

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEVELOPMENTAL-CONTEXTUAL
FRAMEWORK FOR YOUNG ADULTS' CAREER EXPLORATIONS**

Submitted by

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DECLARATION

I, Georgia Roberson, declare that this research is a result of my own work, except where otherwise stated. I have given the full acknowledgement of the sources referred to in the text. This study has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university.

Georgia Roberson

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ABSTRACT

Career development theory and counselling practices in South Africa, which have traditionally utilised imported theory, have long been and continue to be criticised as being unsuitable in contexts different to those in which they were developed. In light of this, the aim of this study is to customise and trial the Vondracek, Lerner, and Schulenberg (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development with a group of employment-seeking young adults at a local community-based setting, as the basis of a career development intervention. Research questions asked were 'In what ways is the examination and discussion of developmental-contextual factors of the individual facilitative of career exploration, in addition to seeking to identify contextual factors that influence career thinking and associated decision making. In doing so, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on the career development of South Africans. Focus group methodology, within an overarching framework of collaborative action research, was employed. The approach to career exploration here was that of peer learning through group discussion of developmental-contextual factors of the individual. Data were generated through pre-intervention questionnaires, collaborative action research cycles, participatory observation, focus group discussions, and post-interventionist semi-structured individual interviews. Template Analysis was used for the thematic organisation and analysis of the data. Findings were that the intervention facilitated increased self-knowledge in relation to career development, increased knowledge of work and careers, and enhanced career planning abilities. Findings further highlighted the limitations of imported career development theories and the importance of the utilisation and development of local career assessment instruments. The group setting was found to be of value in facilitating self-reflection, a source of motivation and a valuable source of career-related information.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Career education in South Africa has historically utilised theories of career development that take decontextualised and overemphasised individualistic approaches to career education (Stead & Watson, 2002). A more contextualised approach to understanding and informing career development theory and interventions within South Africa has long been and continues to be advocated for (see Stead, 1996; Maree, 2013).

As a response to such calls, an earlier study (reported in Akhurst and Spencer, 2000) utilised a Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development (Vondracek et al., 1986) as the foundation of a 5-session career programme for students in a university ‘bridging’ programme. The aims were to avoid the provision of decontextualised and contextually insensitive career information by a facilitator with some knowledge of careers. The value of the framework was that it provided a structure into which the content relevant to participants could be inserted.

This current research study aimed to build on the above earlier study and therefore proposes to customise and trial the Vondracek et al. (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development with a group of employment-seeking young adults in a local community-based setting.

This chapter will explain the motivation for the present research, and briefly present the research question, sub-questions and chosen methodological approach. The chapter concludes with an outline of the chapters of this research report.

1.2 Motivation

Rates of unemployment in South Africa remain high, with an unemployment rate of 38.6% among persons aged 15-24 years (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Du Toit and van Zyl (2012) argue that the absence of quality education and access to career counselling are aggravating factors in this situation, with accessibility and provision of career counselling to disadvantaged individuals remaining limited (Maree, 2009).

In response to the issue of the scarcity of career counselling, the criticisms of imported models of career development and counselling widely used in South Africa today, and the recommendations to take a more contextualised approach to career development theory and practices within South Africa (Maree, 2013) this study aimed to build on the research base to contribute to a better understanding of the career development of South African individuals, in aiming to provide more appropriate career counselling services.

Secondly, as an aspirant counselling psychologist, I have a predisposition towards viewing the individual's mental health and general wellbeing as being contextually influenced and impacted upon by her/his environment. With this view underpinning my philosophical stance in relation to mental health and wellbeing, this research speaks to my related interest in developing interventions that take a preventative and holistic approach to providing mental health care services.

A further motivation to conduct this research study lies in Counselling Psychology's encouragements and alignment with affordable, community-based, preventative and contextually sensitive mental health care service provision (see de la Rey & Ipsier, 2004; Leach, Akhurst, & Basson, 2003; Macleod, 2004; Young, Bantjes, & Kagee, 2016; Young, 2013).

1.3 Purpose of the study

This research study proposed to customise and trial the Vondracek et al. (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development with a group of employment-seeking young adults at a local community-based setting (details about the community-based setting are provided in the methodology section).

The aims of this research study were three-fold. Firstly, due to the increasing recognition for the need to develop a contextualised approach to career development interventions, it aimed to assess the suitability of the Vondracek et al. (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development, as the basis of a group-centred career intervention programme.

Secondly, it aimed to gather contextually relevant information about the ways in which young adults come to make career-related decisions and the sociocultural factors that impact upon career-related thinking. Such information may be useful in informing future career development intervention programmes to support young people in their career development.

Thirdly, this research study aimed to facilitate improved self-knowledge surrounding careers, providing the opportunity to practise and develop various career-related skills (through homework assignments), and to invite the sharing of experiences surrounding decisions related to careers through group discussion. As this approach has features that emphasise participants' interactive learning from one other through the focus group discussions, the role of the researcher within this approach is interventionist, facilitating exploratory learning around careers through discussions in focus groups.

1.4 Research questions and chosen methodological approach

The broad question framing this research was ‘In what ways is the examination and discussion of developmental-contextual factors of the individual (as presented within the Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development, Vondracek et al., 1986) facilitative of career exploration?’ Related to this broader question was the examination of the utility of the group setting, as in this research study, in facilitating career exploration. This research study additionally sought to identify contextual factors that influence career thinking and associated decision making.

This research is a qualitative study and is situated within an over-arching framework of action research. Action research’s core approaches are orientated towards participation, democracy, knowledge production and human flourishing – ultimately informed by the aim of tackling practical issues in people’s everyday lives (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The action research cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection were applied continuously throughout the research process, to guide the activities of the career intervention programme.

1.5 Definition of terms

In this research report, the following definitions were adopted from the literature when referring to terms used in this thesis:

Career

The term career encompasses the significant learnings and experiences that categorise an individual’s professional life, trajectory, competencies and activities spanning her or his various positions and types of work/jobs (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016).

