highlights that she has supportive friends with whom she can share everything. Learner H indicates that his friends encourage him to study hard and be able to support himself financially.

Learner C: I have only one friend neh from Atteridgeville, we share everything, so we motivate each other, we motivate each other we encourage each other a lot. She's very supportive and I'm very supportive to her. So we share everything, she doesn't disagree with all my decision {2:69}

Learner H: Well my friends are like, my friends are studying very hard you know they quite good friends yeh, they got this like swag and which is good and they always tell me, eh ntwana [Setswana slang meaning: friend, boy], you should study very hard, cos you don't want to be living that life on the street, begging money from our friends or whatever. You should just have your money, and at the age of 25 you should just have everything and be settled, and ya they give good advice {2:72}

The learners' discussion within Group 3 highlighted social isolation and the contrast between the positive and negative view of friends. Learner W preferred to be socially isolated, while

other learners had a positive view of friends where they found that friends were a positive influence in their lives.

Learner W: *I don't have friends... (Learner in the background asks: Why not?)*

Learner W: *Why not? I don't believe in friends... Like I love my own space, like I love being indoors at home, when I come to school, I go home and stay indoors or I'm at church... {2:65}*

The above quotes from Learner W show she prefers to be alone rather than being around friends. It also interesting to note that Learner W does not have siblings, she is the only child and that could also be the contributing fact to her preferring her “own space”. Below, we see the positive view of friendships. Unlike Learner W, Learners X and Y highlight that they have a lot of friends. They also indicate that friendships have negative and positive aspects to them.

Learner X: *Uuhm friends, well I have a lot friends whether at school or home whatever or at a party whatever. Some of them they demotivate me when I tell them I wanna be a lawyer whatever, they'll tell you heee heee what what, have you seen the APS score for maybe Tuks, if you don't go there bla bla bla that kinda ish. But then I have those kinda friends they very supportive, they'd be like what you wanna do, I'd be like law, they'd say okay have you done the research whatever whatever ya that kinda ish...ya so some friends are supportive and some demotivating {2:66}*

Learner Y: *Well, I have a lot of friends, yoh I have a lot of friends...but then I have about 3 close friends that's it, those other friends are just there cos you know, you love meeting new people and then they know people you don't know so then I love meeting*

new people. But then I have 3 real friends like this one over here, ya we really close we talk about everything. Those are the kind of friends that encourage you, they give you, like this one over here like, instead of going to law have you considered going...they actually motivate you to do something with your life {2:67}

In sharing their experiences and stories, Learner X indicates that the friends in his life have an influence on his career identity and career decision-making. Learner Y highlights that she also has many friends but only a few real friends. She states those real friends are those who encourage her and influence her career identity positively. Friends are viewed to play a significant role in changing the behaviour in relation to friends in career decision-making individuals, personality development and decision-making processes (Naz, Saeed, Khan, Khan, Sheikh, & Khan, 2014); *“Those are the kind of friends that encourage you, they give you, like this one over here like, instead of going to law have you considered going...they actually motivate you to do something with your life {2:67}*. The portion of the narratives above supports the contribution of friends in various aspects of academic choices. The positive features of good friendships overlap greatly with the features of relationships emphasised in social support (Berndt & Murphy, 2002). Social support emphasises the contributions of close relationships to the enhancement of a positive self-concept: *“But then I have those kinda friends they very supportive, they’d be like what you wanna do, I’d be like law, they’d say okay have you done the research whatever whatever ya that kinda ish” {2:66}* . In particular, friendships foster self-esteem when the friends praise one another for their accomplishments and encourage one another when they are feeling bad about themselves, as can be seen in the narratives above (Berndt & Murphy, 2002).

Teachers as influences

The influence of teachers on the career development of South African adolescents has been regarded as being a significant one (Watson & Stead, 1993). The learners in Group 1 had a negative experience with regard to the teachers. They indicated that they had positive experiences from previous schools where the teachers were actively involved in the learners' career development. Learners expressed a disappointment when coming to the current school where their current teachers are not so involved with their career development. I asked the learners about how the teachers influence their career decision-making. The learners below had negative experiences with regard to the teachers.

Learner F: *Well, my teachers from my old school, used to hold these events; we just sit in a class and discuss different careers and stuff. When I came here in grade 11, oh my gosh we did nothing, didn't discuss anything, the only thing we did was in business with our former teacher, Mr D. And he actually used to call us and talk to us and motivate us at all times. Except him, after him, after he was gone, it was tuu [silence], nothing. We did nothing, here in LO we wrote notes of course... Ya and that's it. {2:78}*

Learner D: *Well I would also say that, our teachers, for us matrics, I would say it's important for us to go out there and learn more about our careers or our choice of careers. They don't wanna take us out to excursions and stuff, they take the younger ones, it's like they see the young ones future brighter than our {2:79}*

Learner F: *Ya cos we in matric and everything, we need to have, like those kinda things, maybe have talk about where we can get bursaries, financial help and stuff. I had to do it on my own, I had to go to Jo'burg and get my own bursary and stuff and it's really difficult cos they need your marks and everything, If they used to host something it could have motivated me to do more, cos last year Grade 11 I didn't care you know*

I didn't care. I'm gonna complete school, if I don't get a job, I'll go stripping something (laughter in the background) I didn't care, I didn't care much but when you in Grade 12, now its reality, you are about to become an adult, into the adult world, responsibilities, even yourself you have to be independent {2:84}

The above extract highlights that the learners felt that they were not obtaining sufficient information from the school and teachers regarding career choices, as seen in the quotes from Learners D and F above. They also highlighted anxiety about role transition, frustration at the lack of access to information, and the difficulties of obtaining bursaries without support from the schooling system. Despite the efforts of the DBE, the Life Orientation (LO) course is not successfully meeting its objectives when addressing the work and career learning area. Watson (2010) identified two main problems: teachers are not trained to teach life orientation and inadequate content on career choices. There are also barriers that are inhibiting the LO course in carrying out its purpose, including a lack of leadership, roles models, and resources (Watson, 2010).

In Group 2, the learners felt that the teachers did not care much about them. A learner disagreed with the group and highlighted that the teachers care about them but could be pre-occupied with their own pressures. Below is an extract of the how the conversation unfolded.

Learner T: *Well I think, they uuhm, they don't really care what we do, they just want us to be out of the school will see from there what we do alone...teachers unless like maybe one or two of them, but otherwise they don't care, yaaaah*

SS: *Really* (directing to group)

Group in unison: *Yes*

Learner M: *I don't think it's about caring, I think since they pre-occupied, I think they pre-occupied since we like the first matriculants of the school, they trying to get the pass rate so they don't have the...they also human, guys. They don't have the, how can I put this, the the energy to focus on their work and on each and everyone of us individually they don't have that*

Learner T: *There was a teacher, like she was good, she would ask us what we wanna do when we grow up if we sure that of what we wanna do, we would tell her we not sure cos we would like, all us, ah maybe except for him. We not really sure what we wanna do as we don't have a lot of information as like last year, if it happened like last year as other schools do they take you to universities to different universities just to learn how it is there. We never had those chances, so now it's like let's just finish matric...will see from there...you know if maybe we did we could have the oomfh to be like I wanna do this, we didn't have that...and we still don't {15:60-66}*

Learner M highlights that the teachers are under pressure and cannot focus on each and every learner individually. Learner T highlights that they do not get opportunities like other schools where they obtain information and are taken to universities to learn more about the offerings at universities. She closes off the conversation very sadly and states that they need to just finish off matric. I picked up much disappointment from the learners with their teachers and the school. The narratives highlight a tension between career exploration and the immediate task of completing schooling. There also seems to be tension between the expectations the learners have of the educators and the expectations of the schooling system of the educators. The last focus group voiced that some teachers were more motivating and encouraging than others. The teachers who motivated learners focused their attention only on the academically strong learners, while the academically weak learners were discouraged.

A study by Coetzee (2006) found that the learners had negative feelings about their school, including negative feelings about their teachers and lack of career guidance. The same negative feelings about teachers and lack of career guidance were echoed in the current study. The learners voiced that some teachers were more motivating and encouraging than others. The following narration highlights the learners' experience with their teachers.

Learner Aa: *Our ahem, okay, well some are motivating but they very choosy. They motivate certain people, if they see potential in you they focus on you. They won't tell other people you can do this you can do that, they just say no, learner Aa, I don't wanna deal with her. They only focus on those people who they believe they can get something out of them...*

SS: *Mmmh interesting, and your personal experience?*

Learner Aa: *Well me, they do motivate me...*

SS: *So they believe in you?*

Learner Aa: *Ya in a way, some of them, ya.*

Learner Z: *I don't think our teachers encourage us, especially us who are doing mathematical literacy. They always telling us we will never go to university, they'll never accept us stuff like that, don't think they encouraging us...{17:1-5}*

SS: *So you are agreeing with Aa that they only motivate those who they see potential in?*

Learner Z: *Yes, especially those who are doing maths... ...*

Learner Aa: *It demotivates you! When somebody tells you, you can't do something, then you just have this feeling, ohk, they think I can't do it so what's the point of doing it anyway cos they not gonna appreciate what I'm going to bring out of that certain*

thing. If they tell you, you not gonna pass at the end of the year, you don't have that thing that, you wanna prove them wrong, cos everybody is telling you, you can't do this, you can't do that, it just demotivates you {17:1-5}

What emerged from the above quotes was that the teachers demotivate and discourage learners. Learner Z highlighted that she felt that the teachers discouraged those who were doing mathematical literacy. Learner Aa was the one learner who spoke up consistently about the negative feelings towards the teachers. The importance of the relationship of the educator as a source of motivation came through strongly from Learner Aa. Dislen (2013) highlights that when learners have low self-confidence and self-esteem, high anxiety and inhibition, their level of motivation is destroyed:

Learner Aa: It demotivates you! When somebody tells you, you can't do something, then you just have this feeling, ohk, they think I can't do it so what's the point of doing it anyway cos they not gonna appreciate what I'm going to bring out of that certain thing" {17:1-5}

Moreover, teachers' negative attitude towards learners and non-supportive classroom environments damage learners' willingness to learn (Dislen, 2013). Shortage of positive reinforcements, approval and appreciation of students by teachers negatively influence motivation to learn (Dislen, 2013).

Learner Y: I think it's true. I think everybody who's in maths is a prefect right? (Group: Ya)...everybody who's in maths is a prefect...

SS: You a prefect so you doing maths... (Group laughs)...

Learner Y: *Noooo, I'm actually doing maths lit, I think I was chosen cos of marks not cos of my personality or anything, cos not everybody in maths I think four or five people, they all prefects. I think you can see they all believe in them...I think almost all teachers here are new. We had this other teacher called Mr D...(Group: yoh shem that was a darling)...he left us early this year, that one did motivate us, even though he didn't encourage maths literacy, he encouraged us do maths, what's math literacy, where is it gonna take you. But he was a good teacher, he encouraged us to do a lot of stuff, he tries to make contact, he even invited all of us on facebook. He was a great teacher and then I don't think he should have left maybe when we done (Group laughs) Yes he's like a father to us*

Learner X: *Well for me it doesn't make much of a difference whether he was there or not... (Laughter in the background)...aowa but haai, this school is, its, there's a lot of politics. So honestly speaking I don't really wanna socialise with issues like that and all that, but as she says, favouritism there's a lot of it...because if maybe you passing and all of that, maybe, I'm just giving an instance and example; maybe I'm doing English, and I get 70 and all that, obviously the teacher is gonna focus on me because he knows he's gonna get a distinction out of you and that's gonna make his name up high, that kind of things. So I don't really wanna get involved I just get to school and pass and that's it...because there is a lot of politics here including teachers, learners I don't really wanna... {17:53-55}*

The learners felt that the teachers' behaviour towards them demotivated them to study harder or even think they could make it to university, as seen by the quotes above. Learner Y also highlighted that there was one teacher (Mr D) who had been more than a teacher to them. Learner Aa speaks up again below on teachers and learners doing mathematical literacy.

There is a mathematics anxiety that is linked to a lack of understanding, which requires a combination of motivation and positive teaching methods work to reduce these fears (Basham, 2011a; Du Toit, 2010; Fynn, 2011). A study by Du Toit (2010) showed that if learners were confident in mathematics then they would not willingly take the easier option of mathematical literacy. The problem therefore starts in primary school where the foundational mathematical algorithms are learnt or not (Du Toit, 2010). Below, Learner Aa continues her thoughts on mathematical literacy and the effect it has on her career identity.

Learner Aa: I think instead of telling them to move from pure maths to maths lit, they should have helped them so they can improve their marks instead of telling them you guys are supposed to move to maths literacy, but when you go to maths literacy, they tell you... where you gonna go with maths literacy, why did you choose maths literacy, at the first place they are the ones that put you there, you didn't decide that you wanted to go to maths literacy, if you wanted to do maths, you should do maths, whether you fail or not it's your choice...If you fail it's your choice

Learner Aa: The time I was changing to math literacy, I went to see the principal. I asked her, whether we gonna be able to go to university with maths literacy, she told us we gonna have to do some gaping [bridging] programme, now when you go to university they tell you: you can't do it. At UP they don't allow anybody with maths literacy, so the only way you can go...

Learner X: you have to get 90...

Learner Y: and if you did maths literacy...so there goes career choices

Learner Aa: So you can't go to certain universities, like UP...

Learner X: There are some courses you can do like HR, PR ya stuff like that...

SS: *But then of course if you want to study courses like Law you are at a disadvantage....*

Learner X: *Ya especially accounting, economics, they don't want maths lit*

Learner Aa: *Now you end up doing things you don't want to do, because of the decisions they made for you. I believe it's not about them, we didn't get the opportunity to know about career fields and everything, where you know gore [that] I have to do certain subjects in order to do this or I don't want to do this I want to do this...cos now some us wanted to be chartered accountants with maths literacy, you can't do that, there is only one university you can go to, which is University of Johannesburg and then there is also a chance you won't get in. I think they want 80% ya 80 %... {17:6-9}*

The above narration from Learner Aa indicates that the demotivation does not come from the learners but from the teachers and the school. It could seem that the reason Learner Aa had such strong feelings towards mathematical literacy and the teachers, was because she was also one of the students who had to change from mathematics to mathematical literacy. There could be a sense of fear coming from Learner Aa, as her career identity could be under threat. She indicates that: “*now some us wanted to be chartered accountants with maths literacy, you can't do that, there is only one university you can go to, which is University of Johannesburg and then there is also a chance you won't get in. I think they want 80% ya 80%*” {17:6-9}. She could now be feeling the pressure to get an 80% mark for mathematical literacy to be able to get into her chosen career field. The fear also comes in where she states that she might not gain admission at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) as it is the only university offering her study with mathematical literacy. Learners expressed a feeling of being put at a disadvantage, having been forced to take subjects that will not gain them

admission into university. However, with the above said, the Vaal Triangle Campus, indicates that “*Mathematical Literacy does not have to mean the end of the road. Gone are the days when it was stigmatised as ‘dumbing down’ the educational system while offering false promises to learners wanting to apply for specific courses such as Accounting and Engineering at a tertiary level*” (<http://news.nwu.ac.za/everything-not-lost-maths-literacy>, Retrieved on 02 February 2016). The university offers learners extended degree programmes with Mathematical Literacy and the opportunity to study towards degrees such as Accounting (general), Financial Accounting, Economics and International Trade, Marketing Management and Economics and Risk Management. In short: BCom degree programmes that they would otherwise not have had access to due to the Mathematical literacy subject choice (<http://news.nwu.ac.za/everything-not-lost-maths-literacy>). I could safely state that, therefore, access to careers services and information which the learners in this study lack is important. Learners would be able to understand the implications of choosing mathematical literacy in preference to mathematics.

4.2.5 Subject selection

I highlighted in Chapter 1 that transition periods occur for learners at the beginning of adolescence, when they are moving from Grade 9 to Grade 10 and are required to make decisions about their subject choices. In this transition, career guidance is needed to assist these learners to explore and plan for their futures (Drummond & Ryan, 1995). It was highlighted in the theme of teachers as influences that learners were put at a disadvantage by their teachers, having been forced to take subjects that will not gain them admission into university.

Under the theme of subject selection, learners highlighted that there is dissatisfaction with certain subjects not being included in the schools' subject choices for Grades 10 to 12. The learners believed that the subjects they were indirectly forced to take would narrow their career options after matric. At this phase, learners were found to be mostly uncertain about their future plans.

The finding is consistent with Bholanath's (2007) assertion that learners at this phase are mostly uncertain about their future plans, which therefore leads them to take subjects which are going to place them at a disadvantage after matric. Learners do not make the correct subject selection in Grade 9, which later do not link with their career preferences (Mashiapata, 2010). Mashiapata's (2010) findings indicate that learners indicated that they did not receive career guidance in Grade 9, which put them at a disadvantage.

In discussing learners' experiences in making subject choices, Learner R indicates that she wanted to become a nurse, which in turn directed her to take the relevant subjects to become a nurse. She later realised that she was not good at those subjects, as she was failing. This then forced her to take alternative subjects that she could pass. Her story follows in the quote below.

Learner R: Okay, for me choosing subjects in Grade 10, was okay, I wanted to be a nurse and stuff like that, I chose subjects, mathematics, life sciences then I failed those subjects, then after, in my Grade 10, after like I was like I wanna be a nurse, but how can be a nurse. Then a friend, something I said, they were like, there's no money in nursing stuff like that, then I came into this school in Grade 11 and I was like let me do economics and business stuff like that and ya, I was doing, but I changed from

maths to maths lit because of the marks stuff like that. I chose this stuff of mathematics and economics cos they said doing business there's money inside of that, there's money in the business, stuff like that, now I realise I'm not good in money, now I have to go back to my nursing stuff ya {15:16}

Unlike Learner R, Learner T below indicates that she chose subjects that she liked but unfortunately they are proving to be harder than she anticipated.

Learner T: well I chose I chose the subjects that I liked, going back in Grade 9 I was very good at, what's this EMS (Economic and Management Sciences), which had accounting inside of it. So I told myself back then if I was at EMS I must be good in accounting and maths I was normal just good at it. Maths accounting I was just fine so in Grade 10 I was like fine let me take maths, accounting, business, and I enjoyed those subjects 1st term 2nd term, then it started getting harder and harder but I just kept going

Learner U below indicates that besides the school offering limited subjects choices, he chose subjects that would be easy.

Learner U: Well I didn't have much choice in subjects cos in Grade 9 I was in Princess Park and I got expelled, and I came here and there were not many choices, it's like its commerce and not many subjects. And I think I would have taken the same options if I wasn't expelled ya...

SS: Why the same options?

Learner U: cos it's easy...

SS: *Which subjects are you taking?*

Learner U: *business studies, economics, tourism and maths lit {15:34}*

There were learners who chose subjects due to pressure from their parents, or a lack of a variety of subjects at school, or not caring which subjects they took, or being pressured by friends to take 'easy' subjects. One learner simply said he took his subjects because they corresponded with what he wanted to be, an economist.

Learner L: *The subjects that I chose, well I chose them because they are corresponding with the field I wanna be in, the economist...*

SS: *So were they the subjects you liked?*

Learner L: *No, I had to take them, a must...*

SS: *And are you good at them...*

Learner L: *Ya, is just maths is a problem. As always*

Learner L notes that the subjects he took were relevant for his career path. He further highlights that he doesn't necessarily like the subjects he took but he was good at them. Learner L's subjects choices were strongly underpinned by his career aspiration. For Learner M below, moving brought on a displacement for her in terms of schooling. She highlights below that she relocated at a time where she had to make subject choices and the decision-making was a 'rush thing' for her. Mai and Paper (2014) assert that generally moving for children/young people may bring on feelings of loss, caused by separation from loved ones, friends, or community supports.

Learner M: *For me choosing subjects in Grade 10 had to be, well it was a rush thing because I used to live in the Eastern Cape and the beginning of grade I moved here and starting at a new school and I didn't really wanna make new friends cos I'm not really, I don't socialise easy with people, I'm quiet, cos I was at my cousins school I chose to do business the commerce uuhm subjects, but if I were uuhm have to remain the Eastern cape, I would have chosen totally different subjects...*

SS: *Which are?*

Learner M: *I would have still chosen accounting, maths, and uuuhm I wanted to do engineering, graphics and design, I used to enjoy it. We used to do it I grade 9 as well and business studies...: I mean I used to see myself designing houses and stuff and everything changed since Grade 10*

The above highlights that Learner M's career plans of becoming a graphic designer changed because the current school didn't offer subjects related to the field. The narrative below highlights that learners' experiences were more than just subject limitations. Learner O's story touches on perceived ease of subjects and the career opportunities available. There is a sense also of the influence of friends.

Learner O: *Uhm in Grade 10, like U said we were in the same school. we were expelled together (group laughs)...it wasn't really my decision to take these subjects that I'm doing right now, uuhm according to me, I was like influenced by friends, aah guys let's take these subjects, it's easy, tourism, it's easy, so I was like yeh, why not. Uuhm but now eish, every day I regret taking these subjects. I wanted to do pure maths and accounting, but as time went on, I was like nah I will do something better even though I took those easy subjects. So as I look into my future, choosing to be a navy its simple,*

it doesn't acquire many things so for me it's gonna be easy, I don't think these will be important by then, like tourism...as time went on, uuhm I thought it was going to be good for me in the future but as time went on I started to regret a few months ago, I was really jealous of these guys who are doing pure maths and accounting and I thought no ways I'm only wasting my time being jealous I'll do something better then...

Learner Q: *Well for me I didn't care which subjects I'm going to take any subject for me would be great {15:73-80}*

Learner Q above did not care which subjects he took, unlike Learner O, who wanted 'easy' subjects. It is interesting to note that Learner Q states that his decision-making was influenced by peer pressure. He further highlights that he regrets the choices he made when he was in his growth stage. Learner Q's experiences are again consistent with Super's (1980) theory that suggests that children modify their initial fantasies of occupations as they become more aware of the world of work and that how they view themselves changes as they increasingly accommodate reality factors from the broader environment. In contrast to the findings of the current study and others mentioned above, Bullock and Wikeley (2001) found that Year 9 learners in the United Kingdom involved expressed concern that they were being pressured to make subject decisions that they did not feel ready to make and they realised their thoughts about the future were likely to change, so they felt career guidance irrelevant and a waste of time. The learners in the current study, unlike in Bullock and Wikeley's (2001) study, did not receive any formal career guidance; instead, the pressures to make subject choices came informally from parents, friends, teachers and the school.

4.2.6 Information and planning

In line with the future aspirations and inspirations, the present learners at the age of exploration are expected to take their goals and values into consideration when making a career decision (Sharf, 2002). In addition, Sharf (2002) states that, while learners may not know how to weigh their interests, capacities, and values, they nevertheless have the necessary building blocks for career choice. I asked the learners how they were planning on attaining the ‘money’ future aspiration. I wanted to find out what building blocks the learners had and how they were using them.

Learners in Group 2 indicated a knowledge of future careers which suggests that career exploration had been taking place. A lower career maturity was also identified in some learners, as they showed no knowledge of their chosen careers. While some learners expressed their confusion and lack of information about their present career exploration, others had clear ideas of their present career exploration. The following extracts present the stories of the learners.

Learner T: *Like for financial analyst you must be focused, you must know your accounting, maths and uuhm ya. Actually when you still in high school, you work hard, so that you can go to university, when you get there, choose the financial analyst uuhm I don't know what they call it. Then it goes on and on. Just hard work and knowing your stuff*

Learner Q: *I don't have the information yet*

Learner R: *Not really*

Learner S: *I don't have the information {15:27-31}*

Gordon and Meyer (2002) state that career indecision and a lack of career information and planning suggest a low level of career maturity. The extract above suggests two things; firstly, Learner T indicates having knowledge of her future career, which suggests that she has been engaging in career exploration. She, however, does not mention the entry requirements to university, the types of places she could go to work, etc. Secondly, Learners Q, R, S could be seen to have a lower career maturity as they show no knowledge of their chosen careers. While some learners expressed their confusion and lack of information about their present career exploration, others had clear ideas of their present career exploration, as can be seen in the following case stories.

Learner M: The first thing I would like to do is to speak to people about deciding what I want to become, cos right now I'm very confused, its either I market products or I become an accountant or do something in the business field and well...becoming an accountant I have the information, I know that I have to get into university and study accounting sciences or accountancy, but marketing products I have no idea where I'm gonna start, so the first thing I'm gonna do is internet, internet is going to help me get information and the stuff that I need to start deciding what I'm gonna do. {15:33}

The extract above describes how Learner M, while uncertain about which of the three fields she wants to pursue, has undertaken the task of information and planning for the field of accounting. She identifies specific degree programmes that she needs to enter into to attain the relevant qualification. Furthermore, she indicates that her primary source of information for career information is the internet, which is indicative of an independent information-seeking strategy in the absence of the school support for career information. Further probing

could have focused on whether she had information on the degree entry requirements as well as her strategies for attaining the required marks.

In the extract below, Learner U narrates his strategy for building a network and marketing himself in the entertainment industry.

Learner U: *Well next year I'm planning on recording my demo and then I'm gonna send it to people who can help me make it big, can start on radio maybe can move to TV yeh that kinda ish (laughter in the background)...well I have a crew and there is another one the three repertoires, we have like 3 mixed tapes ya mixed tapes, like ya we just planning that we go big and make it into the fame world {15:34}*

Learner U describes how he intends to use samples of his work to connect with others in the industry that could assist him in developing a professional music career. What is interesting about the narrative is that he does not mention formal studies in pursuit of his professional career and relies solely on his talent and the network he hopes to build in the industry.

Learner O: *Well I think there are a thousand ways to get information, like for me yesterday I spoke to my dad about the SA Navy, well I started talking about the military and what he told me is that being a military is something like you are sacrificing your life for other people as he told me like the SA Navy is the simple way to like get a job like it doesn't require a lot of mathematics or science or what, it only requires physical training. To be like those guys you have to single you have to be between 22-26, I can't really say a lot of things about it, but for me it's going to be easy, cos my dad is the*

only person that's helping me right now, I'm only depending on him right now, that's all I can say right now {15:35}

Learner O's narrative highlights the parental role as a source of information on career prospects. The conversation described between Learner O and his/her father positions the SA Navy as a safer career option compared to the military, as well as an 'easy' entry point for a career path. Once again the role of school subjects as a barrier to pursuing a career path is brought to the fore with the description of how the SA Navy does not require mathematics or science to enter employment. From the narratives in the preceding sections and the narrative above, it appears that the avoidance strategies learners employ to avoid taking mathematics and science play a key role in defining the career pathways envisioned. Learner O's narrative also very explicitly indicates that the sole source of career information is from the father. Literature on information-seeking behaviour shows that multiple sources of information are a critical aspect in ensuring accuracy of information and for a more holistic understanding of the career pathway (Hemminger & Adams, 2007).

Learner R: Ok about the information for nursing, when I was in Grade 10 I was doing science subjects and mathematic, then I was kinda talking to my friend 'I wanna be a nurse and stuff', then she was telling me being a nurse there's no money there bla bla bla...Then in Grade 11, I changed my mind I came into this school and start doing commercial subjects then after in matric I realise now like this subjects I don't belong here, most of the time I'm doing my assignments I feel like this is not me it's like people are pushing me, where I don't belong, kinda doing this stuff, and then just trying my best after finishing my matric even in going to the college about nursing to get that thing, cos I tried like university stuff but I but they told me you don't do maths so we

can't accept you about nursing here, but I tried the other college and they told me we may accept you but first you have to do stuff like that, in may june I have to try the test if they get me then that's great for me {15:36}

Learner R's narrative reflects more than just information sources; I got the sense of a tension between her self-identity and the environmental feedback from her friends and nursing colleges. The tension is seen where she indicates that she wants to become a nurse and her friend telling her that there is no financial security in nursing. The environmental feedback could be the commercial school she went into and the colleges which did not accept her to study nursing.

In Group 3 learners were found to fit well with what is expected of them in their life stage. Their narratives indicated that they had been acquiring information of what work they would enjoy. Using the information found, learners could be focusing on acquiring more occupational information to explore whether the desired work would allow them to implement their self-concept (Super, 1961). Learner W expressed that her indecision was led by a lack of information and also discouragement along the way. Learner X immediately commented on Learner W's story and said law is broad and one can choose which field they would like to get in.

Learner X: Well from my research ne, law it has different sections, it depends what you wanna do, maybe she wanted to do criminal law, ya there, you have to read a lot, like if you do mining or industrial you have to things like contracts whatever whatever so it depends on what you wanna do...

SS: So which one do you wanna get into, you said airforce?

Learner X: *ya ya airforce or shipping between the two...*

SS: *what will you be doing there as a lawyer?*

Learner X: *Uhhm as a lawyer, well I don't know how to explain it, I'll be signing contracts, I'll be under the surveillance of doing this thing, like everything that will be happening in the airforce, I'll be involved in, I don't know how to explain it to you but ya {17:11}*

Learners Z and Aa, on the other hand, voiced that they also do not know what goes into law. Their stories are voiced below.

Learner Z: *Mmmh I don't really know what goes into law because I didn't really choose it for myself, cos my dad forced me ahem forces me to do it, I wanted to do nursing because of the availability of jobs, but then my dad insisted that I do law so I don't really know...*

SS: *So you don't know really know what it takes to go into law cos your dad is insisting you take it...*

Learner Z: *Ya and he has already bought me books (laughter in the background)...*

SS: *So your dad has got you covered, you sorted ne (laughter), okay we will talk about that later {17:13}*

Learner Aa: *Uhhm well I don't have much, what I know is that you have to be good in commercial subjects, accounting and maths yes you have to be good at that, then you have to study Bcom degree for accounting and then you have to study further for 3 years I think, you do your practical something like that then you gonna be a qualified chartered accountant, in this field you can get to be an auditor, financial manager, analyst and ya stuff like that... {17:14}*

The above extract highlights that Learners Z and Aa fit well with what is expected of them in their life stage. The quotes indicate that they have been acquiring clarification of what work they would enjoy. Using this information, Learners Z and Aa could be focusing on acquiring more occupational information to explore whether the desired work would allow them to implement their self-concept (Super, 1961). Learners Z and X could also be acquiring information on the careers they would enjoy and whether they would be able to implement their self-concept.

4.2.7 Employment opportunities in South Africa

A study by Roberts (2011) found that a high proportion of workers in a sample of young South Africans appear to be unskilled and unaware in job search in that they have inflated expectations about their employment prospects and do not update this assessment when they are given objective information about employment opportunities. With this in mind, I asked learners what they thought was available for them in South Africa in terms of employment opportunities.

Learner A highlights that they do not know what they should expect, while Learner F states that for her as a dancer she cannot pursue her career as the industry for dancing is limited.

Learner F: South Africa, I don't think I have that much opportunity in South Africa, but I know if I go overseas I'll have so much opportunities, here in South Africa the entertainment industry is this small, everything is just this small. All we hear is corruption corruption corruption, if you wanna be successful in South Africa go to politics, that's the only way. so for me as a dancer, I don't think I'll settle here in South

Africa...that's a no no, cos you know I'll get 'Oh she's a dancer', I wanna be more than that, I wanna be a choreographer, I wanna be more than that... I don't wanna end up dancing on the street {2:102-105}

A study commissioned by the Department of Labour in 2008, indicated that in South Africa the support (funding, grants, resources) for “art-for-art’s” sake (cultural development of theatre, dance, music) is declining annually (Joffe & Newton, 2008). Learner A’s expectations could be seen as realistic looking at the opportunities available for her chosen career. Learner A further commented that there are opportunities in South Africa but there is a lot of corruption involved.

Learner A: Well I personally think that there are a lot of opportunities here in South Africa, but then the level of corruption is just so high that those that are educated, don't get the chance to do what they deserve, because of people who took short cuts to get there, and they don't even know the job so they end up messing it up...I'm sorry our economy is just weak...

In the extract above, Learner A shows considerable insight into the context of the labour market in South Africa when highlighting the perceived political dynamics of gaining access to employment. While discussing employment opportunities, Learner J came out to say that he would go to universities popular on sports, like the University of Pretoria and University of Cape Town, where he could be able to pursue his soccer career. It was interesting to note again how Learner J came out to speak freely about his career path, as he seemed unsure and undecided at the beginning. Below is an extract of the discussion pertaining to employment opportunities in South Africa.

Learner A: *...that's the thing we don't even know*

Learner J: *Like me next year, I just wanna get into varsity and do sports....like I was saying, right now those kind of events, like varsity, like Tuks, UWC, ya those varsities playing sports...ya like maybe I can do soccer or cricket cos it's what I can do, ya maybe take soccer or cricket as a career...*

SS: *J you actually do know what you wanna do you wanna go into sports (laughter in the background)... {2:102-105}*

Group 1 highlighted that they did not know what they should expect. Learner A further commented that there are opportunities in SA but there is a lot of corruption involved. Learner L in Group 2 indicated that economists are rare and he expects to get opportunities in the field. Learner M, on the other hand, noted for her there would not be so many opportunities as the marketing industry is crowded.