Career Development

Career development is the lifelong evolution of learning and work. It is constituted by psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic and chance factors that impact upon the nature and significance of work during the life-span of the individual (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016).

Strauser, Lustig and Çiftçi (2008) conceptualise career development as consisting of three phases: These are the developing of appropriate work-related behaviours (allowing the individual to meet the demands of the work environment), developing a career identity (the development and awareness of one's career interests, goals, skills, and talents, effective career decision making), and the development of the ability to find a job and find employment.

Career Counselling

Career Counselling is defined as a one-to-one interaction between a counsellor and a client, utilising psychological theory, with the focus on aiding the client to make career-related decisions and manage career-related issues (Kidd, 2006). Career counselling aims to facilitate the development of career competency, maturity, adaptability and self-efficacy (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016).

Career Exploration

Career exploration is constituted by both self-exploration and environmental exploration. It is the gathering and examination of information regarding career related matters. These include self-awareness, the world of work, the formulation of career goals, and career decision and strategy making (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2010).

Career Education

Career education provides individuals with a service that supports them through difficulties related to enacting subjective career intentions and goals through their objective career-related behaviour (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016).

Career Choice

Career choice is a term that denotes the decisions that need to be made or remade by individuals in relation to their careers and the world of work (Miller & Brown, 2005). These include both subjective decisions based on preferences, aspirations, orientations, and intentions, in addition to objective information regarding economic conditions, employment opportunities and sociological factors such as family and education (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016).

1.6 Outline of chapters

This chapter introduced and provided a background to the research study, the motivation and purpose of the study, and set out the research question. The literature review, presented in Chapter 2, draws on the available literature, providing an overview of career theory to date, while reflecting on its application within the South African context. Next, an introduction to Ecological Systems Theory and the developmental-contextualist perspective that underpin the Vondracek et al., (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development is provided. This is followed by an explanation of Vondracek et al.'s (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development.

Chapter 3 details the methodology utilised in this research, presenting the rationale behind the chosen research design and methods of sampling, data collection and analysis. Included here are ethical considerations, and evaluation criteria.

In Chapter 4, the findings of the research study are presented. The findings include participants' demographical information and career-related knowledge, and a description of the process of how the intervention unfolded. A thematic analysis is also presented of the influence of developmental-contextual factors (as represented by the Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development, Vondracek et al., 1986) on career development, and of the utility of the framework in facilitating career exploration.

In Chapter 5 a discussion of the main findings is presented in light of the research questions and aims, making reference to the existent literature on career development theory and interventions in South Africa. The final chapter, Chapter 6, provides a brief conclusion to the research study, including a discussion of the limitations of the study and the emergent recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review begins with an overview of traditional career development theory, discussing each theory as related to the South African context, followed by a review of current theoretical approaches in the 21st century. An introduction to Ecological Systems Theory and the developmental-contextualist perspective that underpins the Vondracek et al. (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development is presented next, concluding with a description of the framework.

2.2 An overview of career development theory

Career psychology emerged primarily from two sources, mainstream psychology, and the subdiscipline of vocational psychology in the United States (Naidoo, Pretorius, & Nicholas, 2017). Career psychology is concerned with advancing knowledge about career behaviour, improving career development interventions, and informing social policy about career and work-related issues (Savickas, 2001).

The first wave of career development theory, and informing career counselling practices, includes trait-and-factor theories, most notably Parson's (1909) seminal work (Naidoo et al., 2017). Expansions within the trait-and-factor theoretical approach include Holland's (1959, 1997) theory of personality and occupational types, Dawis and Lofquist's (1993) theory of person-environment correspondence and Jung's (1971) theory of personality types.

The second wave of career development theory, which also informed career counselling practices, are those that understand career development from a lifespan perspective; the leading contributor here being Super (1990).

Within the South African context, career counselling practices have historically been informed by imported theories such as Holland's trait-and-factor (Holland, 1997) and Super's life-span (Super, 1990) theories of career development. More recently, career development theory and counselling practices both internationally and in South Africa have moved toward a postmodern perspective (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016), largely in response to mounting criticism of the unsuitability and irrelevance of imported theories (Maree, Ebersöhn, & Molepo, 2006). In the following sections, traditional and postmodern theories of career development, and their application in career counselling practices in the South African context, are presented in more detail.

2.2.1 Traditional theories of career development: The trait-and-factor approach

A prominent contribution within this approach is Holland's theory of vocational personalities in work environments (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016). Holland proposed that individuals choose situations and environments that match and satisfy their personalities. Individuals are characterised in terms of six personality types, with career and occupational environments also categorised in their resemblance and support of the six types. In South Africa, the two most frequently used career interest inventories, based on Holland's theory and the proposed hexagonal model, are the Self-Directed Search (SDS; Gevers, du Toit, & Harilall, 1997) and the South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII; du Toit, Prinsloo, Gevers, & Harilall, 1993).

The validity and applicability of Holland's hexagonal model has been questioned (du Toit & de Bruin, 2002), with studies showing varied results regarding the validity and applicability to

multicultural contexts (Albien, 2013). Vocational interest inventories, based on Holland's theory, have also been criticised on the basis of their content not being representative of occupational developments (Morgan, 2014 as cited in Rabie, 2017) which have resulted from global changes in the economy and world of work (Maree, 2010). In studies where the validity and applicability of the SDS have been questioned, emergent recommendations have called for the refinement and translation of instruments such as these (du Toit & de Bruin, 2002), arguing that the translation of the SDS into indigenous South African languages is a necessary step in furthering research into the validity of Holland's hexagonal model.