Learner L: *Economists in South Africa are really rare, so they are needed so that's why I chose this career cos there aren't enough economists so I took this opportunity*

Learner M: *In the business world I know it's a competition, but who knows how to deal with people it's about strategies, advertising and so many other things. As a person who wants to market products I don't think there a lot of opportunities out there cos everyone wants to do business {15:82-83}*

Only Learners L and M contributed to the question. Learner L indicated that economists are rare and he expects to get opportunities in the field. Learner M, on the other hand, noted that for her there would not be so many opportunities as the industry is crowded. The implications

could be seen as ambiguous in that inflated and deflated expectations may have both positive and negative consequences: On the one hand young people who overestimate their probability may be more inclined to continue searching or take certain risks for which the realised payoff could ultimately be higher than for those who have more realistic expectations (Roberts, 2011). On the other hand, unskilled and unaware young people could also make unfortunate choices such as investing in education in over-available or over-supplied markets. It may also include them not wanting to change career aspirations because of perceived benefit (Roberts, 2011).

4.2.8 Ways to improve career guidance

The findings of this study have suggested that there is no single ‘magic bullet’ for good career guidance and development. I have found that improving career guidance and promoting career development in high school learners is about consistently doing a number of things, identified by literature and voiced by the learners. To round off the focus group discussion I asked the learners what more could be done to help them to make better career choices. The learners highlighted that, “*Excursions, Counselling, exposure, career guidance*” {2:107}, could be helpful for them. They went to state that: “*camps, sports...we actually NEED career guidance...at least provide some forms for bursaries ...* {2:107}.

Learner F: *a little bit of effort, I know we naughty and stuff, but we do deserve a chance in life, they shouldn't punish us...I mean the punishment is harsh, withholding information* {2:108}.

Learner D: *at least have debates, then maybe we could see my weaknesses are here and my strengths are there* {2:109}

Learner F: ...*you know I get career guidance from Facebook, I talk to Mr D via FB ka*
[Tswana word literal meaning: with] *inbox...and if you don't answer he pokes you...*
{2:110}

The above extract indicates that learners saw an importance to engage in career development activities to make their career decision-making simpler. They also highlighted that it is important for teachers to share career development information as they valued information and planning. The learners emphasised the need for them to actually receive career guidance at school.

Learner M: *okay first I think the school should have played a big role, cos since we young and stuff, in Grade 9 beginning Grade 10 where we supposed to choose subjects, the school should have helped learners in determining what kind of subjects, by having uuhm I don't know like professionals come talk to us, giving us advice on what we should do shouldn't do and what subjects we should pick. And now I think the school can still help by bringing in people from universities to talk to us about what opportunities we will have once we leave school*

Learner N: *I don't have much, maybe they should give us support in what we good at, like maybe I'm good in math they should give support, Ya give support in what we good at* {15:88-89}

Learner N above states that they (I am assuming he is referring to the school) should support the learners in their strengths. The main thing that I picked up from both the focus groups is that the learners felt that the school should be more involved. I gathered that the learners felt isolated and left to make their own decisions with regard to career information. Learners also

highlighted that teachers should support them in their strengths. Learners from focus groups 1 and 2 expressed that the school should be more involved in sourcing career information, taking them out to exhibitions and getting professionals to speak to them.

4.3 SUMMARY

Learners are supposed to have access to a variety of career events outside of school, according to the Department of Basic Education (2012). The provincial offices of the DBE take responsibility for organising career events for Grade 12 learners outside of school hours. However, the findings of the study prove otherwise. SAQA (2012) indicated that career events and exhibition events are usually more accessible to schools in urban areas and learners from rural areas are often neglected. However, the current private school does not offer career events or exhibitions for learners in Grade 12.

Findings of the current study are consistent with Maree's (2014) assertion that only a small percentage of learners across the country ever receive career counselling, and it remains the almost exclusive preserve of learners from affluent homes. In finding ways to improve career counselling/guidance, Maree (2014) contends that a career construction counselling approach should be implemented by authorities that will provide school counsellors with a strategy to help learners a) choose appropriate fields of study and achieve success in their studies, b) construct themselves adequately, c) construct their sense of self (self-concept), and d) design successful lives and make meaningful social contributions.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS OF NARRATIVE ESSAYS

To effectively communicate, we must realise that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.

Robbins, *n.d.*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The narrative essays were collected after all three focus group discussions were completed. The narrative essay exercise took two weeks to complete, the transcription and analysis took a further four weeks. However, not all learners handed in their narratives; of the 25 learners only 11 handed in their narratives. The essay length ranged from one to two pages.

The following section introduces the learners and provides an overview of their backgrounds and stories as well as the analysis of the narratives using Super's (1980) theory. I have given each learner a stage name based on the characters they play in their stories. I chose to use particular stage names as the pseudonyms for the learners, as I believe the character role best reflected the learners' representation of their current career identities. I will conclude the section with an integration of the emerging themes from each of the narratives.

5.2 NARRATIVE ESSAYS

5.2.1 Dancer Girl/Learner F

I first met Dancer Girl in the first focus group. She came across as a confident outspoken young woman. She participated enthusiastically in the discussion and spoke freely of her experiences. Dancer Girl grew up in Hammanskraal where she was raised by her

grandmother until the age of 7. She moved in with her parents when she was 8 and it was difficult settling in with them because not everything was as blissful as she thought it would be. Dancer Girl was abused as a child and promised herself at a young age that she was going to help every child who lives in the same situation she grew up in. Through her tough times, a love for dance grew. Dancing made her forget about her situation at home. It helped her to start believing in herself. Dancer Girl chose to structure her narrative according to overarching themes, with her childhood, her current identity, her culture, friends, family and how her past shaped her future aspirations as the central themes.

In describing her childhood, Dancer Girl highlights that her grandmother raised her until her transition to living with her parents, which for her was not as she had anticipated. She describes her home environment as unsettling and hard for her as a child due to her being abused. Although she had negative experiences, she narrates a positive outcome from her difficult experiences, which she describes as her central motivation or driving force in pursuing dancing as a passion as well as her need to want to help abused children. The extract below repeats the summary in her words.

“I grew up in Hamanskraal at my maternal home. My grandmother raised me up to the age of 7. I moved in with my parents when I was 8 and it was difficult settling in with them because not everything was as blissful as I thought it would be. I grew up in an abusive home and everything was hard for me as a child and I promised myself that am going to help every child that lives in the same situation as I did. Through all the tough times my love for dance grew because it helped me forget about my situation at home. It helped me believe in myself no matter what” {6:2-5}.

In the quote above, Dancer Girl highlights the home as a central theatre in which her identity as a dancer was played out. The home theatre, according to Super (1980), is one of the primary theatres where the roles of parent and child are played out. Super (1980) highlights that roles are defined in the terms of expectations and performance within each life role theatre. In Dancer Girls' narrative, her role of child can be seen as being unsatisfied by her parents' roles, which is not explicitly stated, but which is implied in the quote, "*I moved in with my parents when I was 8 and it was difficult settling in with them because not everything was as blissful as I thought it would be*" {6:3}. The use of the word 'blissful' indicates an unvoiced expectation of an ideal home environment characterised by the feeling of bliss which carries connotations of comfort, a sense of belonging and happiness. The phrase "*I thought it would be*" can be seen as an explicit statement of expectation of the roles she believed her parents should play in creating the blissful environment she envisages in her statement. Therefore, I believe that Dancer Girl is expressing dissatisfaction with the manner in which her parents played their role as comforters and protectors and they created an unsafe home theatre characterised by abuse. The description of the influence of the home theatre falls within the overarching theme of family, which is discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Dancer Girl's dissatisfaction with her child role is redefined due to her expectations and her home theatre and drives her from her home theatre to take up a role as a mentor in the community theatre, as seen in the quote, "*I grew up in an abusive home and everything was hard for me as a child and I promised myself that am going to help every child that lives in the same situation as I did*" {6:4}. The promise to herself to help other children who come from abusive homes can be seen as a core value around which Dancer Girl could build a future career self, as it describes a deeply held personal belief that is characterised by an

empathic link to others who shared a similar childhood experience. Individuals will tend to choose an occupation that enables them to satisfy needs that were unfulfilled in their childhood, and actualise dreams passed on to them by their family (Pines & Yanai, 2001).

Dancer Girl identifies how the safe environment of the dancing schools enhanced her ability to endure the negative home environment. *“Through all the tough times my love for dance grew because it helped me forget about my situation at home. It helped me believe in myself no matter what”* {6:2-5}. She further highlights that she had an enabling environment to play her role more effectively, *“My society I grew up in an environment whereby its safe, clean and I had access to dancing groups and sport club where I play tennis”*. Below Dancer Girl summarises her reflections on her past, present and future experiences.

My past influenced me into being a better person it shaped my love for dance and presently am working hard to get distinctions and my future, I c myself opening a centre for kids who have been abused before and I c myself playing tennis or dancing internationally. Thank you!!! {6:2-5}.

Dancer Girl’s past experiences are described as crystallised in the future aspiration to provide a safe space for children who have been abused and to use her sports or dance career to attain international recognition. The narrative above describes the way in which a negative influence, in this case an abusive home, provided the driver which lead to exposure to an environment in which Dancer Girl learnt about her future career. In her early narrative, the role of dancing is positioned as one of escape and positive self-reaffirmation and evolves into a positive expression of self-identity. Within this positive self and career identity,

Dancer Girl elaborates on her career identity by expressing the desire to open a centre for abused children, yet another consequence of the negative home theatre.

5.2.2 Street Rapper/Learner U

I met Street Rapper in Group 2; he was one of the vocal learners who participated in the discussion. Street Rapper chose to structure his narrative in a form of a rap lyric. Reading Street Rapper's narrative, I found it important to introduce the context of rap music. Rap music is often seen to focus on the violent lifestyles and impoverished conditions of inner-city youth, and we see this coming out in Street Rapper's narrative. Rapping is distinct from spoken-word poetry in that it is performed in time to a beat (<http://www.last.fm/tag/rap/wiki>). Rapping is often associated with and a primary ingredient of hip-hop music (<http://www.last.fm/tag/rap/wiki>). When reading Street Rapper's narrative, I found it to be more like a song. The rap lyric starts by describing Street Rapper's community context, emotional surroundings, influences, and closing off with individual moments defining identity. Below is an introduction to Street Rapper in his lyric.

Legend has it, "there was a boy who was born in a small village, who took control at a smaller age, who never thought he would be on a stage". That is a true story because I see that kid every time I face the mirror. Ya!! That is me and the following is my life portrayed in ink {7:2}

The above quote highlights the foundations of what rapping is, which is more of a stylised a rhythmic and rhyming speech that is chanted "*Legend has it, 'there was a boy who was born in a small village, who took control at a smaller age, who never thought he would be on a stage'*". Super (1969) states that young peoples' careers develop through some balance of the

individual capability (embodied in autonomous decision-making) and community context effecting social pressure. Street Rapper's story highlights that one cannot separate individuals and the community they come from, as echoed by Berry (2013). The following is a description of Street Rapper's community context.

Born clean, pure with no sin, take my first breath on earth, my life begin, God had a mission, I was born because the generation needed a generator. I grow up surrounded by love and hate, talent being the topic of debate.

I was born in a messed up family, I still remember them telling me "it will all be good", when we change to another neighbourhood. As I tell this tale, I put my childhood on the scale. Grow up in a dangerous society, with bullet holes from a photo shoot, bodies on the side walk pavement painted in red brutal bloody behaviours of our brothers, I was troubled as I travailed but was soon wanted because I was shilled {7:4}

The above quote on community context reflects again how Street Rapper plays on words to express his career identity. He introduces the paragraph by stating that he had a greater purpose on earth and that he was created to make a difference, '*my life begin, God had a mission, I was born because the generation needed a generator*'. The juxtaposition of love and hate within the family environment shaped his future dreams of being a rapper, which is further seen in how he continued his thoughts in the quote '*talent being the topic of debate*'. The quote implies that Street Rapper did not get the support from his loved ones in terms of his career choice. It could be that the only place Street Rapper could be himself was on the street, rapping. Street Rapper mentioned in the focus group discussion that the support is very limited.

Berry (2013) highlights that learners cannot develop their careers without experiencing and reacting to societal influence. He further echoes that the young person's career is not something that evolves at the whim of society's pressures alone. The individual receives information from his/her community and processes this to develop personal attitudes. What we get from Street Rapper is that he grew up in a dangerous society which he explicitly describes. We can also see the processing of information from his community and how he develops his personal attitude, as he ends the thought with, '*I was troubled as I travailed but was soon wanted because I was shilled*'. In the extract below Street Rapper speaks of the influences in his life.

I engage in street activities, I pull off a stun just to get what I want, peer pressure, pick people, I just had to be one of them. They say I broke the law it's still in one peace. Trying to stay away from the wrong side of the bars unlike my friends, Stan is doing six years for murder and to him it does not matter. T man is a dropout, Kim a single parent at the age of 18 and she's still dating. Amaly is so fat she can't fit in with the popular, she says her life is so dark she thinks she's shadowed by Dracula, but I still stand by them at all means that just means that I care. I only hope they feel the same. Teachers always on my trail making it hard for me to breathe. All my homies look up to me not only because I high over the weed but also cause they wanna be like me and they know what I'll become, till then I'll be calm, always on that microphone waiting for that call {7:5}

The above quote highlights that Street Rapper is surrounded by negative social events in the context of having friends in trouble with the law, addictions, teen pregnancy, indifference to schooling, dropping out of high school, and deaths of friends (Grygo, 2006). It could also be

that he has a negative view of his teacher as seen in his quote *'Teachers always on my trail making it hard for me to breathe'*. Street Rapper highlights in the extract below that he enjoyed getting up to mischievous things. The quote below also echoes Super's (1988) assertion that children move from an immature view of the world to a more realistic and mature worldview.

I used to say, it's a good day to be bad. Go out with my crew, we skate around the city, stamping walls with graffiti. Working on new CD, till I met Jesus in this bible study I attended because I wanted to meet cailchis sister, Rashaznai. Now I always pray, let you be the predator. I live life with flying colours like a rainbow, undefeated I never fall. Undisputed I stand tole (sic). My music is sophisticated because I'm educated; I know I'm a star. I don't need a telescope to prove it. Living the America dream, don't wake me up. It's my way of life, you look for directions. I'm on the right track; it's just not my playlist. With a pocket full of dreams, my actions hold the reality. With a hand full of aces, will I play my cards right or take the other directions.

Trying to write my wrongs but I'm running out of ink. I learned my lesson now I'm doing my correction. This is my resurrection. I hope you get the picture and if you do put it in a frame. In life you only have yourself to blame. I came, I saw and I'm about to take over. Mark my word that's why I put them on paper. I'll be legendary before I go to the simitary (sic). My name will be in the history books, first on the hall of fame {7:6-7}

Street Rapper highlights his passion for writing music and also rapping. He indicates that music is his resurrection, which could imply that rapping is more like a restoration of his life. We can also see from his last quote on *'I'll be legendary before I go to the simitary. My*

name will be in the history books, first on the hall of fame' that being famous and recognised for his talent is very important to him. The choice of narrative structure as well as various phrases such as *'Legend has it, "there was a boy who was born in a small village, who took control at a smaller age, who never thought he would be on a stage"'*; *'All my homies look up to me not only because I high over the weed but also cause they wanna be like me and they know what I'll become, till then I'll be calm, always on that microphone waiting for that call'* indicate that Street Rapper sees his career path as an integral part of his identity and not simply as a source of income. Throughout his narrative, he weaves in the dominant tropes consistently expressed in rap music such as economic struggle, drug use, social exclusion, crime and the belief in one's talent above all.

5.2.3 The Writer/Learner I

The Writer was in focus group 1 and she came across as a shy, reserved girl. The Writer did not participate a lot in the discussion, she just commented on her future aspirations. She indicated that she wanted to be an economist and that she was raised by a father who supports her fully. She also highlighted Karl Marx as her role model and mentioned that she likes writing. She chose to structure her narrative according to themes in her current identity, her childhood, family, and how her past shaped her future aspirations as the central themes. The Writer describes her current life identity below as being pleasant. She highlights that if one can have a closer look at life without pretending that life is good, a person will find that it's not the case. The introduction of The Writer's narratives implies that The Writer is not happy with her life realities, as seen in her words below.

I believe that the lives we live are the lives we make I call it self-destiny. When you finally sit down at the end of the day and look at yourself in the mirror scrubbed (sic)

all the make-up, and truly see yourself and where you are at this stage of your life and façade of your outer self, without any pretense the reality of life sucks. I was born into a middle class worthy family; I lost my mother at the age of 6. Growing up being raised by my father has not been an easy task, however I have to wake up everyday and keep abreast with changes. At times he becomes too strick (sic) and make me wish that my mother was still alive, but I cannot change Gods will {8:3}

The Writer describes above what Super (1988) describes as the two processes of developing a picture of the kind of person one is, and that of trying to make that concept a reality. She views the kind of life she lives as her self-destiny and also the concept of reality is seen in her statement that ‘*When you finally sit down at the end of the day and look at yourself in the mirror scrubbed all the make-up, and truly see yourself and where you are at this stage of your life and façade of your outer self, without any pretense the reality of life sucks*’. Her concept of reality is seen as not desirable for her, as seen in her quote. The quote further describes The Writer’s family and childhood. She describes her family as being middle class. She indicates that she lost her mother while she was still young. She states that losing her mother has made life unpleasant for her, as her father had to raise her alone. The Writer continues her earlier thoughts of experiencing a difficult time after her mother’s passing below.