In responding to such criticisms, Morgan, de Bruin and de Bruin (2015) recently constructed and assessed a new interest inventory for the South African population, namely the South African Career Interest Inventory (SACII) (Rabie, 2017). The results of two recent studies (Morgan, et al., 2015), which documented the development of the SACII and examined the structural validity of Holland's hexagonal model in the South African context, support the use of hexagonal model, suggesting the structural validity of the six vocational personality types as reliable in the South African context. Although Holland's hexagonal model may be valid in the South African context, recommendations for further research are still being proposed (Morgan et al., 2015) and a very recent study (Rabie, 2017) has taken further steps to refine the SACII.

Also informing career counselling practices in South Africa is Jung's (1971) theory of personality types, which posits 'psychological type' as a major construct through which to understand personality. The basic premise of this theory, in its translation to career counselling, is that each personality type indicates an individual's preferences, provides information to ascertain the best fit between person-environment, i.e., occupational environment (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016). Two career assessment instruments based on this theory and widely used

in South Africa are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985) and the Jung Personality Questionnaire (developed for South Africa) (du Toit, 1983).

Criticism of traditional theories of career development is that they do not take into consideration the various contextual influences of career choice and decision making (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Patton & McMahon, 2006). Contextual factors that influence the career development of many South Africans are the widespread lack of career education and information in secondary education settings, economic constraints and low social mobility, and an unstable economic and working environment (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006; Stead, Els, & Fouad, 2004). In South Africa it is therefore critical that concepts such as career decision making and career choice, are considered against the backdrop of our socio-political history, socio-economic and socio-cultural environment (Watson, 2009) and that these considerations inform theory and practice. Naidoo and Kagee (2009) echo these calls, arguing that the development of psychological theories in the local context, that are organically derived, is an area of practice that requires attention.

2.2.2 Lifespan development theories

Super's (1990) life-span theory of career development departed from earlier trait-and-factor theories, which he argued focused more on career choice than career development per se (Super, 1980). Unlike trait-and-factor approaches, life-span theory focuses on the developmental and contextual factors of career development (Brown & Lent, 2013). Career development is argued to be life-long process; that is, the individual's vocational self-concept is in constant change through the achievement of sequential developmental tasks, over the course of life stages (Super, 1990).

The career-related self-concept is thought to be influenced through role playing, observations of work, identification with working adults and other environmental factors. An individual's self-concept is realised in career choice, as a means of self-expression (Super, 1990). Super's developmental tasks (as relevant to a USA context) include growth (development of capacity, attitudes, interests, and needs associated with self-concepts from birth to 15 years), exploration (where choices are made tentatively from 15-24 years), establishment (which entails trial and stabilization through work experiences from 25-44 years), maintenance (the continual adjustment process to improve working position and situation from 45-64 years), and, finally, decline (which includes preretirement considerations, reduced work output, and eventual retirement) (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016). A further central concept of this theory is that of career maturity which denotes the readiness to make career decisions and cope with the tasks of each life stage (Super, 2013).

Stead and Watson (1998) argue that Super's theory, validated and standardised on white American populations, is not generalisable to other contexts since contextual factors such as culture, language and psycho-socio factors differ; and its applicability for use with black¹ South Africans is therefore being called into question. Core concepts (or assumptions) such as career maturity and career choice are viewed as problematic when positioned within a context of occupational deprivation, where individuals receive limited career counselling, and within a restrictive socio-economic climate. Stead and Watson (1998) recommend that constructs such as developmental stages, self-concept, career maturity and decision-making require a re-examination or to be redefined indigenously when utilised in the South African context.

¹ In this document "black people" will refer to African, Coloured or Indian persons in accordance to the definition provided in the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003

2.2.3 Career theory and counselling practices in the South African context

In response to the criticisms highlighted above, career development theory and career counselling practices have begun to move from a predominantly quantitative (positivist) approach to an acknowledgement of the value of qualitative approaches (Maree, 2010). Amidst this shift, the value and utility of combined quantitative-qualitative approaches in the South African context have been expressed (Maree, 2013; McMahon & Patton, 2002; Winslade, 2007).

Quantitative-qualitative approaches involve utilising more traditional approaches, for example using psychometric instruments in conjunction with qualitative and dynamic (postmodern) methods, for example narrative counselling (Amundson, 2006 cited in Maree, 2010). Studies have found that a combined quantitative-qualitative approach allows for the triangulation and crystallisation of 'results' thus making them more reliable, valid and trustworthy (Di Fabio, 2012 cited in Maree, 2013). Postmodern approaches prominent in 21st century career development theory and counselling practices are detailed further below.

2.2.4 Postmodern approaches

As a departure from traditional theories where the role of context is minimised, and intra-individual factors are emphasised (Stead & Watson, 2002), postmodern approaches focus more on the interaction of individuals with their environments (Watson & Stead, 2017), and question the adequacy of the well-established career development theories and counselling practices. In constructivism, the underpinning paradigm in postmodern approaches, individuals are understood to be active constructors of their own reality, with an emphasis on the personal and contextual nature of career development. Career decisions are thus believed to be influenced by other individuals, the environment and society at large. It is through the exploration of these

various systems that clients elaborates meaning and understanding with regards to their career development (Patton, McMahon, & Watson, 2017).

A major contribution within the postmodern perspective is Savickas's Life Design theory (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016), combining elements from Guichard's (2005) Life-long Self-Construction theory and Career Construction theory (Savickas, 2005). This theory offers a holistic model for career counselling practice where the individual's career is constructed from telling small stories (construction), is re-constructed into larger stories, and then co-constructed into future stories, through the counselling process (Maree, 2017). The core aim of a narrative approach to career counselling such as this, is to facilitate the construction of a life story script, where clients explore personal meaning and find holding environments. This process is argued to facilitate and emphasise the agency of the individual, highlighting the importance of flexibility, employability and life-long learning (Savickas, 2007).