The journey of my life has not being the good one. At the very early age I had to learn to take pain, I had to learn to be strong and understanding just so that I can overcome particular challenges. Through the love of God everyday becomes a better as I am going closer towards my destiny of becoming an economist, owning five companies, helping the poor and living my life to fullest {8:4}

Although she had negative experiences, she narrates a positive outcome from her difficult experience which she describes as her central motivation or driving force in writing. Through her painful times a love for writing was born. Writing soothed her pain of her mother's passing. It also helped her to start believing in herself. Despite the loss of her mother, she expresses that the passing on of her parent motivated her to pursue her dream of becoming a 'well-known writer'.

*I began writing a book called LIFE, two years ago. If there is one thing I enjoy doing, is writing. My mother's passing on, motivated my enjoyment of writing. I write about hundred words a day, I pray one day I will become a well-known writer. I love my self a lot, I do not want to be anybody else, but my father is my role model *sometimes*lol*
{8:5}*

The Writer's narrative suggests that the exploratory experiences of adolescence in most cases could be seen as an awakening to something that is already there, rather than the discovery of something new and different (Super, 1988). This suggestion indicates that her mother's passing awakened her passion for writing and was not necessarily a discovery moment. I can safely assume that if I had followed up with The Writer, I would have discovered that her writing passion started before her mother passed on. She ends off her narrative by stating that she loves herself; The Writer emerges from her narrative as having a high self-esteem, being a self-accepting, self-understanding individual, with an integrated set of values which makes it easier for her to set goals of being 'well-known writer' and moving systematically, 'I write about hundred words a day' toward her attainment of being a well-known writer.

5.2.4 The Family Man/Learner A

Family Man was in focus group 1; he was one of the loud, outspoken learners. He was always the first to want to comment on a topic of discussion. It is interesting to note that in his narrative he indicates that he had a dream of being called 'BOSS' and wanting to be in charge of games he played with friends. Being 'BOSS' could also explain how he always wanted to participate and to be the first to respond in the focus group. He indicated that he wants to be role model and a family man, as he grew up without a father. Below is his story, which he chose to structure according to his childhood, current identity, family and friends as central themes.

My name is FM and I was born in Limpopo Mnakweng Hospital. I would like to think that I had a very happy and memorable childhood. Although I was a happy child, there was still something missing, a father. I grew up not knowing my paps till I was 5. As a child it didn't even matter to me that I didn't have a father because I grew up around my uncles and they gave me their support. In my younger days I used to have big dreams, I had a dream of being what I like to call "BOSS". I just wanted to always be in charge of whatever games we used to play {9:2}.

In describing his childhood, the Family Man highlights that he had a happy childhood. He indicates that he grew up without a father which, as a child, did not matter as much, as he was surrounded by male father figures. He highlights that he grew up having big dreams. Family Man describes his family below.

I have two families, one from my mother's side and one from my father's side. The family from my mother's side are just two sweet and loving and the family from my father's side well I would like to describe them as people I just know. I have very supportive and understanding friends; they help me cope through my challenges and are there when I need them. I would like to describe my youth group as the 'misunderstood' because nobody seems to understand us, as crazy as we might be, we do what needs to be done and nobody seems to see that part our doings, only the negatives are focused on. I think we have so much potential to become what we want but it is overweighed by all the negative attitude we get from our elders and teachers {9:3}.

In the quote above, Family Man indicates that he has two families. The way he describes his “two” families is interesting. He states that his mother’s family is sweet and loving while his father’s family is just people he knows. The warmth towards his mother’s family could be that he spent more time with them and felt more love from them. It could also be that not knowing his father played a factor in him describing his father’s family as people he just knows. This also brings us to his aspiration of wanting to be a family man, to be called “boss” and also to be a role model. Family Man does not share a lot in his narrative about his career aspiration and the reader is left with questions and assumptions. It can be assumed, though, that his aspiration of just being the family man which was born from his home theatre outweighs his desired career identity. The home theatre, according to Super (1980), is one of the primary theatres where the roles of parent and child, which are defined in the terms of expectations and performance, are played out. His narrative implies that his father’s absence did not affect him negatively but rather positively, where he was surrounded by his uncles who acted as father figures for him. It is in the home theatre where the family role and career

identity were played out for Family Man. A study conducted in the USA found that young people were less likely to identify work as an important part of life than those of the same age a generation earlier (Beauregard, 2007). It can be assumed that Family Man's occupational choices are influenced by the way in which he prioritises his work and family roles, and in his case the family role is placed higher (Beauregard, 2007).

5.2.5 Cricket Player/Learner G

The Cricket Player was one of the learners in Group 1 who was shy and did not contribute a lot to the discussions. He stated that he wants to be an economist. He highlighted that he had supportive parents and friends. Cricket Player relocated from Durban to Pretoria when he was 9 years old. The move brought on feelings of separation from his loved ones and friends. Below is his story structured according to his childhood, how relocating shaped his current identity, subject selection and support from friends and family.

My name is CP. After I am done with grade 12 I would like to study economics and I want to become an economist. I was born in Durban, Kwazulu Natal. Growing up I always wanted to be a doctor since I was small. I also wanted to become a professional cricket player because I am really good at it. When I was 9 years old my family moved to Pretoria. This had a big effect on my life because I lost all my really close friends and family. It was like starting a new life all together. In 2010 I was a grade 9 student at the school. This had been a really bad decision because this is a business school and there was no sport, so there went my dreams {10:2}.

Cricket Player in the above extract highlights Mai & Paper's (2014) assertion that generally moving for children/young people may bring on feelings of loss, caused by separation from

loved ones, friends, or community supports. Parents are at times hesitant to relocate their children precisely because they think it will be traumatic or harmful to educational performance (DeLuca & Rosenblatt, 2010). In the case of Cricket Player I can assume from his discussion in the focus group and in his narrative essay that relocation for him brought on loss of friends and family. One of the things I picked up from Cricket Player is that another loss was being unable to continue playing cricket as the school did not have sports. It could seem that the relocation reshaped his self and career identities. The reshaping of Cricket Player's identities continues below, where he describes his experiences of making subject choices in Grade 9 as well as the support he had.

In 2011 I didn't really have much of a subject choice. I could only choose from maths and maths literacy and accounting or tourism. The other subjects were all compulsory. So from that moment I decided I want to be a economist. My parents don't really mind, they say that they will always support me no matter what I do or become. My school friends encourage me a lot {10:4}.

In the above extract, Cricket Player highlights that his career identity was reshaped again when he had to make subject choices; his dream of being either a doctor or cricket player changed. The narration is in line with Super's (1980) suggestion that learners' view of themselves change as they increasingly accommodate reality factors from the broader environment. Cricket Player's reality factors from the broader environment included the relocation and the limited subjects. He ends off his narrative that both his parents and school friends encourage and support him.

5.2.6 Soccer Star/Learner H

The Soccer Star was in focus group 1; he was one of the ‘cool’ quiet guys. He narrated in the focus group that when he was growing up, he wanted to do a lot of things which were sport-related. He highlights that he has a passion for soccer and that he looks up to soccer players like Cristiano Ronaldo. He has a strong belief in religion and God. He states that he grew up in a Christian family. Below is his story, which he chose to structure according to his family and current identity as central themes.

I SH was born in Mafikeng 1994 and stayed there till the age of 6. Then I then moved to Pretoria and been staying here for 13 years now. I stay with my whole family. I have two beautiful sisters. My dad is a stricked (sic) father that wants no nonsense so I always make sure I never get him upset. My mom is the kind soft mother, I talk to her more that I talk to my father. I grew up in an Adventist family (Christian typa thing) and we always go to church on Saturday. My grandfather from my dad’s side was a pastor. He died before my grandmother than later followed her.

I love soccer I have a passion for sports in general its basically flows in my blood. I love watching football with my dad and movies with my mother. My belief is I should work hard and be successful man to provide for my family. I believe that there is a God in heaven watching over us. I strongly believe that if you don’t respect your parents you will not go far in life. I would say most of my friends are corrupted but the thing I like about them is that they know where they going in life.

My school teachers are okay sometimes they bore to the max. They sometimes gives us a lot of assignments at once and they would want them the next day.

My role model is Cristiano Ronaldo who is a professional soccer people that is earning millions every week {11:2-5}.

In the extracts above, Soccer Star highlights his passion for soccer and indicates that he believes in hard work and being able to provide for his family. Soccer Star indicates that he has negative view of his teachers, which also came out in the focus group discussion. He ends off his narrative by drawing again on his love for soccer and highlights that his role model is Cristiano Ronaldo. Research has shown a relationship between role model influence and a variety of career-related outcomes, including career maturity, where academic and career development could be accelerated (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002). Pleiss and Feldhusen (1995), in Flouri and Buchanan (2002), indicate that learners can benefit from relationships with adults who are successful in their areas of interest. The authors further highlight that these adults may be present in learners' lives as mentors, role models, or heroes and heroines.

5.2.7 Soldier Girl/Learner Q

I met Soldier Girl in Group 2. She was reserved, quiet and did not want to contribute much to the discussions. She indicated that she wants to go into the military because she 'feared nothing'; however, she did not have information about getting into the military. She highlighted that she did not have many friends. She also mentioned that she wants to support her mother financially and assist with her little brother's school fees. It is worth noting that she did not care which subjects she took, it could be that she had made up her mind to go into the military in order to help her mother and nothing else seemed important. Below is her story in her own words. She chose to structure her narrative according to themes in her childhood, future aspirations, culture, family and friends, role models and reflections on her past as the central themes.

I grew up in a very respectful family. My childhood, well there's nothing much I can talk about it. I lost my father when I was 14 years and it had an effect on me because he was someone I could count on. I grew up in a wealthy and respectable family {12:2}.

The above extract describes Soldier Girl's childhood. She highlights that she grew up in a wealthy and respectable family. She starts and ends of the paragraph with the statement that 'she grew up in a respectable family'. It could seem that being respected is very important to her. She indicates that she lost her father when she was 14 years. It could also be that her father was the source of wealth and that gave the family the status of being respectable. The loss of her father could be seen as the driver to her career identity of wanting to now be the source of wealth for her family, as can be seen in the narrative below.

I am interested in SA Military because now I have a single parent but the reason why I want to go is because I want to help my mom financially. Sometimes I get the feeling that it's not what I want because I'm doing this to help my mother. It hurts me knowing that I'm no longer interested in the SA military and I'm even afraid to tell her the truth. But at other times I know that I'm doing this for my mother because she has done a lot for me and she inspires, she's my hero. My abilities I know that I can go to SA Military even though it's dangerous at other times. But I know that I can also handle hard training that's there before "all men for himself". I know that I can handle whatever they throw at me {12:3}.

Soldier Girl highlights above that she is not really interested in going into the military but it seems that she has decided that it is the only option for her to be able to help her mother financially. She echoes below that her culture drives her to care for her mother, as it is

expected of children to take care of their parents as a way to thank the parents for raising them. In this regard, Munro (1984) hypothesised that traditional black African culture values of the belief that individuals should live to help others have influenced black children's occupational aspirations.

In my culture, I believe that as you school then you have to look after your parents as they looked after you when you were still a new-born baby. I believe that I can look after my mother and help her with everything that she needs that she can't get because of the financial problems that she has {12:4}.

Looking after her mother is very important to Soldier Girl, which is seen as her main driving force, as a core value on which she builds a future career self. It can be seen in her belief of looking after her mother that she chose a career that she identifies as enabling her to satisfy needs that were unfulfilled in her childhood, and actualise dreams passed on to her by her father (Pines & Yanai, 2001). Flouri and Buchanan (2002) state that there is a relationship between role model influence and a variety of career-related outcomes, including career maturity. Soldier Girl narrates below that her mother is her role model and that she is the influence of her career choice. However, the career maturity aspect of Flouri and Buchanan's (2002) assertion is not clearly seen in Soldier Girl's narrative, as she stated earlier in the focus group discussion that she did not have any information on her career-related outcomes. There is, however, the link to the mother as a role model in terms of being a provider, which is central to her conception.

My role model is my mother because she really inspires me and she has done wonderful things for me. She has shown me that she is the only one who loves me and

there's nothing more a mothers love. She has sacrificed a lot for me and I am grateful for having such a wonderful mother like her. Thinking about my past has made me realise how education is important because I was that kind of person who didn't care about tomorrow or what I wanted to do with my life when I finish grade 12. Now for the present I can also think or have a vision on what I want to become in the future and I have already decided that I want to go into the SA military {12:5}.

Soldier Girl confesses that she did not realise how important education was in her reflection of her past experience. Drawing from the focus group discussion, she expressed that her past experience in making subject selection was not thought through. She highlighted that she did not really care which subjects she took. I am safely assuming that her reflection encompassed the experience of making subject choices as she was indifferent then, and now it could be that she sees the importance of past phases.

5.2.8 The Apple and the Tree/Learner D

The Apple participated in Group 1 and she was outspoken and commented on all the topics of discussion. The Apple wanted to go into the military but was discouraged by her mother (the Tree) and her brother. It is worth noting that The Apple highlights her brother as the larger force in her life and her mother as her sole provider, as she lost her father at a young age. The Apple grew up in the Eastern Cape and notes that she is the last child of three children. Below is her story in her own words, which she chose to structure according to overarching themes of her current identity, her childhood, her family and how her past shaped her future aspirations.

I am a Xhosa and I am a frock female. I am a very shy person, but a social life at the same time, I love going out with my girlfriend. I am kind, outspoken, self-confident when it comes to my clothing style. I love swimming, partying, faking walks and spending time with my best friend B. I am very talented person; I can draw, sing (very well), design things graphically and dance. Oh! And cooking. I grew up in a very small town in Eastern Cape in King Williams Town. I lived there with my father, mother and my two brothers. In 2002 I lost my father through a car accident. I was very young I was in grade 2 by then. Later that year my mother applied for a post at work of moving from Eastern Cape and coming to work in Pretoria. Up until today she raised 3 children as a single parent, her first born is an IT specialist and her second born is Graphic designer and here I am as well the last born in matric, carrying all the pressure on my shoulders {13:2}.

The Apple's view of herself could be seen as positive; this view is closely related to the way she feels about her ability, past experiences and what she thinks lies ahead for her (Super, 1961). Her view on her abilities could be seen as positive, where she describes herself as being kind, having self-confidence, being able to draw and cook. The perception of self and environment through one's senses and feelings about their ability to exude confidence and dignity also contributes to a person's definition of self-concept (Nasir & Lin, 2013). Not only does self-concept include physical and psychological aspects, but it can also relate to the experiences and knowledge acquired throughout childhood experiences, as seen in The Apple's quote above of losing her father. She further takes the reader through her individual moments as defining her identity.

I am a Christian and I believe that I have a very close relationship with God. And I thank God for giving my mother that I have because she groomed me at a very young age to start going to church and even though I made excuse of not feeling well or being sick she would tell me that “it’s the devil his trying to keep you away from church so because of that I’m going to take you to the church pastor and he will pray for your sickness”. So since that day on I knew I stood no chance of making excuses {13:3}.

The two extracts above describe The Apple’s current identity and her childhood. She describes her family structure and her likes and dislikes. In describing her current identity, she highlights that she is a Christian and has a close relationship with God. She introduces her mother, The Tree, in narrating her Christian identity. It is reflected in her narration that her mother is the force that has groomed her identity. A tree typically has many secondary branches supported clear of the ground by the trunk. In The Apple’s story, her mother can be seen as The Tree with a very strong trunk. The Apple and her siblings can be seen as the secondary branches of The Tree, being the children. Most trees are surrounded by a layer of bark which serves as a protective barrier.

I value myself as a girl, I believe I am one of those girls who live on earth to keep their morals and dignity firm. Because I believe I were to let go of my dignity I would break down. My mother always made an example of a beautiful fresh and fruitful apple on a tree that all guys around want to take a bite of it and as that apple if I let them as I loose a part of me, that I will feel like there is some thing missing. So that how I learnt to keep my morals, values and dignity {13:4}.

The above narrative highlights The Apple's mother to be her bark and protective barriers where we see how The Apple describes how her mother wants them to go to church so that they can be protected from evil. She further describes how her mother, The Tree, sees her as a beautiful apple. The choice of the narration from The Apple highlights that she values the teachings and metaphors from her mother, The Tree. We see how her identity is crafted in her home theatre and in her role as a daughter and sibling. Being the last of the siblings, The Apple describes below that she has a good support structure in her home theatre.

My siblings are very supportive although my older brother is very egocentric person that would change your mind and make you believe in what he wants you to believe in but, his very supportive and loves me so much. My family believes that if you don't like something about someone or there are things that have been going that you don't like we as a family should sit down and talk about it and in that way we will always remain understand each other and enjoying each other's company. Thinking about the past brought sad memories. Memories that I try to not remember in my daily life. Like when things go bad in my life I start to wish that if my father was alive things would be great everything would go well with him around, and my mother wouldn't have to suffer alone in this {13:5}.

Trees have been viewed to provide shade and shelter, timber for construction, fuel for cooking and heating, and fruit for food. It is implied in her narrative that The Tree has provided shade and shelter for The Apple since her father passed away. The Tree has been a very big part and drive for The Apple in terms of her present and future path. Parts of the tree are branches, as I mentioned in my previous comment. One of the branches is viewed as The Apple's brother, who has also had a big influence in shaping The Apple's career

identity. The Apple ends off her narrative by reflecting on her past, and she indicates that she misses her father's presence in her life. She highlights that her mother wouldn't have to carry the weight of being The Tree if her father was still alive. Despite The Apple feeling sad about her mother carrying all the weight of providing for the family, it could seem that The Apple has had a positive and supportive experience of shaping her career identity.

5.2.9 The Netball Captain/Learner N

The Netball Captain was in focus group 2 and she came across as a shy, reserved girl. The Netball Captain did not participate a lot in the discussion; she only commented on her future aspirations. She indicated that she wanted to be in Human Resources because her father worked in the field. The main thing that she wanted to pursue was playing netball, but unfortunately the school did not offer sports. Below is her story in her own words. She chose to structure her narrative according to themes in her childhood, family, loss of her father and how her past shaped her future aspirations as the central themes.

I am the first born to my parent am the person who grew up wanted to be a netball player and I decided to do what it is good to me, when I was in grade 4 I started to play netball, aerobic and dancing at school and I was so glad that I'm doing netball because that was my wish. I started going out when I was in grade 6 is when they were taking out to play with other school. I was also playing netball then I became a captain from grade 8 till 11 at my previous school and I failed grade 11 because my mom decided to take me to the school where I am now at but when I get to this they was no sport I found myself irritated but there was nothing I can do with that I have to deal with the thing {14:2}.

The Netball Captain describes above her journey in playing netball and how she came to become a captain. Her narrative highlights her passion for sports and her disappointment in being unable to pursue her passion further. In her narrative she indicates that she failed Grade 11 because she was not happy that there were no sports. She implies in the quote, *'I get to this there was no sport I found myself irritated but there was nothing I can do with that I have to deal with the thing'*, that the reason she states for failing was that she was irritated with a lack of sports at the school. The Netball Captain highlights that her family values Church beliefs highly, unlike herself, as can be seen in her narration below.

In my family we are the people who don't even like peoples thing all we do is to believe on our own beliefs, culture and values my family attend church at ZCC [Zion Christian Church] and everyone knows that zcc has a lot of laws I decided not to get involve on the zcc but I go to church sometimes but being zcc member full time it's not my wish, being a zcc member you have to do things at the right way and do not do what you want to do. When I was young my family used to call me molungu [a Zulu word meaning a white person] because I was light like white person and some used to say are you white or what and people were asking me such things was people in our community then they found out that I was coloured, but things were not too easy to deal the problem of calling me names but I managed to deal with the names they call me {14:3}.

She indicates that her church has certain rules and boundaries which discourage her from getting involved in the church. In the same breath the Netball Captain narrates that her family used to call her a white because she was light-skinned. Name-calling commonly attacks some observable trait with a word meant to hurt, and in her case the word was 'molungu'.

The name set the Netball Captain apart as someone “different,” who doesn’t necessarily fit the family image. The Netball Captain narrates that it was not easy for her to deal with the name-calling, maybe due to the fact that the name-calling stemmed from her home theatre. The name-calling could be seen to have a negative and lasting impact on Netball Captain’s identity, as she chose to include it in her narrative. Another life-shaping moment for Netball Captain was when she lost her father. Losing a loved one could produce an unforgettable emotional impact and leave a scar that, to some extent, marks one’s identity. In the following quote we see the emotional impact in Netball Captain’s life.

In life my mother and father are my role models the day that make me feel like the world is over for me is the day my father past away. I was in grade 9 and I know that my father was the one who understand me very well and who knows what is right and wrong for me. It 2009-19-April and it was Sunday if I’m not wrong; I think it was 19:45 I was washing dishes, my aunt called my other aunt to come at my fathers place and she told her that she must come alone then my aunt said okay I will be there, then she told us that I will be back am going somewhere then we said okay. Then my aunt came back she told us that our father passed away I was so cold I couldn’t even eat or talk to anyone but they keep saying don’t worry everything will be fine {14:4}.

The extract above describes the Netball Captain’s experiences of her father’s passing. She has chosen to organise explicit detail about the day she heard the news. The sequencing of events in her narration highlights that the memory she holds has had a big impact on her, which can be seen in the quote: ‘*I couldn’t even eat or talk to anyone but they keep saying don’t worry everything will be fine*’. Specifically, her experience could be perceived to have a negative and positive impact on her current identity with regard to relationships, self-

esteem, isolation and the ability to express feelings. In the focus group discussion the Netball Captain highlighted that she wanted to go into HR because it was her father's occupation. It can be assumed that the impact of her father's passing can be seen in her shaping of her career, however, without the necessary building blocks (information gathering and planning) to pursue the career. In closing of narrative, the Netball Captain states that she is a 'big girl' who is not called names and is now in the processing of planning for her future.

But now am a big girl who can take care of herself and who knows what is right or wrong and who knows how to manage life but know I am planning my future like I said no one is better we are all the same. In life there is no hurry and there is no the end. Am now planning what I will be and what is going to help me with and how will you gain on being that in life and see what the future has for me. I wish God could bless me on my future to be true and may bless me on what god has provided us {14:5}.

5.2.10 Baby Sister/Learner B

Baby Sister was in focus group 1 and she came across as a shy, reserved girl. She did not participate a lot in the discussion; she commented on her future aspirations. She indicated that she wanted to be a political analyst but unfortunately her mother was against her choice of career. Baby Sister is the last child of three children. She highlights that she is under pressure to live up to standards her older sisters have set of performing well academically and in her career. She chose to structure her narrative according to themes in her childhood, family and her future aspirations as the central themes.

As a child you face many challenges that are difficult to overcome. During my childhood, I have always wanted what was best for myself. But then as the time went

by all my dreams were shattered and my life was wasted. As a teenager now, I am facing challenges that are difficult to solve which indeed accentuates my life.

In ménage I am the third child, I have two sisters who are both independent, successful and succeeded in life. My senior sister is a journalist and the second one is an Electrical Engineer. As a stripling my parent equivalence me with my sisters, that I should acquire high marks and be like my sisters. That is preasely what I am doing at the instant. In 2010 I was in grade 9 where we had to select subjects that we gona do in Grade 10. My parent forced me to pick out incorrect subjects that I didn't want to do, but I didn't have the quality to fight or battle against her determination. So I selected those subjects, the whole of grade 10 twelve month, I was acquiring low marks. Then in 2012 I united with the school to complete my grade 11 and throughout the twelve month, I was doing so well {15:2}.

In describing her childhood, she highlights that she has always wanted the best for herself, but she states that her dreams 'were shattered'. At this point the reader is not told who or what shattered Baby Sister's dreams or what the dreams are. She further narrates her past experience in making subject choices and indicates that her parent forced her to take what she perceives to be incorrect subjects, which led her to fail Grade 10. Again we are not sure which parent she is referring to; however, during the focus group discussions she mentioned that her mother was the one who influenced her subject choices. We get a sense from Baby Sister that her position of being the last-born puts her in a position where she cannot question the decisions made for her by her family. In the focus group discussion she was reserved, and when she attempted to speak up, one of the learners would speak over her and she would only nod and shy away from speaking again. In the extract below, Baby Sister continues her thoughts on her career identity.

I do not really know what I want to do with my life. My life is complicated at the moment. I have three options in mind concerning the career choice. When I was growing up I always wished to become a doctor one day, but as I said my dream was crashed. I am a type of girl who loves politics, I am fascinated in political parties so I decided to study political analyst but then my mother was against my wish but I am now interested in film and television and also economist but it's not something I really want to do but I do not have the quality to change my decision. Now I realise that my future is in my hands. Success is the key to succeed, I am striving to achieve a better life and better future. I do not want to make mistakes that I made in my past. I want to be responsible in everything that is coming my way {15:3}.

Baby Sister describes that her life is complicated as she has three options with regard to her career choice. In the extract she points out that her initial dream was becoming a doctor. She does not indicate how her dreams were crashed; we can only assume that it was because of the incorrect subject choices. Baby Sister narrates that another option she had was studying politics, which her mother discouraged. We pick up again from the quote '*but it's not something I really want to do but I do not have the quality to change my decision*' that Baby Sister is unable to change her mind about the current shaping of her career identity. She, however, seems positive that in the future she will start being responsible and take ownership of her life and decisions.

5.2.11 Caged Bird/Learner W

I met Caged Bird on the last day in the third focus group. She came across as a confident, outspoken young woman. She participated enthusiastically in the discussion and spoke freely

of her experiences. Caged Bird grew up in Soshanguve and always dreamt of being a doctor. She grew up in a family that has experienced financial difficulties and at times felt that her needs were not met due to the hardships. She states that one of the financial difficulties put her in a situation where her school fees were overdue and she was getting pressure from the school, which made her have a negative attitude towards her father. Caged Girl feels trapped at times and feels that she needs to be free from all the negativity that surrounds her, the main negativity coming from the school. Below is her story in her words, which she chose to structure according to her childhood, family, individual moments as perceived as defining identity, people around her and reflections on past decisions. Her story reflects the restrictions imposed by a cage on the bird within its bars.

I grew up in Soshanguve and when I was in pre-school I always wanted to be a doctor all my life. I came from a family that has its own advantages and disadvantages, why I am saying this is because some of needs cannot be meet do to the financial going downhill. I grow up in a family that I thought was not the right family for me. I thought that I was born by mistake because my mother was young when she had me. Growing up was fine and again hard, because of how the situation was for my mother when she grew up. At this current moment I want nothing to do with my father's family because of how they ill-treated my mother. Grow up was a challenge for me and my mother {16:2}.

Evident in Caged Bird's narrative above are two themes, her childhood and individual moments perceived as defining identity. Caged Bird depicts her childhood as having been difficult and unpleasant for her, implied in a quote 'grow up in a family that I thought was not the right family for me. I thought that I was born by mistake because my mother was

young when she had me. Growing up was fine and again hard...' Caged Bird gives a description of the two contrasting environments in her childhood, being '*Growing up was fine and again hard*'. She states that her negative attitude towards her father's family stemmed from the manner in which they treated her mother. Below Caged Bird speaks of her experience in failing Grade 10.

I failed grade 10 twice and that take away my future in a way because that is the reason why most of my time I do not have the strength to study. I live in my own world full of regrets and sorrow. I believe in respecting myself in a way of having dignity. I that someone who do not follow much of her culture, that girl who lives the modern Christian life. I do some of cultural things and those things must not affect my Christianity {16:3}.

Caged Bird describes her individual moments of failing Grade 10 twice; she highlights that the experience has made her not have the strength to study. We again visualise the bird in a cage when she describes that she lives in her own world full of regrets and sorrow. Her regrets and failure could be her cage, disabling her to study. In O'Hare's (1990) findings, study habits and positive study and work orientation have been found to be associated with career maturity. Low career maturity was assumed to be typically associated with high school dropouts and failing of grades (Legum & Hoare, 2004). In Caged Bird's case we can safely assume that failing Grade 10 twice and a lack of strength to study has associated her with having low career maturity.

People around some I trust and some I do not trust because I might be wrong thinking that they want the best for of which they know that they do not want to see me succeed

in life. Even my family I only trust my parents because seeing me fail will also bring tears to them than those extended family that would compare me to their children, not looking at the goods that I make but the negative parts. I do not have friends so I regard my church mates as friends not that I trust them but because they are those I spend most of time with. They encourage me to study harder than I did last year, it seems as if they have same faith in me making it through my matric. I do not have any role model, I am my own role model because when I look back to how our generation live their lives, I am proud to say that I am good example to those around me, a good child to my parents {16:4}.

Caged Bird voices her mistrust for people around her. She further indicates that the reason for the mistrust is due to her thinking that people do not want the best for her. Erikson's (1963) theory of psychosocial development is built on the premise that higher levels of trust in relationships early in life lay the psychological foundation for happier and better functioning relationships in adulthood. Caged Bird's mistrust could be a result of the way she grew up and how her father's family 'ill-treated' her mother. The two extracts below describe Caged Bird's experience with her teachers and reflections on past decisions.

My teachers some of them are my worst nightmare whenever I think of them I get discouraged. There is favouritism in my school they only look upon those who can give them a better name for the school, rather than helping those who are struggling, all they will tell you is that you will never pass your grade 12, you won't have a better future and yet if you fail it won't affect them at all, they will have all they want and their salaries would not change at all even if we fail. My community cares for no one than their own lives. If they help you they have to benefit from that, nothing is for

'mahala'. Which makes it no better environment, because its not safe and it not healthy for a human being to live at that kind of an environment.

My past is better than where I am going now, because everywhere I go I fell discouraged, no one is the to show support, all they would say is that his or her time to engage me in studying or help me understand the importance of studying. I will cross the bridge when I get there. One thing for sure I regret ever coming to this school, all I want now is to focus and get out of this school. I fill trapped in a cage that I cannot open. I am not free not at all. Each and every morning I think oh is that time to to be shouted at in front of the class, to be blamed for not paying fees as if you the one who's paying them, they are not engaged in our lives and want we go through because they do not have time to put their self in our shoes, they do not talk to us to find out what is going on in our lifes of schooling. Discouragement is all this school is all about {16:5-6}.

Caged Bird narrates above that she feels trapped and that she is not free at all, which brings attention to the idea of the caged bird singing for freedom. She narrates about her teachers and highlights that they are her *'worst nightmare'*. Her experience with her teachers has had an influence on her current identity and shaping her career identity. Her narration depicts again the teachers' discouragement and lack of support as a cage for her in which she is stuck. She highlights that she wants to focus on getting out of school, which represents a cage for her. The Caged Bird sings for freedom, which for her could be seen as a need to be concerned about *'they are not engaged in our lives and want we go through because they do not have time to put their self in our shoes, they do not talk to us to find out what is going on in our life's of schooling'*; the quote highlights her need of wanting to be cared for and freed from prejudice and judgement.

5.3 SUMMARY

The findings were discussed within the theoretical framework of Super (1957, 1961, 1969, 1980, 1988, 1990), as well as the literature review where applicable. I introduced the learners and provided an overview of their backgrounds and stories, as well as the analysis of the narratives using Super's (1980) theory. Each learner was given a stage name based on the characters they play in their stories. I chose to use a particular stage name as the pseudonyms for the learners, as I believed the character role best reflected the learners' representation of their current career identities. I concluded the section with an integration of the emerging themes from each of the narratives.

The life narrative provided a life-span insight into a person's sense of self-identity, and a view of how individuals see themselves and how they fit in the adult world (Okocha, 2001). Within the narratives, the main theme that emerged was the learners' childhood backgrounds which fit with the life-span segment of the Life-Career Rainbow. The main themes that emerged which fit in the Self-Concept of the Life-Career Rainbow were the sense of self and the manner in which the self was defined in terms of the future aspirations, inspiration of dreams, ideal self and culture/beliefs/values. Themes which were found to speak to the segment of Life Space were people around me, my society, which fit with learners' roles being enhanced in their interpersonal skills. Lastly, aspects that were found under the theme of career maturity as it relates to the past, present and future were: information and planning as well as expected employment opportunities.

Chapter 6 will discuss the applicability of Super's Life-Career Rainbow to the career development of Grade 12 learners as presented in this study. Conclusions, limitations, and recommendations based on the findings will also be outlined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not I or anyone else can travel that road for you.

You must travel it by yourself.

It is not far. It is within reach.

Perhaps you have been on it since you were born, and did not know.

Perhaps it is everywhere - on water and land.