Further postmodern approaches include the Systems Theory Framework of Career Development (Patton & McMahon, 2006), that proposes that individuals are located within multiple systems that constantly interact with each other and with the individual. Personal, social and environmental systems include influences such as values, interests, social groups and the labour market (McMahon & Watson, 2012). The 'My System of Career Influences' (MSCI; McMahon, Patton, & Watson, 2005) is a qualitative career assessment tool grounded in the System Theory Framework (STF) of career development (Patton & McMahon, 2006), and based on constructivist theory.

McMahon, Watson, and Patton (2014) argue that as the STF and MSCI are sensitive to variables such as culture, socioeconomic status and other contextual variables; as a theoretical perspective and qualitative career assessment process, they are useful both in the 21st century and in the South African context. The STF and MSCI was utilised in a recent study that focused

on the influences on career choices of black and coloured South African adolescents (Blomerus, 2016). This study sought to address the gap in the literature around the career-related decision making and influences of disadvantaged South African adolescents to encourage the provision of relevant career counselling practices. Career development literature highlights the influence of family structure and processes on career development constructs (Whiston & Keller, 2004), more specifically career-decision making self-efficacy (Hargrove, Creagh, & Burgess, 2002 cited in Miles & Naidoo, 2016). Additional studies have also shown that career-related support and expectations of family members influence adolescents' career development to a greater degree than demographic variables (Paloş & Drobot, 2010). A recent study (Albien, 2013) supports this conclusion, with findings demonstrating the significant role that parents and family member serve in the career development of adolescents.

In considering theories of career development that focus on the interaction between person and environment, this literature review will now focus on the Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development (Vondracek et al., 1986). To contextualise the framework, the theoretical position of human development and environment that underpin, and are compatible with, the Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development (Vondracek et al., 1986) will first be explained.

2.3 Ecological systems theory

Vondracek et al. (1986) state that Bronfenbrenner's (1979) conceptualisation of the environment is a compatible perspective with the developmental-contextual view. The social ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) argues that to understand human development, it is vital that the entire ecological system, or environment in which development occurs, is considered.

The social ecological perspective proposes that there are five sub-systems within the environment. Bronfenbrenner uses the term ‘systems’, rather than ‘parts’ of the environment, to denote the interactive, relational and dynamic nature of the environment. These five sub-systems are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem. This perspective views individuals as having their own innate capabilities, and biological and genetic characteristics – which, in turn, relate and react to their immediate and surrounding environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The microsystem encompasses the individual’s personality and characteristics as well as the relationships and interactions between the individual and their immediate family. The mesosystem includes the relationships and interactions between the individual’s family and organisations such as school/housing shape human development. The exosystem comprises the wider community in which the individual is nested, including organisations such as the parent’s workplace and extended family members. The macrosystem is represented by society, the wider forces at a societal level, e.g., socio-political factors, and social policy economic structures. Finally, the chronosystem is the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course, as well as sociohistorical circumstances (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

2.4 The developmental-contextualist perspective of human development

Various individual theorists have worked to develop integration and comprehensiveness in human development theory, with other theorists working to develop broad theoretical frameworks, termed bridging theories or meta-theories (Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008). One such meta-theory is the developmental-contextualist perspective (Savickas, 1995), and is derived from both the developmental organic perspective (‘organicism’) and the ‘contextualist’ perspective of human development (Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008).

Referring to ‘organicism’, individuals are viewed as active constructors of their world as opposed to being passive recipients. The term ‘contextualist’ refers to the constantly changing nature of the environment, assumes that all levels of analysis (e.g., inner-biological, individual-psychological, dyadic, organisational, social network, outer physical-ecological, and historical) are in constant flux, and that all levels of analysis are embedded and interact dynamically with all other levels (Vondracek et al., 1986).

This developmental-contextualist perspective underpinning their conceptual model of career development emphasises ongoing change both in the individual and in the environment, stressing the importance of the interaction between the two. It acknowledges the self-determinism and agency of the individual, and the dual nature of influence between the individual and the environment, over the course of the life span, that impact upon the development of an individual’s career and career decision-making (Stead & Watson, 2006; Vondracek et al., 1986). A figure of the model is presented below.

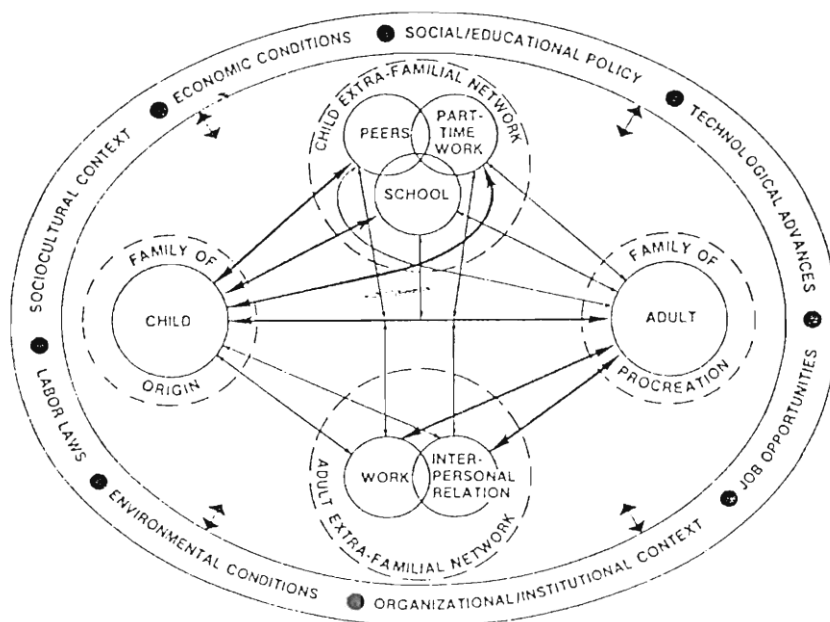


Figure 2.1 Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development (Vondracek et al., 1986).