Whitman, 1855, *Leaves of Grass*

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The narratives of Grade 12 learners were explored from the perspective of Super's (1980) Life-Career Rainbow and narrative framework of career development. The purpose of the current research was to explore the narrative career aspirations of Grade 12 learners as well as the constructs of the Life-Career Rainbow. Knowledge of how these constructs relate to one another will add to the career literature as it relates to Grade 12 learners' experiences of career guidance/development and will serve as a guide for the career guidance/counselling process. This final chapter discusses the applicability of Super's (1980) Life-Career Rainbow for the career development of Grade 12 learners in a private school in Pretoria West. Conclusions reached will be based on the research findings described in Chapters 4 and 5, and will be presented according to the constructs of the Life-Career Rainbow, namely the life-span, life space, self-concept and career maturity. Recommendations for future research will thereafter be provided. Certain limitations of the present study will also be acknowledged.

The following sub-questions were addressed:

1. What were the learners' experiences in making subject choices in Grade 9?
2. What influenced their subject choices?
3. What are the learners' experiences in crystallising their career choices?
4. What influence their career choices at present?
5. What are the learners' future intentions?
6. What do learners see as ways to improve career guidance in schools?

6.2 CONCLUSIONS OF OVERALL FINDINGS

In terms of future employment options, learners indicated interests that fitted within most career types while other learners were undecided about their future aspirations. The career types included sports, entertainment, financial, the military and medicine/nursing. The findings demonstrate consistency with previous national research on adolescents' occupational aspirations (Shumba & Naong, 2012; Watson, et al., 2010; Watson & Stead, 1993). In relation to the findings of the past experiences of learners relating to subject choices, the study highlighted that there is dissatisfaction with certain subjects not being included in the schools' subject choices for Grades 10 to 12. The study further highlighted that learners believed that the subjects they were indirectly forced to take would narrow their career options after matric. At this phase, learners were found to be uncertain about their future plans.

The learners' present experiences in career crystallising indicated that they are in the process of exploring and crystallising their career choices. The applicability of the Life-Career Rainbow in the present study has provided an opportunity to represent the complex interrelationships of influences that impact on the career development of the Grade 12 learners in this study. According to Super (1957), the range of influences that learners

experience comes from the self, family, friends, schooling, community and work. As learners interact with the various interrelated influences, they continually collect information that is influential in their career development.

The following sub-sections present the conclusions of this study derived from exploring and describing the career guidance experiences of Grade 12 learners from the Life-Career Rainbow theory perspective. Conclusions related to the life-span, life space, self-concept and career maturity will be discussed in turn. It must be noted, before discussing these conclusions from the research findings, that the findings of this study are exploratory and descriptive in nature. They are not conclusive, therefore, and they should be regarded as such throughout the following sub-sections.

6.2.1 Life-Span

The findings suggest that the learners fit well within Super's (1980) exploration stage of exploring and crystallising their career choices. However, as in research findings of Feldman's (2002) study of antecedents and consequences of early career indecision among young adults, the findings of the present study found that learners do not adopt strategies for focused information gathering and dissemination. Influences which were found to be prominent in the present study were personality, interests and abilities, parents, friends, teachers, schooling experiences, financial support, availability of jobs, work experience, and opportunities to work overseas. The life narrative provides a life-span insight into a person's sense of self-identity, and a view of how individuals see themselves and how they fit in the adult world (Okocha, 2001). Within the narratives, the main theme that emerged was the learners' childhood backgrounds which fit with the life-span segment of the Life-Career Rainbow.

My childhood, background, family I grew up in

The childhood theme was derived from the portions of the narratives that explicitly describe the role of the family and home theatre in shaping beliefs about the world and the learners' early identity. The childhood theme described both positive and negative drivers for the learners in defining their current career identities. Under the family theme for Dancer Girl, she describes how a negative family environment drove her to seek a refuge within the community. In her case, she found refuge in dancing as a sport. Her association with dancing as a coping mechanism and as a means of demonstrating her ability is described as the reason for her passion for the sport: '*My past influenced me into being a better person it shaped my love for dance*' {6:5}.

The juxtaposition of love and hate within the family environment shaped Street Rapper's future dreams of being a rapper, which is further seen in how he continued his thoughts in the quote '*talent being the topic of debate*'. The quote implies that Street Rapper did not get the support from his loved ones in terms of his career choice. It could be that the only place where Street Rapper could be himself was on the street, rapping. Street Rapper mentioned in the focus group discussion that the family support was very limited. The Writer describes her family as being middle-class. She indicates that she lost her mother while she was still young. She states that losing her mother has made life unpleasant for her, as her father had to raise her alone. Although she had negative experiences, she narrates a positive outcome from her difficult experience, which she describes as her central motivation or driving force in writing.

In describing his childhood, the Family Man highlights that he had a happy childhood. He indicates that he grew up without a father which, as a child, did not matter as much, as he was surrounded by male father figures. He highlights that he grew up having big dreams. He indicated that he wants to be role model and a family man, as he grew up without a father.

Soldier Girl highlights that she grew up in wealthy and respectable family. She starts and ends off her narrative with the statement that '*she grew up in respectable family*'. It could seem that being respected is very important to her. She also indicates that she lost her father when she 14 years old. It could also be that her father was the source of wealth and that gave the family the status of being respectable. The loss of her father could be seen as the driver to her career identity of wanting to now be the source of wealth and respect for her family.

Caged Bird depicts her childhood as having been difficult and unpleasant for her, implied in the quote '*grow up in a family that I thought was not the right family for me. I thought that I was born by mistake because my mother was young when she had me. Growing up was fine and again hard...*' The Caged Bird gives a description of the two contrasting environments in her childhood, being '*Growing up was fine and again hard*'. She states that her negative attitude towards her father's family stemmed from the manner in which they treated her mother.

6.2.1.1 Self-Concept

Super, in his Psychology of Careers (1957), states that "The choice of an occupation is one of the points in life at which a young person is called upon to state rather explicitly his concept of himself, to say definitely 'I am this or that kind of person'" (Super, 1957, p. 191). This implies that a learner in this study is not only viewed in the process of finding out "what

goes” in the adult world and then adopting those behaviour; rather the learner should be seen as what he/she brings, what she or he sees, tries, how well she or he likes it, how well she or he succeeds depends upon her- or himself as well upon her or his culture (Super, 1961).

Some of the components of the self-concept are mutually compatible, while others may prove to be incompatible with each other (Super, 1957). Similarly, Rogers’ (1959) theory speaks of congruence and incongruence, which Meyer et al. (2003) defines as follows: congruent functioning is when an individual’s self-concept corresponds with her/his potential, while incongruent functioning is when the individual’s self-concept does not correspond with her/his potential. The interpretation of the abovementioned concepts for the learners in this study is that they chose subjects in Grade 9 that were not compatible with their future careers. In addition, the majority of the learners made career choices that were not congruent with how they see themselves and their abilities, while a few of them made subject choices and later career choices that were congruent with how they see themselves and their abilities.

Cabral and Salomone (1990) found that well-developed self-concepts enabled individuals to process information that had been unforeseen. This same information would be confusing to learners with negative schemata or self-concepts about their own career potential (Cabral & Salomone, 1990). The findings of this study are consistent with Cabral and Salomone’s (1990) findings, where it is indicated that the learners who had negative self-concepts were confused and had no clear direction about their career potential, while the learners who had a positive self-concept were able to decide on a career path and process information about their career potential. Within the narratives and focus groups, the main themes that emerged

were the sense of self and the manner in which the self was defined in terms of the future aspirations, inspiration of dreams, ideal self and culture/beliefs/values.

6.2.1.2 Future Aspirations

Under future aspirations, learners indicated an interest in becoming an economist, business man, financial analyst/advisor and a psychologist respectively, while Learners J and H were uncertain about their future aspirations. I found that the common future aspiration from learners in Groups 1 and 2 was being an economist/financial analyst, joining the navy and being in the military respectively{15:15}. The learners in Group 3 also indicated an interest in being a chartered accountant and lawyer, while some learners were undecided about their future aspirations. The findings illustrate that learners indicated employment options that fitted within most career types. This suggests that many of the learners are differentiated and it also indicates that they have a variety of interests.

Inspiration of dreams

The inspiration of dreams theme was derived from the portions of the focus groups' discussions that describe the reasons for learners choosing specific career paths. The inspiration of dreams theme described both positive and negative drivers for the learners in defining their current career identities. Under the theme, talent and passion were identified as a driver for choosing a specific dream. Birth order of learners was a second driver identified within group. Learners also highlighted the importance of the approval from the familial network in their choices of careers.

Who am I, my ideal self?

The ideal-self theme was derived from the portions of the narratives that explicitly describe the role of the learners' identity in shaping beliefs about the world and the learners' early identities. Super (1988), in his work on implementing a self-concept, states that "choice of an occupation is one of the points in life at which a young person is called upon to state rather explicitly his concept of himself, to say definitely 'I am this or that kind of person'" (p. 352). The theme described both positive and negative drivers for the learners in defining their current career identities.

In describing her self-concept, The Apple highlights that she is a Christian and has a close relationship with God. She introduces her mother, The Tree, in narrating her Christian identity. It is reflected in her narration that her mother is the force that has groomed her identity and her ideal self. Dancer Girl identified herself as a confident female who has had a painful experience of abuse in her childhood. She described herself as being an outgoing person who enjoys sports, especially dancing. Dancer Girl narrates that her friends see her as a good adviser and listener, which in turn brings her satisfaction and an enjoyment of being around her friends and close family. Super (1988) states that some of the things a person does well in favourable environments bring him/her satisfaction of mastery as well approval of parents and friends.

My culture, beliefs, values

Culture is a collective feature, including values and norms, which are common and shared by a group of people and are not tangible, yet, it is apparent in people's behaviour (Gunkel, Schlagel, Langella, & Reshetnyak, 2013). The theme was derived from the portions of the narratives that explicitly describe how culture, beliefs and values have shaped the learners' beliefs about the world and career identity. The Apple also identified herself with being

Xhosa and female. Dancer Girly proudly identified herself with her culture of being Pedi as well as being a Christian. Both learners highlighted that they had a strong belief in Jesus. Soccer Star's narrative touches on an element that highlights that he has his life rooted in being a Christian, going to church, praying and a belief that God is watching over 'us'. Looking after her mother is very important to Soldier Girl, which is seen as her main driving force, as a core value on which she builds a future career self: *'In my culture, I believe that as you school then you have to look after your parents as they looked after you when you were still a new-born baby'*. It can be seen in her belief of looking after her mother that she chooses a career that she identifies as enabling her to satisfy needs that were unfulfilled in her childhood, and actualises dreams passed on to her by her father (Pines & Yanai, 2001). In this regard, Munro (1984) hypothesised that the traditional black African culture values of the belief that individuals should live to help others have influenced black children's occupational aspirations. The Netball Captain highlights that her family values Church beliefs highly, unlike herself: *'In my family we are the people who don't even like peoples thing all we do is to believe on our own beliefs, culture and values my family attend church at zcc and everyone knows that zcc has a lot of laws I decided not to get involve on the zcc'*. She indicates that her church has certain rules and boundaries which discourage her from getting involved in the church.

6.2.1.3 Subject selection

Rogers' (1960) theory speaks of congruence and incongruence, which Meyer et al. (2003) define as follows: congruent functioning is when an individual's self-concept corresponds with her/his potential, while incongruent functioning is when the individual's self-concept does not correspond with her/his potential. My interpretation of this for the learners in this study is that they chose subjects in Grade 9 that were compatible with their future careers.

In addition, they will be making career choices that are congruent with how they see themselves and their abilities. Under the theme of subject selection, learners highlighted that there is dissatisfaction with certain subjects not being included in the schools' subject choices for Grades 10 to 12. The learners believed that the subjects they were indirectly forced to take would narrow their career options after matric. There were learners who chose subjects due to pressure from their parents, or a lack of variety of subjects at school, or not caring which subjects they took, or being pressured by friends to take 'easy' subjects. One learner simply said he took his subjects because they corresponded with what he wanted to be, an economist.

6.2.2 Life Space

An individual's life-span consists of roles that one needs to play in domains such as family, school, community and the workplace. A person performs different roles within the life-span, i.e. child, student, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent and pensioner (Super, 1990). Super's (1990) Life-Career Rainbow suggests that when a person makes a transition from growth and exploration stages to establishment and maintenance stages, their roles of child and student are transformed into that of worker and home worker, with the roles of leisurite and citizen crossing over all stages. The present findings suggest that the learners in this study tended to think more about roles (leisurite, citizen and student) which allowed them to enhance their interpersonal skills, as stated by Super (1996). Themes which were found to speak to this segment were people around me, my society, which fit with learners' roles being enhanced in their interpersonal skills.

People around me, my family, friends, teachers, my youth group, role models

Most career research has focused on the significant role of family, more specifically parents and peers, in an adolescent's development of a career identity (Ackermann & Botha, 1998; Lankard, 1995). Gottfredson (1981) proposes that individuals attend to readily available sources of information first, such as parents and friends, and often fail to consult more useful sources. The findings of this study indicate that both parents and peers are prominent influences in the career development of the present adolescents.

Street Rapper is surrounded by negative social events in the context of having friends in trouble with the law, addictions, teen pregnancy, indifference to schooling, dropping out of high school, and deaths of friends. It could also be that he has a negative view of his teacher, as seen in his quote: *'Teachers always on my trail making it hard for me to breathe'*. Dancer Girl narrates that her friends see her as a good adviser and listener, which in turn brings her satisfaction and an enjoyment of being around her friends and close family, as seen in the quote: *'My friends see me as a good adviser and good listener I love being around my friend and close family, so I can say I am a family person because life is short you can never know what could happen tomorrow' {6:9}*. The Family Man indicates that he grew up without a father, which as a child did not matter as much as he was surrounded by male father figures. Being the last of the siblings, The Apple describes that she has a good support structure in her home theatre.

Caged Bird narrates that she feels trapped and that she is not free at all, which brings attention to the idea of the caged bird singing for freedom. Caged Bird voices her mistrust for people around her. She narrates about her teachers and highlights that they are her *'worst nightmare'*. Her experience with her teachers has had an influence on her current identity and shaping of her career identity. Her narration depicts again the teachers' discouragement

and lack of support as a cage for her in which she is stuck. She also highlights that she has no friends.

Soccer Star ends his narrative by drawing again on his love for soccer and highlights that his role model is Cristiano Ronaldo. Research has shown a relationship between role model influence and a variety of career-related outcomes, including career maturity (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002).

My society; community, environment

Berry (2013) highlights that learners cannot develop their careers without experiencing and reacting to societal influences. He further echoes that the young person's career is not something that evolves at the whim of society's pressures alone. The individual receives information from his/her community and processes this to develop personal attitudes. What we get from Street Rapper is that he grew up in a dangerous society which he describes explicitly. We can also see the processing of information from his community and how he develops his personal attitude, as he ends the thought with *'I was troubled as I travailed but was soon wanted because I was shilled'*. Dancer Girl highlights that she had an enabling environment to play her role more effectively: *'My society I grew up in an environment whereby its safe, clean and I had access to dancing groups and sport club where I play tennis'*.

6.2.3 Career maturity

The construct of career maturity answers the questions that are of direct concern to high school learners, i.e. "How do I deal with expectations about preparing for and participating in work?" Acknowledging that learners in this study have gone through a series of

preliminary choices (e.g. choice of school subjects in Grade 9) resulting in the elimination of some options, retention of others, and a narrowing down of alternatives leading to an initial vocational choice, Super (1957) questioned the readiness of young people to make the career choices required of them and proposed the concept of vocational maturity, which later became known as career maturity.

The findings of the study revealed that learners showed low and high career maturity in their past and present experiences of making subject and career choices. It was found that most learners had failed previous grades, which signalled slow progression in high school. In addition, an inability to narrow down options and make career choices signalled low career maturity. On the other side, some learners had high career maturity, clear ideas of their career options from Grade 9 up until now in Grade 12. A study by Gordon and Meyer (2002), assessing the nature of career indecision (which is a dimension in the measurement of career maturity) amongst Afrikaans- and English-speaking prospective university students, revealed that career indecision and the lack of career information and planning is prevalent among these students, thus suggesting a lower level of career maturity. As a result, Gordon and Meyer (2002) suggest that prospective university learners may benefit from an intervention aimed at improving career maturity-related skills through career counselling. Dybwad (2008) states that career uncertainty is an important aspect of career maturity. Career uncertainty has been seen to function as a proxy for two “illnesses”, namely dropouts and poor progression through high school (Dybwad, 2008).

Vondracek and Reitzle (1998) noted that multiple personal and contextual factors may increase the likelihood that some learners will gain greater career maturity, and some gain less career maturity over time. It was found that contextual factors, such as conversations

about careers with parents, relationships with parents, teachers, and friends, parents' educational level, parents' income, and private education expenses, are found to play an important role of either increasing or decreasing adolescents' career maturity (Yon, et al., 2012). The present study found that learners who had supportive friends and family, who had good relationships with their teachers, had higher career maturity than those who had failed grades in the past, who had parents who were not supportive and even though they had supportive friends, they did not have career conversations with them. In the narrative essays, the following aspects were found under the theme of career maturity as it relates to the past, present and future.

Thinking about my past, present and future

Baby Sister describes that her life is complicated as she has three options with regard to her career choice. She, however, seemed positive that in the future she would start being responsible and taking ownership of her life and decisions. In closing of the narrative, the Netball Captain stated that she is a 'big girl' who is not called names and is now in the processing of planning for her future. Dancer Girl's values once again shone through in her reflection where she described herself as better person shaped by her past and her empathic link to children who have been abused '*My past influenced me into being a better person it shaped my love for dance and presently am working hard to get distinctions and my future, I c myself opening a centre for kids who have been abused before and I c myself playing tennis or dancing internationally*'. The Apple ends her narrative by reflecting on her past; she indicates that she misses her father's presence in her life. She highlights that her mother would not have had to carry the weight of being 'The Tree' if her father was still alive. Despite The Apple feeling sad about her mother carrying all the weight of providing for the

family, it could seem that The Apple has had a positive and supportive experience of shaping her career identity.

Soldier Girl confessed that she did not realise how important education was in her reflection of her past experience. Drawing from the focus group discussion, she expressed that her past experience in making subject selection was not thought through. She highlighted that she did not really care which subjects she took. It could be that her reflection encompassed the experience of making subject choices as she was indifferent then, and now it could be that she sees the importance of past phases. Street Rapper highlighted his passion for writing music and also rapping. He indicated that music is his resurrection, which could imply that rapping is more like a restoration of his life. We can also see from his last quote: *'I'll be legendary before I go to the simitary. My name will be in the history books, first on the hall of fame'*, that being famous and recognised for his talent is very important to him. Super (1957) maintained that a career mature person displays certain characteristics: the career mature person will gather information about the self in order to gain insight, obtain the necessary competencies in order to make an informed decision, integrate self-knowledge and knowledge of the world of work, and implement the abovementioned knowledge when planning a career. In thinking about their past, present and future, the learners' narratives display an immature view of their career identities to a more mature view, where they are now thinking wiser and positively about their futures. Super (1957) further asserts that a learner's inclination to look to the future while acknowledging the right to make decisions to build one's own future, looking around to explore career opportunities, and building up a sense of self-efficacy in problem solving, contribute to forming the critical dimensions of vocational development over the life-span.

Within the focus groups, subject selection, and information and planning, were found under the theme of career maturity.

6.2.4 Information and planning

In line with the future aspirations and inspirations, the present learners at the age of exploration are expected to take their goals and values into consideration when making a career decision (Sharf, 2002). In addition, Sharf (2002) states that while learners may not know how to weigh their interests, capacities, and values, they nevertheless have the necessary building blocks for career choice. Learners indicated a knowledge of future careers which suggests that career exploration had been taking place, *'Like for financial analyst you must be focused, you must know your accounting, maths and uuhm ya. Actually when you still in high school, you work hard, so that you can go to university, when you get there, choose the financial analyst uuhm I don't know what they call it. Then it goes on and on. Just hard work and knowing your stuff'*. A low level of career maturity was also identified in some learners, as they showed no knowledge of their chosen careers. While some learners expressed their confusion and lack of information about their present career exploration, others had clear ideas of their present career exploration. Gordon and Meyer (2002) state that career indecision and a lack of career information and planning suggest a low level of career maturity.

6.2.5 Employment opportunities in South Africa

Learners indicated inflated and deflated expectations of employment opportunities in South Africa. The implications could be seen as ambiguous in that inflated and deflated expectations may have both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, young people who overestimate their probability may be more inclined to continue searching or

take certain risks for which the realised payoff could ultimately be higher than for those who have more realistic expectations (Roberts, 2011). On the other hand, unskilled and unaware young people could also make unfortunate choices, such as investing in education in over-available or over-supplied markets. It may also include them not wanting to change career aspirations because of perceived benefits (Roberts, 2011).

Holistically, the findings indicate a consistent pattern of similar themes emerging as the learners explored influences within the self, family, friends, schooling, community and work, in their past, present and future experiences. Specific influences within each dimension were identified as being more prominent influences in the narrative experiences of Grade 12 learners at a private school in Pretoria West.

6.3 LIMITATIONS

Certain limitations constrained the conducting of the present study and must be acknowledged in order to critically evaluate the study's conclusions and the research findings on which they are based. Firstly, due to the scope limited to me, I was not able to explore subjects such as gender, age and culture, which could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the career development process of the present sample of learners in their unique context. In addition, only one school was utilised in this study. The unique structure and conditions of this particular school could possibly have had an impact on the findings of this study as each school operates according to its own unique system.

Generally, there is a substantial gap in the volume of research conducted, both internationally and nationally, with Grade 12 adolescents' experiences of career guidance. The present study represents research in not only exploring learners within a specific context, but also utilising

the newly emerging narrative framework with the convergence of Super's Life-Career Rainbow. Therefore, the findings of this study could not be explored against the findings of previous studies.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.4.1 Recommendations for future research

At present, Grade 12 learners in the present study are not exposed adequately to information as far as the available employment opportunities in South Africa are concerned. They lack information on what the necessary requirements are, or what subjects they need to take in order to follow these careers. It is recommended that more research be undertaken to address the career development of Grade 12 learners. The particular school used in this study is a private school situated in Pretoria West. Therefore, cross-contextual studies can be conducted to examine the similarities and differences in the influences of learners who attend private schools but live in different settings and also public schools in the same areas.

In view of the lack of research on Grade 12 learners' experiences of career guidance, cross-contextual studies would enhance the understanding of how learners in different contexts, in particular, impact on career development, specifically considering South Africa's socio-political history. Furthermore, comparison studies can be conducted to examine career development in relation to different cultures and genders.

Research could be conducted to investigate means by which Life Orientation educators could be empowered with the necessary training to support learners adequately. Further research could also include a longitudinal study focusing on the career maturity of learners in Grade 9, during Grade 12 and post-matric. In addition, a comparative study of the career maturity

of learners who received formal career guidance as opposed to those who have not received it might be considered.

6.4.2 Recommendations for career development interventions in high schools

In Chapter 1, I highlighted that the aim of the study was to hear the voices of the learners, to explore and understand their experiences in choosing careers, from choosing subjects in Grade 9 to finally making career choices in Grade 12. I specifically asked the learners what they thought would improve career guidance in schools. It is therefore necessary to recommend what learners needed and thought would improve career guidance in schools.

Below I provide the recommendations from the learners:

- Learners need to be offered opportunities for exposure to activities that are career-related, such as job shadowing and internships.
- Schools need to have school guidance offices offering career counselling assistance with qualified career counsellors, which may help learners to make subject choices, explore new careers and career technology programmes.
- Guest speakers and mentors could be invited to schools to hold talks and information sessions where learners may become aware of employment opportunities and also be made aware of the training/education needed for various positions.
- Schools need to provide students with information for bursaries and education loans.

While DBE's range of career services for learners could be seen as comprehensive, it is recommended that a stronger policy stance toward implementing these services is enforced, as there are still learners who do not receive these services.

In developing and implementing career development interventions at schools, I recommend that school career counsellors/practitioners and teachers move towards understanding first the status of high school learners in their different transitions in order to develop goals for interventions. Interventions that combine psycho-educational and experiential activities could be useful in helping students to cope with the developmental tasks which confront them (Maree, 2014).

Learners indicated that guest speakers and mentors could be invited to the school. The school could extend this request and teach students about the relationship between work and education. Learners could be given opportunities interview workers of their choice and ask in which way academic subjects connect to work tasks.

The study also found that there was miscommunication and misconceptions about maths and mathematical literacy. The difference between the two subjects, as well as the opportunities afforded by obtaining good marks in mathematics, needs to be explained clearly. Parents and learners need to be informed about the admission requirements for different fields of study. Parents should also be 'educated' to have realistic expectations about what their children can or cannot study, as well as about how well they can or perhaps cannot perform (Maree, 2014).

The importance of understanding issues related to equity and access in career choice needs to be considered. Schools could raise funds or look for sponsors to hold career fairs which could also include non-traditional workers representing a wide range of occupations, such as female carpenters and female engineers, male nurses, etc.

The interventions recommended could occur in groups, workshops and Life Orientation classes. Both psycho-educational and experiential activities are viewed as helping learners to acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to develop attitudes and skills for educational and career decision-making (Super, 1990).

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Ethical Clearance of a research project involving human participants

UNISA 
university
of south africa

Department of Psychology

03-10-2012

ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF A RESEARCH PROJECT INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

Project: Grade 12 Learners Experiences of Career Guidance

Researcher: Ms. Sharonrose Sefora

Supervisor: Mr. A Fynn (Department of Psychology, Unisa)

The proposal was evaluated for adherence to appropriate standards in respect of ethics as required by the Psychology Department of Unisa. The application was approved by our Ethics Committee without any conditions.



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**Grade 12 Learners' narrative experiences of making career choices: Focus Group
discussion guide**

My name is Sharonrose Sefora, and I am currently conducting research as a student at UNISA to obtain a Master's Degree in Psychology. I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this research to gain an understanding of your career choice and guidance experiences as a Grade 12 learner preparing to make career decisions in the coming year. Please feel free to ask any questions should you wish to. Remember there are no right or wrong answers. Your experiences are important to this study. The interview should last approximately an hour.

- Introductions
 - Set rules as a group; (respect, confidentiality, give each other a chance to speak,)
 - Icebreaker: **“when I grow up I want to be a...”**
1. What inspired you to be a...
 2. What is required of you to be a...
 3. What have you done or are doing to be a...
 4. What information do you have on being a...
 5. Tell me about the people around you and how they influence you wanting to be...
 6. Tell me about your community; where, the people, your role model, influences?
 - a. Parents
 - b. Family members
 - c. Friends

- d. Teachers
 - e. Others: youth groups
 - f. Media
7. Describe your experiences of career guidance in school?
 8. What was the process of making subject choices in Grade 9?
 9. How did it make you feel when you finally had to make subject choices?
 10. Who/what influenced your subject choices?
 11. What is the connection between the subjects you're taking now and the work you want to do later?
 12. How did you experience applying at different institutions in Grade 11?
 13. How do you plan on paying for your tertiary education?
 14. What employment opportunities are out there for you?
 15. What part-time or volunteer work have you considered now or in the past?
 16. What employment options have you considered for your future?
 17. What more can be done to prepare you to make career decisions?

Grade 12 Learners' experiences of career guidance: Narrative essays

I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. The purpose of this narrative essay is to show your action and movement of your career development through time. In a sense, your life experiences influence your status of being in Grade 12 and having to make career choices.

This narrative will be a tool for you to tell the story of:

- My childhood, background, family I grew up in
- Who am I, gender, age, personality, interests, abilities
- Who am I, my ideal self
- My culture, beliefs, values
- People around me; my family, friends, teachers, my youth group, role models
- My society; community, environment
- Thinking about my past, present and future

This will all fit into your need to now make career decisions.

Remember there are no right or wrong answers. Your experiences are important to this study.

You are free to be as creative as possible.

Grade 12 Learners' narrative experiences of making career choices: Narrative Essay

Transcription

Legend has it, "there was a boy who was born in a small village, who took control at a smaller age, who never thought he would be on a stage". That is a true story because I see that kid every time I face the mirror. Ya!! That is me and the following is my life portrayed in ink. Born clean, pure with no sin, take my first breath on earth, my life begin, God had a mission, I was born because the generation needed a generator. I grow up surrounded by love and hate, talent being the topic of debate.

I was born in a messed up family, I still remember them telling me "it will all be good", when we change to another neighbourhood. As I tell this tale, I put my childhood on the scale. Grow up in a dangerous society, with bullet holes from a photo shoot, bodies on the side walk pavement painted in red brutal bloody behaviour of our brothers, I was troubled as I traveled but was soon wanted because I was skilled. I engage in street activities, I pull off a stunt just to get what I want, peer pressure, pick people, I just had to be one of them. They say I broke the law it's still in one piece. Trying to stay away from the wrong side of the bars unlike my friends, Stan is doing six years for murder and to him it does not matter. Tom is a dropout, Kim a single parent at the age of 18 and she's still dating. Amaly is so fat she can't fit in with the popular, she says her life is so dark she thinks she's shadowed by Dracula, but I still stand by them at all means that just means that I care. I only hope they feel the same. Teachers always on my trail making it hard for me to breathe. All my homies look up to me not only because I high over the weed but also cause they wanna be like me

and they know what I'll become, till then I'll be calm, always on that microphone waiting for that call.

I used to say, it's a good day to be bad. Go out with my crew, we skate around the city, stamping walls with graffiti. Working on new CD, till I met Jesus in this bible study I attended because I wanted to meet cailchis sister, Rashaznai. Now I always pray, let you be the predator.

I live life with flying colours like a rainbow, undefeated I never fall. Undisputed I stand tole. My music is suffisticated because im educated, I know I'm a star. I don't need a telescope to prove it. Living the America dream, don't wake me up. It's my way of life, you look for directions. I'm on the right track, it's just not my playlist.

With a pocket full of dreams, my actions holds the reality. With a hand full of aces, will I play my cards right or take the other directions. Trying to write my wrongs but I'm running out of ink. I learned my lesson now im doing my correction. This is my resurrection.

I hope you get the picture and if you do put it in a frame. In life you only have yourself to blame. I came, I saw and I'm about to take over. Mark my words that's why I put them on paper. I'll be legendary before I go to the simitary. My name will be in the history books, first on the hall of fame.

Grade 12 Learners' narrative experiences of making career choices: Focus Group 1

Second stage analysis transcription

Day 1: The first Focus Group

The learners were relaxed and seemed to be excited about the discussion ahead. It could also be that the excitement came from getting time away from class. I took this as an indication that facilitating the discussion would be easier. The first focus group got off to a good start. The themes that emerged from the first group discussion are future aspirations, inspiration of dreams, influences, Grade 9 subject choices, employment opportunities in SA and finally improvement of career guidance.

The discussion started with me introducing myself again and my assistant. I then asked the learners to set rules for the focus group, which they would feel most comfortable with and abide by. The following are the rules of the focus group as set collectively by the learners in Group 1:

- *No laughing at each other*
- *Respect one another*
- *No discussing what we say outside the group*
- *We must all participate*
- *Be honest*

Future Aspirations

Following setting the rules, I started with the Ice-breaker question ‘When I grow up I want to be a...’ I chose to use the specific question as it as it best reflected that career development begins early in life and continues until late in life (Super, 1980). I wanted the learners to position themselves in their childhood dreams as the dreams are assumed to stay the same but mature as life realities change. The first response was given by Learner A, who shouted out “*Role model*” {2:20}, followed by other learners as seen in the extract below.

Learner G: *I want to be an economist,*

Learner H: *not sure,*

Learner I: *an economist,*

Learner J: *no idea,*

Learner K: *When I grow up I want to be a businessman,*

Learner B: *When I grow up I either wanna be an economist or a financial analyst,*

Learner C: *I wanna be an Air Hostess,*

Learner D: *Financial advisor,*

Learner E: *Psychologist {2:23-31}.*

The above extract highlights that most of the learners indicated an interest in enterprising, social, investigative and realistic careers while Learners J and H were uncertain about their future aspirations. I probed Learners J and H on the possible reasons they were uncertain about their future aspirations. Learner J narrates that in the past they knew what they wanted to be when they grew up, but are now restricted by what they are offered in schools, so they can’t really venture into what they actually want to do. Learners H and B both nodded to the statement made by Learner J. Learner H narrated that for him, it is because he wants to do a lot of things and now he is confused, while Learner B narrated after Learner H that she was

restricted by her mother. The extracts below are Learners H and B's stories in their own words.

Learner H: *"when I was growing up I wanted to be a lot of things...yeh starters...you know I love I love sports. I wanted to be an athletic, like an athlete, I'm sorry. I wanted to play soccer. Now as I'm growing up I'm not sure anymore because I'm interested in being in the business field, you know, and uuhm, like I believe like I would, you know when you grow up you do something for a year, like a course, then you get bored of it, then you want to do something again so it's kinda confusing" {2:38}*

Learner B: *"Uuhm, I wanted to be a political analyst, but then I didn't do history. My mom was against this whole thing situation about politics because she thought it was too risky, politics are being murdered an all so I had to change my career thoughts, that's when I got economics. It's not something that I actually wanna do, it's just that I don't have a choice. What I wanted to do was political analyst but my mom was against it these whole decisions, and my dad was okay with my career choice" {2:39}*

The above narratives are consistent with Super's theory (1980) that suggests that children modify their initial fantasies of occupations as they become more aware of the world of work and that how they view themselves changes as they increasingly accommodate reality factors from the broader environment. In the life stage of growth, children aged 4 to 13 years are confronted with career developmental tasks of developing a sense of self.