Career development is thus conceptualised as being dynamically interrelated across macro-and-micro-contexts (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Furthermore, this approach to career development shares many essential features with Super's lifespan life space approach (Vondracek & Porfeli, 2008). Contextually, the framework considers both historical and current phenomena within the individual's life. These are child-rearing practices, the influence of the school context, the value and influence of peer support, the impact of the opportunity to engage in part-time work, the effect of becoming a parent, the individual's current employment and his or her interpersonal relationships (Vondracek et al., 1986).

The framework additionally acknowledges the impacting nature of more distal environmental factors on an individual's career development such as social and educational policy, technological advances and their impact on job loss and retrenchment, the restriction of job opportunities, organisational and institutional context, labour laws, and economic and sociocultural conditions (Vondracek et al., 1986). For a more detailed description of the theoretical focus of the framework, see Akhurst and Spencer (2000).

Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) have argued that socio-culturally situated narratives allow for the inclusion of dimensions such as history, relationships, and language – which contribute to self- and environment understanding, a fundamental aspect of one's career development. Perhaps then, in exploring the micro and macro contexts of lived experience outlined in the model, the emergence of socio-culturally narratives fundamental to one's career development may be facilitated.

2.5 South African research using this model

An earlier study (reported in Akhurst & Spencer, 2000) investigated a career education programme run with students enrolled in the Science Foundation Programme (SFP), a one-year bridging course at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, for black students with insufficient

matric points to enter directly into the science faculty. This study utilised the developmental contextual approach of Vondracek et al. (1986) to organise and make sense of the contextual data. The findings of this study were that the provision of career information which is not located in the participants' context is insufficient. Findings further highlighted the value of the interactions within a group setting of peers in enhancing self-awareness, career-related knowledge and the value of discussion as a valuable tool in career education techniques.

Findings from a recent study (reported in Schwartz, 2017), not using the model but looking at the link between unemployment and mental health, aimed to contribute to debates about what lessons about a social justice approach a counselling psychologist might learn from a youth unemployment community engagement activity, confirming the bi-directional link between mental health and unemployment; with unemployment argued to contribute to higher levels of psychological distress, depression and low levels of self-esteem (as also found by Letsie, 2009; Lund et al., 2011).

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review has covered some studies relevant to the South African context. It has concluded with reference to the Vondracek et al. (1986) model, which seems to hold potential as a theoretical framework for group career-related discussions (Akhurst & Spencer, 2000), without depending on any materials (that have cost implications) in an under-resourced setting.

The following chapter comprises the methodology section of this research. Here, the research design, sampling procedures, method of data collection, evaluation criteria, and ethical considerations will be addressed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the research process and rationale for the methodology in light of the research questions (see Chapter 1). The research design, sampling procedure, methods and procedures of data collection and method of data analysis will be presented. Following this, ethical considerations, the evaluation process, and a brief reflection on my subjective positioning as participant-researcher will be discussed.

3.2 Research design

This research is a qualitative study and is situated within an over-arching framework of action research. The core principles that underpin action research are democracy, justice and participation. Action research is often carried out to solve a real-world problem, reflecting on what is happening and asking how it might be improved (McNiff, 2002). Furthermore, action research seeks to produce practical knowledge that is both useful and relevant to individuals in their everyday lived experiences (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

In action research, the iterative patterns allow for the sharing of knowledge, which facilitates both individual learning and collective learning that is potentially self-transforming (McNiff, 2002). Action research is thus appropriate within this study as its core approaches are complementary to the aims of this research, seeking to facilitate career exploration through peer learning, democratic participation, and to provide a space facilitative of the ‘flourishing’ of individuals in terms of their own career exploration and development of self-knowledge.

3.3 Sampling procedure

The sampling strategy employed in this research study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is generally used in the selection of units with a direct reference to a specific research question(s) (Bryman, 2012). Purposive sampling is appropriate for this study as it allowed for the selection of the data sources, which would make accessible the career development narratives of young people, not at university, thus providing data related to the research question(s) at hand. A community-based organisation was thus selected as a recruitment site as it provided access to individuals identified as suitable participants, that is, employment-seeking youth who were interested in attending career development workshops.

The community-based organisation is located in the Eastern Cape, one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, with unemployment and school underperformance being the highest in the country. The organisation functions to promote entrepreneurship and business skills development amongst young adults, encouraging the exploration of business ideas and by supporting new business owners in the development of business plans, accessing support for their internal governance processes and assisting with securing outlets for their products and services. The organisation also offers a life-skills course to young people (the target group are adults between the ages of 20 – 30 years) in the local community to support them in identifying what their purpose is in life. The organisation also offers a number of services including IT facilities, mentorship, workshops and legal and financial advice.

Following ethical approval by the Department of Psychology's Research Project and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) (Appendix A) a local organisation was approached to commence the recruitment of the participants. Prior to the recruitment, the manager of the community-based organisation provided written permission for the research study to take place (Appendix B).

Six participants between the ages of 18 to 26 years were recruited from a community-based organisation that offers courses and services such as business skills development, leadership, life skills, access to a financial savings and credit group, and computer connectivity and literacy. Prior to becoming involved in this research study, the six participants had all completed a life skills course targeted at young adults with no or weaker matric passes, with the aim of improving their soft skills such as communication, setting smart goals, interview skills, budgeting, and motivation. Participation in the life skills course was not a selection criterion in the sampling process, however, it was thought that their participation in the career development workshops might complement the life skills programme they had already attended.

The research study was advertised in person at the centre. A group of approximately twenty people were addressed and provided details of the research project, and what participation would entail. A sign-up sheet was left at the centre for a one-week period where individuals could sign-up and provide their biographical details and contact number. Individuals were then contacted via telephone and an initial meeting date was confirmed.

The first meeting was scheduled to take place at the community-based organisation where the participants were provided with an information and confirm consent form to read through and sign (Appendix C).

Table 3.1: Biographical data of participants

No	Pseudonym ²	Age	Sex	Level of Education	Home Lang.
1	Mr X	26	Male	Grade 11	isiXhosa
2	Ms K	25	Female	Grade 12	isiXhosa
3	Mr U	25	Male	Grade 11	isiXhosa
4	Ms B	24	Female	Grade 12	isiXhosa

² Pseudonyms have been used to protect the true identities of the participants.

5	Ms N	24	Female	Grade 12	isiXhosa
6	Ms M	23	Female	Grade 11	isiXhosa

3.4 Data collection: Method and procedure

Data were gathered through the methods of participant observation, questionnaires, and audio-recorded and transcribed focus group discussions and post-intervention individual interviews. Participant observation is a widely used qualitative data collection method and requires that the role of participant and researcher is fulfilled simultaneously, whilst being immersed in the social context of the research study with research participants (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013). The types of data collected as participant observer were observation notes and process flows, which generated the data for the process-related findings of the research study. Table 3.2 below details the data collection dates.

Table 3.2 Dates of data collection point

Collection Date	Data Sources Collected
1 August 2016	2 pre-intervention questionnaires, Focus Group Session 1
8 August 2016	Focus Group Session 2
22 August 2016	Focus Group Session 3
29 August 2016	Focus Group Session 4
19 September 2016	Focus Group Session 5
18 November 2016	Post-intervention interview with Mr U and Ms M
21 November 2016	Post-intervention interview with Mr X
22 November 2016	Post-intervention interview with Ms K

Focus group methodology was adopted within this research as a method for data generation and collection. A focus group is essentially a group interview where all participants are encouraged to ask questions, exchange ideas and share their experiences in relation to a provided theme or topic (Kitzinger, 1995). All questions posed by the researcher were open-ended to facilitate group discussion. Prompts were also employed as an aide-mémoire, to

facilitate the exploration of areas that had not been mentioned spontaneously and were thought to be relevant in relation to the research question (Barbour, 2008).

Collaborative Action Research was incorporated as a method of data generation and collection, and allowed for collective reflection, and the generation of insights with, rather than for, participants (Akhurst & Lawson, 2013). In Collaborative Action Research, group processes are central in facilitating change; focus groups are thus widely used by action researchers.

A focus group environment allows greater control by participants thereby bolstering the emergence of personal and meaningful experiences, through allowing more relevant experiences to surface organically through the absence of researcher directed investigation (Chiu, 2003). This suggests that this method of data collection is appropriate here as it complements the studies aim of facilitating peer learning. Additionally, this method maximised the potential of generating contextually relevant career information through group discussion, a further aim of the study, and upholding the collaborative ideal of action and interventionist research.

Group processes have been found to be central in facilitating change and creating the space for learning, the exchange of ideas and change, and are widely used within action research (Chiu, 2003). Furthermore, Savickas and Porfeli (2012) suggest that discussions focused on the processes of career-related decision-making that take place within a group setting may be very useful to improving the career adaptability of individuals. The utilisation of the focus group may therefore be beneficial to the participants to facilitate improved self and environmental knowledge surrounding careers through the sharing of experiences about decisions related to careers through group discussion, and the sharing of contextually relevant career information, an aim of the research study.

In total, participants attended five focus group sessions. As this study was situated within an over-arching framework of action research, and interventionist in nature, action research cycles of monitoring and reflection were employed. This insured that the topics that were discussed were driven by the needs of the participants. Succeeding sessions thus built upon those preceding, ensuring that topics discussed were of central interest to participants. The two pre-intervention questionnaires (Appendix D and E) were administered in the first focus group session and gathered demographic information and assessed the participants subjective and objective career related knowledge.

Data were also gathered from narrative discussions during focus group sessions and from a post-interventionist semi-structured individual interviews, which were all audio-recorded and then transcribed using play-script analysis (Gibson & Hugh-Jones, 2012).

The post-interventionist interview aimed to explore the participants' attitudes and reflections on their learning and experiences of attending the focus groups, including reports of any changes in their career-related thinking and activities. These individual interviews were also seen as an opportunity to offer the participants a one-on-one career counselling session to ensure that any aspect of the career exploration that had been insufficient or disrupted through the research process, was remedied.

3.5 Method of analysis

The data set was analysed using Template Analysis (see Appendix G), which is not a distinct 'method' per se, but rather a varied but related group of techniques that allow for the thematic organisation and analysis of textual data. It is widely used in qualitative studies (King, 2012). Template analysis is appropriate to analyse larger data sets but is also useful in the analysis of data emergent from small sample sizes too (as in this study) (Brooks, McCluskey, Turley, & King, 2014).

Template Analysis comprises the development of conceptual themes, with the subsequent identification and delineation across cases of ‘broader themes’ and their subsidiary ‘narrowly focused themes’ (King, 2012). A list of codes (a template) is produced to represent hierarchically structured themes, typically defined *a priori*, which are then modified and added to through the reading, rereading and interpretation of the data set (King, 2012).

This ‘method’ of analysis was performed over six stage-wise phases, outlined below.

1. An initial reading of the entire data set was carried out in full (Brooks et al., 2014) in order to become familiar with the textual material to be analysed.
2. Although not obligatory, it is normal in Template Analysis for the definition of several *a priori* themes that reflect major areas of interest, that is, areas salient to the aims of the research project (King, Carroll, Newton, & Dornan, 2002). A preliminary coding of the data set was thus performed in order to identify broader, and within these, more narrowly focused *a priori* themes.

Within this research study, the broadly defined *a priori* themes are those salient to answering the research questions presented in Chapter 1 above, which sought to understand how the consideration and exploration of developmental-contextual factors of the individual (as presented within the Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development, Vondracek et al., 1986) facilitate career development (broader themes). Subsidiary themes are those salient to the usefulness of the group setting as utilised in this research study in facilitating career development and the identification of the sociocultural and contextual factors (more narrowly focused themes) that influence career thinking and decision making.