Inspiration of dreams

I was interested to find out what inspired the dream to become a psychologist, an economist, etc. I asked a follow-up question to explore what inspired the learners' future aspirations. Below are three learners' narratives on their career inspirations. Learner C was unable to continue her story as she got shy and gave the recorder to another learner. Learner C is interested in being an air hostess, she stated that she likes travelling and seeing people around, but her family doesn't like her choice. Learner F has a love for dancing, while Learner D changed from wanting to go to the military to now wanting to be a financial analyst. Below is an extract that tells the learners' stories.

Learner C: *“The thing is neh...I like travelling. Ya. I like seeing people around...but my family neh they don't like uuhm they don't want to see, well they don't like the choice that I chose because uuuhm... (learner shakes her head unable to continue passes the recorder to someone else) {2:41}*

Learner F: *“Well at first, when I was growing up I used to go with my sister to dancing classes and stuff so I have this love for dancing, so by the age of 5 I started dancing with my sister And then I grew up, I always wanted to be a dancer, but then at first my family thought I was joking, so now when I say “Mom you have to pay my fees, I'm going to university and I'm gonna do dancing”. They all like are you crazy, most dancers you have to be like this like that. They all have this image you know. And then from that negativity I just thought lemme change to something else but then you always have that thing at the back of your mind that maybe I would have been something big something like this...but because of what they say and all the kind of things, just discouraged me into doing dancing, that's what happens” {2:43}*

Learner D: *“Well I'm actually at the beginning of the year, at the end of last year, I decided which career path I wanted to take and I wanted to go to the military, so fine*

I told my mom I wanted to go there ...when I told my older brother that I wanted to go there and he disagreed and everything. Since I'm the last born at home so that's how it happened that I chose financial advisor...cos he wanted me to go to university and my brother and my mother didn't mind, she's supporting me...”{2:47}

The above narratives give an indication on why learners chose their respective career choices. Learner F, even though she couldn't continue with her narrative, highlights that her inspiration to be an air hostess came from her love of travelling and seeing people. Learner F's inspiration came from dancing at a young age with her sister. Learner D, on the one hand, was interested in going to the military but unfortunately her brother discouraged her. Learner D indicates that she is the last born at home, and this could imply her reason to change her career direction. Learner D's narrative is consistent with Beauregard's (2007) assertion that the birth order of learners affects the career choice. This depends on the expectation placed on them by the family (Beauregard, 2007).

Influences

Parental Influences

Leading from Learner D's narrative about her brother being the bigger force in her life, I asked the other learners about the bigger forces in their lives and how the bigger forces influence their career decisions. The discussion started with learners talking about the support from their parents. Below, Learner K expresses that his parents support his decisions. He mentions that he loves soccer but he can't venture into it because he is the first born at home. I realised that indeed the birth order affects the career choices of learners. For Learner K, the expectation did not come from his family but more from him, in contrast to Learner D's story above. Below is Learner K's story in his own words.

Learner K: *Well me my parents will support me in anything I wanna do, so the choice is mine. Well, ya,, and the other thing is that, I have a love for soccer, but because I'm the first born I can't go to sports, I have to go to University and so something else there....ya anything is fine for my parents {2:51}*

Another learner who received support from his parents was Learner G:

Learner G: *"Well my parents are okay with me becoming an economist, cos growing up they always told me to follow my passion. So when I told them I wanted to become an economist, they told me it was fine with them, they will support me through it"* {2:55}.

Following on Learner G's story, Learner I nodded and said that:

Learner I: *"Uuhm, okay, I grew up being raised by a single parent, and it's a father and he always encourages me to become the best I can be so he's willing to support me in any career opportunity I choose so ya, for him is not a big deal {2:52}*.

In contrast to Learners K, G and I's stories about having supportive parents; Learner H indicates that for him it is the opposite where he is not getting support from his father, as seen in the extract below.

Learner H: *Uuuhm okay, my dad is always asking me what do I wanna do, and I will tell him, I don't know. And he will be like since you don't know how about you do this*

and this. Like nah dad what if I don't like it? No but still, just do this for us. And I believe it's about me not doing this for them, they just pressurising in doing things I don't wanna do, that's why I'm not sure. {2:53}

The above quotes highlight that parents and family members can have a significant influence (positive or negative) on learners' career direction as they seek to answer questions of identity and begin the transition to adulthood. In the case of Learner H, he feels pressured by his father to make a career decision, which leads him to uncertainty about his career identity.

Also in cases of siblings, the effect on the individual learner can be negative, as is seen in the quote below.

Learner A: firstly neh I come from a family neh, the kids in my family they all intelligent, each one of them that passed matric, they passed it with like distinctions and stuff. I'm always under pressure cos everyone expects me to meet their level, and it's not happening so and it kinda brings me down, cos they always comparing me like why can't you be like her or him, look at him he's gonna be successful. And I told them it's not my thing; I don't like theory, I'm into practical things like soccer and stuff...ya that's how it is. {2:56}

Learner A expresses a negative experience with regard to parental support, where he feels pressured to measure up to the intelligent kids in his family. Parental influence is further mediated by such factors as sibling position, socioeconomic status, and perception of parental influence as measured from the learner's point of view. Learner E below narrates

that she does not have a relationship with her parents where they can have career conversations, unlike the other learners. Learner E's point of view is that her parents are too busy and are fine with whatever career direction she embarks on. Below is her narrative on parental influence.

Learner E: *Well my parents are never home, we don't have that relationship where we can sit down, like mama I wanna do this, I wanna do that. She'll always tell me you can do anything, as long as you get fine life, and you can support yourself and everything...so ya..they always busy I don't know with what (learners laugh)...well like my dad works neh, and my mom tags along and stuff...they just fine with anything I do {2:58}*

As I was about to round off the discussion on parental influence, Learner J quickly jumped in and stated that he remembers the reason why he was uncertain about his future aspiration. His quote follows below.

Learner J: *Ya well now I know the reason why I'm not sure (laughter in the background)...you see neh my dad is a financial analyst, and my mom is a thingy a lawyer, she's into law. You see now I've been discussing this issue with my parents, and my mom wants me to follow her path and my dad wants me to do his thingy there. So I don't know where I should go. Like my mom has her opinions and my dad has his opinions....SS: So which opinions do you like more?...Learner J: Yoh, I'm not into those things, law and stuff {2:60}*

Learner J above highlights that his uncertainty and career indecision is due to his parents wanting him to follow their career paths. I also picked up that it could be that Learner J was not comfortable earlier in saying his parents were confusing him. It could also be that he opened up after hearing other learners sharing their experiences. Certainly parents often provide a valuable and positive influence in helping their children decide what to pursue in the work world. There may also exist, however, a negative aspect of parental influence when parental encouragement is overzealously applied and becomes pressurised demand for success as seen in Learners J, H and A's experiences.

1. Friends as influences

The discussion moved to learners' experiences with friends and the support they get from their friends with regard to career paths. A word that came up constantly when the learners spoke individually about friends was "supportive". The group shared similar experiences where they had supportive and encouraging friends. Learner A enthusiastically took the recorder and started the discussion on friends. He narrated that he has supportive friends that encourage him to be successful, as seen in the quote below.

Learner A: Yes, Ya, my friends; they very supportive. Most of them are older than me, they already in the working field, they always telling me to push, whatever I wanna do, I must do it well and get...so they supporting in everything I wanna do... ya so I wanna be successful no matter what I do, as long as I can take care of my family, cos I wanna be a family man {2:63}

It is interesting to note that Learner A was the first to answer when asked what he wants he be, "a role model". He now speaks of being a family man... I can safely assume that Learner

A values taking care of his family and being a role model more important than a formal career. Young people's occupational choices are influenced by the way in which they prioritise their work and family roles, and that they tend to place a high value on both work and family rather than on one or the other, as seen in Learner A's narrative (Beauregard, 2007).

Research by Grygo (2006) found strong support for the significant role that friends provide in terms of emotional resources and relevant role modelling. Learner F below identifies herself with friends who also dance. She indicates that her boyfriend is very supportive of her dancing career. She also highlights that not all of her friends know her dancing side; below is her story.

Learner F: Well my friends, my friends at home, they supportive cos some of them also dance and stuff. Well my boyfriend is the one that's very supportive ... (Learner says sweet in the background)...I know... (Laughs) well he also dances but he studies medical stuff at University. But he also does dancing on the side, so he's very supportive of my career. As for my school friends, they don't know much 'bout my dancing, they just know she can dance and that's all, they don't know much about me dancing. Learner A found out that, he read on my, A found out, he saw this stuff I was writing for LO, and then he looked at me in a way, like what you can dance. That's why I don't like telling people that I can dance, cos I don't know how they will react to the whole thing cos, we just know each other for 2 years, one year and a half and stuff so they don't know much about me so I don't talk about it when I'm with my school friend {2:64}

From the above it could seem that the learner finds emotional resources from friends who share and support her dancing identity. It sounded from the experiences that friends play a major role in career decision-making; they demotivate, motivate or support career choices. Below are narratives of learners who commented about their friendships and career choice. Learner C highlights that she has supportive friends with whom she can share everything.

Learner C: *I have only one friend neh from Atteridgville, we share everything, so we motivate each other, we motivate each other we encourage each other a lot. She's very supportive and I'm very supportive to her. So we share everything, she doesn't disagree with all my decision {2:69}*

Learner H: *Well my friends are like, my friends are studying very hard you know they quite good friends yeh, they got this like swag and which is good and they always tell me, eh ntwana [Setswana slang meaning: friend, boy], you should study very hard, cos you don't want to be living that life on the street, begging money from our friends or whatever. You should just have your money, and at the age of 25 you should just have everything and be settled, and ya they give good advice {2:72}*

Learner G: *Well lemme start with my school friends, most of them are in tourism neh, and I do accounting, so on say Wednesdays and Fridays I have accounting after school, so I'll be like I'm tired I wanna go home, and they would actually encourage me to go to class and they say...so then they will encourage me to go to class, they know I'm really good in Accounting, so they would say why would you wanna go home when you can pursue your career in Accounting, it's gonna benefit you in the long run {2:73}*

Learner J: *Well I'm gonna talk about my friends from home, like my homies cos like my friends from school don't really know me much. Okay, my friends from home, we*

don't really talk much about career and stuff. We just like friends, don't have friends that gives me kind of advice, I chill with them, just talk and have fun, those are the kind of friends I have {2:74}

Learner K: Me, I only have one friend, he's busy in class not here, one thing I learn from him is he likes money, yoh, that boy. We used to travel together in the metro rail, going to Soshanguve. So that boy taught me was, easy ways to make money, like to sell things, even here at school, last year we used to sell sweets and stuff. He's the one that made me go into business, now I also like money I don't know why {2:75}

2. Teachers as influences

The influence of teachers on the career development of South African adolescents has been regarded as being a significant one (Watson & Stead, 1993). I asked the learners about how the teachers influence their career decision making. The learners below had a negative experience with regard to the teachers. Learner F narrates that she had a positive experience from her previous school, where the teachers were actively involved in the learners' career development. She expresses her disappointment when coming to the current school where her teachers are not so involved with the learners' career development. Her story follows below.

Learner F: Well my teachers from my old school, used to hold these events; we just sit in a class and discuss different careers and stuff. When I came here in grade 11 oh my gosh we did nothing, didn't discuss anything, the only thing we did was in business with our former teacher, Mr D. And he actually used to call us and talk to us and motivate us at all times. Except him, after him, after he was gone, it was tuu, nothing. We did nothing, here in LO we wrote notes of course... Ya and that's it. {2:78}

Learner D: *Well I would also say that, our teachers, for us matrics, I would say it's important for us to go out there and learn more about our careers or our choice of careers. They don't wanna take us out to Excursions and stuff, they take the younger ones, it's like they see the young ones future brighter than ours. {2:79}*

Learner F: *Ya cos we in matric and everything, we need to have, like those kinda things, maybe have talk about where we can get bursaries, financial help and stuff. I had to do it on my own, I had to go to Jo'burg and get my own bursary and stuff and it's really difficult cos they need your marks and everything, If they used to host something it could have motivated me to do more, cos last year grade 11 I didn't care you know I didn't care. I'm gonna complete school, if I don't get a job, I'll go stripping something (laughter in the background) I didn't care, I didn't care much but when you in grade 12, now its reality, you are about to become an adult, into the adult world, responsibilities, even yourself you have to be independent. {2:84}*

The above extract highlights that the learners felt that they were not getting enough information from the school and teachers regarding career choices, as seen in the quotes from Learner D and F above.

Subject Selection

The learners remember their earlier years at school when they had to make subject choices. As they recall these times, there were ‘sighs’ and murmurings among the group. When it comes to the subject’s choice, one learner shook his head muttering in the home language, as seen in the quote that follows, “*Yoh yoh mathata*” {2:6} meaning “Oh no, problems”.

I chose this particular quote because it most movingly expressed the feelings of the learners as a unit towards subject selection. Below is an extract of the conversation that transpired.

Learner D: *Most of us came to the school thinking that will find like different subjects, like the application form mentioned what kind of subjects they are...of which they gave us the subjects, we had to choose between Accounting and Tourism and then between Maths and Maths lit...*

(Learner E: *That’s the only choice we had)...so we were forced to do...*

(Learner A: *and I’m not sure if we allowed to sue... laughter in the background*)

Learner A: *But ya on the application form, the reason why I came here was because of sports, on the application form, they put like a variety of sports, that you can take but there’s not even one, ya and then they tell you education is our 1st priority, but they don’t take us to excursions they don’t bring*

Learner in the background: *Ya it’s important for us to take the right subjects we don’t end up confused now {2:6}*

The above extract indicates that learners were forced to do certain subjects due to a lack of variety of subjects at the school. It would seem that the learners were forced to choose between a limited number of subjects which did not necessarily include their preferred

choices. Learner A expresses his disappointment when he found out that there were no sports at the school.

Employment opportunities in South Africa

I asked learners what they thought was available for them in South Africa in terms of employment opportunities. Learner A highlighted that they do not know what they should expect, while Learner F stated that for her as a dancer she can't pursue her career as the industry for dancing is limited. Learner A further commented that there are opportunities in SA but there is a lot of corruption involved. While discussing employment opportunities, Learner J came out to say that he will go into varsities popular on sports like the University of Pretoria and University of Cape Town, where he can able to pursue his soccer career. It was interesting to note again how Learner J came out to speak freely about his career path, as he seemed unsure and undecided at the beginning. Below is an extract of the discussion pertaining to employment opportunities in South Africa.

Learner A: *...that's the thing we don't even know*

Learner F: *South Africa, I don't think I have that much opportunity in South Africa, but I know if I go overseas I'll have so much opportunities, here in South Africa the entertainment industry is this small, everything is just this small. All we hear is corruption corruption corruption, if you wanna be successful in South Africa go to politics, that's the only way. so for me as a dancer, I don't think I'll settle here in South Africa...that's a no no, cos you know I'll get 'Oh she's a dancer', I wanna be more than that, I wanna be a choreographer, I wanna be more than that...I don't wanna end up dancing on the street*

Learner A: *Well I personally think that there are a lot of opportunities here in South Africa, but then the level of corruption is just so high that those that are educated, don't get the chance to do what they deserve, because of people who took short cuts to get there, and they don't even know the job so they end up messing it up...I'm sorry our Economy is just weak...*

Learner J: *Like me next year, I just wanna get into varsity and do sports....like I was saying, right now those kind of events, like varsity, like Tuks, UWC, ya those varsities playing sports...ya like maybe I can do soccer or cricket cos it's what I can do, ya maybe take soccer or cricket as a career...*

SS: *J you actually do know what you wanna do you wanna go into sports (laughter in the background)... {2:102-105}*

Ways to improve career guidance experiences in high schools

To round off the focus group discussion I asked the learners what more could be done to help them to make better career choices. The learners highlighted that, '*Excursions, Counselling, exposure, career guidance*' {2:107}, could be helpful for them. They went to state that: '*camps, sports...we actually NEED career guidance...at least provide some forms for bursaries*' ... {2:107}.

Learner F: *a little bit of effort, I know we naughty and stuff but we do deserve a chance in life, they shouldn't punish us...I mean the punishment is harsh, withholding information* {2:108}

Learner D: *at least have debates, then maybe we could see my weaknesses are here and my strengths are there.* {2:109}

Learner...you know I get career guidance from Facebook, I talk to Mr D via FB ka inbox...and if you don't answer he pokes you... {2:110}

The above extract indicates that learners saw the importance to engage in career development activities to make their career decision-making simpler. They also highlighted that it is important for teachers to share career development information, as they valued information and planning. The learners emphasised the need for them to actually receive career guidance at school.