3. Themes were organised into meaningful clusters, and an understanding and definition of the relationships between the themes were established. These relationships include hierarchical relationships and integrative themes, that is, themes which reoccur across several broader themes, were identified and organised (Brooks et al., 2014).
4. During this phase, an initial coding template was created. As this was a smaller study, the initial coding template was based on the entire data set rather a subset of the data (as in larger studies) (Brooks et al., 2014).
5. In larger studies, the initial template is applied to further data and modified if necessary (Brooks et al., 2014). With a smaller data set, as in this research study, this phase was not performed as the initial coding template was based on the entire data set from the beginning of the coding and analysis phase.
6. During this phase, and in larger studies, the template is finalised and applied to the full data set. It should be noted that a 'final' version of the template in some respects is never reached, as further refinements to the template are always possible upon continued analysis. Again, considering the small data set of this research study, in addition to pragmatic reasons, this phase was not performed and the version of the template that the researcher believes to meet the needs of the project at hand (a 'final' version) was finalised (Brooks et al., 2014).

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the research study was granted by the Rhodes' Psychology Department Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee in April 2016 (Appendix A). The manager of the community-based organisation granted permission for the intervention in July 2016 (Appendix B).

Beforehand, all participants were given an information sheet and consent form (Appendix C) including information about the study, what was expected of their participation in terms of duration and time commitments. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions and to decline to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary, and each gave written consent.

Pseudonyms and disguised locations have been used for confidentiality purposes. In addition, I recognise the harmful effects of unemployment on mental well-being, which have been widely noted (see Bjarnason & Sigurdardottir, 2003; de Witte, Rothmann, & Jackson, 2012). I was thus working in close collaboration with colleagues in the local Psychology Clinic, in order that any participant experiencing undue distress because of the research process could be supported. The provision of counselling did not become necessary. This is possibly due to my having been equipped with counselling skills prior, aiding me in sensitively handling any potentially distressing topics throughout the research process.

3.7 Evaluation

The assumptions of reliability, validity and generalisability in positivist research are at odds with the aims and underpinning assumptions of qualitative research, as in this research study. Instead the philosophical assumptions that inform much qualitative research make use of evaluation criteria of trustworthiness and reflexivity (Tuli, 2010).

Tuli (2010) argues that the provision of a sound rationale which justifies the researcher's chosen methodology, and an explicit description of the processes involved in data collection and analysis, form the basis for credible and authentic investigations. Within this research, it is believed that these criteria have been met through a detailed description of the theoretical lens through which this research was undertaken; and through the justification of chosen methods of data selection, collection, and analysis as presented within the methodology chapter.

Furthermore, the collaborative nature of this research study, and the utilisation of action research cycles throughout the data collection process is considered to generate data that meets the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

3.8 Reflexivity

Finlay and Gough (2008) define reflexivity as a process of “critical self-reflection on how the researcher’s background, assumptions, positioning, and behaviour impact on the research process”. My own reflexivity process brought into awareness how my own background and the numerous positions I occupy inform my assumptions, and thus the potential to influence the research process.

My positioning as a trainee psychologist could potentially serve as an advantage and disadvantage during the research process. Although my training equipped me with the necessary skills to facilitate a group, and empowered me with valuable career-related information, the role of ‘expert’ and its resultant power imbalance can impede a collaborative research process. Additionally, in light of South Africa’s historical inequality, my background as a white, educated and middle class individual further reinforces this imbalance. Remaining mindful of these factors and addressing them in a transparent manner within the group setting will hopefully foster a collaborative research environment.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the research process. The research design, sampling procedure, methods and procedure of data collection and method of data analysis were presented. Following this, ethical considerations and the evaluation process within this research study were discussed. In the following two chapters, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, the findings of this research study followed by a discussion of the main findings will be presented.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The findings of this research study will now be presented. Data were gathered from two pre-intervention questionnaires, which provided demographic information and assessed the participants' subjective and objective career-related knowledge. Additional data were gathered from participant narratives, which were audio-recorded during the five focus group sessions and four individual post-intervention open-ended interviews, providing data in response to the research questions. The findings from the two pre-intervention questionnaires are firstly presented below.

4.2 Demographic pre-intervention questionnaire findings

The participants in this study comprised six young adults (ages 23 – 26) recruited from a community-based organisation, detailed above in chapter 3. All six of the participants came from disadvantaged backgrounds both educationally and socio-economically. At the beginning of the study, five of the six participants were unemployed. One of the participants was a shareholder in a poultry co-operative. All six of the participants did not have access to the internet or a computer at home.

4.3 Career development knowledge pre-intervention questionnaire findings

A customised second pre-intervention questionnaire was utilised to encourage the participants to reflect on their occupational role awareness, their confidence to plan and make career decisions, their knowledge about the world-of-work and the various career-related resources available to them.

4.3.1 Previous career education

Out of the five participants who answered this question, four had not received any career education at school or since leaving school.

4.3.2 Self-knowledge and vocational identity

All six participants reported that they felt that they had adequate self-knowledge to identify and make choices regarding an occupational role. They however reported that they would like support in clarifying and expanding on this knowledge.

4.3.3 Career planning process

Two of the participants felt that they understood the necessary steps in realising their chosen occupational roles. The remaining participants were unsure about the necessary steps involved in the career planning process. This was due to feeling that they were unsure about which occupational role they would like to pursue.

4.3.4 Occupational knowledge

All participants stated that they felt that their knowledge about various occupational roles was inadequate.

4.3.5 Knowledge about career-related resources

Four of the six participants stated their knowledge about career-related resources was inadequate. The two participants who felt that they possessed adequate knowledge in this area, reported using online resources.

The following two sub-sections present the process-related findings about the action research cycles and content-related findings. The process-related findings describe the intervention

process over the course of five focus group sessions and also reflect on the group setting of this intervention. The process-related findings draw from my observations and notes as facilitator.

In response to the research questions, content-related findings are then presented thematically, representing *a priori* themes derived from the developmental-contextual factors of the individual as presented within the Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development (Vondracek et al., 1986).

4.4 Process-related findings

Process-related findings comprise data generated from my observations and notes as facilitator.

Table 4.1 below details which participants participated in the five sessions.

Table 4.1 Participant session attendance

Session No	Attending participants
1	Ms K, Mr X, Mr U, Ms M, Ms N
2	Ms K, Mr X, Mr U, Ms M, Ms N, Ms B
3	Ms K, Mr X, Ms N
4	Ms K, Mr X, Mr U, Ms M
5	Ms K, Mr X, Mr U, Ms M

4.4.1 Attrition

Two participants stopped attending the focus group sessions from the second and third sessions respectively. One of the participants found employment and the second was asked to stay home and take care of an ill relative.

4.4.2 Session One - The child's family-of-origin

The activities were pre-planned and included allowing the participants to introduce themselves and state their reasons for joining the group, with the aim of providing the researcher with information to inform subsequent activity planning. The participants then completed a career

family genogram exercise (Appendix F), which explored the influence of their family-of-origin on their career development.

The participants stated that their reasons for joining the career exploration group were to access support to gain a clearer understanding of which occupation role would be best suited to them and to find out more about the training requirements and job demands of these roles. A further expectation of the participants was the acquisition of practical knowledge to improve their career planning competencies, and gathering information around career planning resources.

Participants stated that they found the genogram exercise difficult as some of their immediate family members were unknown to them, and that the topic of careers had never been discussed with known family members at home.

As an overly narrow focus, which included immediate family members resulted in a less fruitful discussion than had been hoped for, we extended our focus to identifying extended family members or individuals that had been supportive figures in their early years. This was also done to hopefully repair the potentially demoralised feelings of the participants. Participants were however unable to provide or recall information around career influences in relation to these individuals.

4.4.3 Session Two - Child's extra-familial network

Based on the participants' indications of wanting to explore the occupational roles that would be best suited to them, the second session included a poster making exercise requiring them to list their self-perceived talents and abilities, interests, and values by reflecting on their adolescent years. Discussion points included reflecting on the contribution and influence of their school careers, peers and any work experiences on their self-knowledge.

Utilising their listed self-knowledge as a further discussion point, this session included linking this self-knowledge to their career development. The participants appeared to enjoy the activity, talking and laughing amongst each other at times, which created a light-hearted atmosphere. They also referred to one another to clarify the meaning of the terms ‘interests’, ‘abilities’, ‘qualities’ and ‘values’.

When asked to reflect on the various occupations that they had previously considered, the participants demonstrated limited knowledge of occupational role diversity, possibly reflecting their limited exposure due to life circumstances. At this point of the intervention, the types of roles that were identified were limited to accountant, lawyer, forensic scientist, nurse, software developer, soldier, chef, and TV presenter, some of these possibly influenced by TV viewing.

Their limited occupational role knowledge and reported difficulties in articulating their abilities, interests, needs, and values informed the planning for the third session, which aimed to develop their self-knowledge further and increase their knowledge of occupational roles. As a homework task, the group was asked to gather information by talking to family and/or peers, or to engage in online research, about the various occupational roles already identified.

4.4.4 Session Three - Adult extra-familial network

During session three, the participants were asked to report back on any career information gathered from the homework task. Following this, the Self-Directed Search (SDS) was administered. The SDS was utilised in this research study, as opposed to another instrument, as at the time, this tool was one which was both familiar and available to the researcher.

The group had not managed to complete the homework task, stating that they had not had the time due to being kept busy with household responsibilities and not having access to the internet at home. The administration of the SDS covered the entire two-hour session as the participants frequently requested that unfamiliar terminology, the concepts of many of the

statements, and the meaning of English words used in the SDS be explained. The absence of previous opportunity of participants to engage in many of the tasks and activities that make up the content of the items resulted in participants being unsure of how to respond to statements.

This suggests that the completion of the SDS in its current format poses difficulties when used outside of the geographic and cultural context in which it was developed, and highlights the importance of the development of locally developed inventories.

4.4.5 Session Four - Adult extra-familial network

The participants were given their SDS three-letter summary codes. Occupations from the ‘SDS Occupation Finder’ were discussed with the group. The participants reported finding the names of the occupations within the ‘SDS Occupations Finder’ unfamiliar. Again, this illustrates the challenge of utilising imported instruments in a context very different to that of the instruments origin.

Taking this into account, the group were given the ‘Career Interest Profile Career Categories’ list (Appendix B of the CIP manual), which provides vocational roles common in South Africa, grouped according to nineteen career categories. As a group, the participants identified the CIP career categories relevant to their SDS codes. Although the participants were unaware of the specifics of the various roles, they seemed to find the various occupational roles somewhat more familiar.

4.4.6 Session Five - Adult extra-familial network

Due to the absence of internet connectivity and computer access at home, the final session was spent in the organisation’s computer lab. The aim of this session was to make use of online resources to carry out career-planning activities such as investigating occupational roles, gathering information about further education and training, and exploring various options

related to rewriting their Grade 12 year. Most of the participants required a great deal of assistance to find accurate and appropriate information when searching for educational and career information, due to unfamiliarity with internet searching.

4.4.7 The group setting

The genogram activity (session 1) required participants to record the occupations of their family members spanning three generations and respond to written questions about the influence of their family members on their career-related thinking and decision making. Following the activity, the participants were asked if they wanted to share any reflections with the group. As family trauma, illness, losses, and unknown parents were found to be common among the participants, this activity did result in some distress. As a result, most of the participants declined to share further, stating that they found it difficult to discuss personal and family experiences with others.

This illustrated the need to re-evaluate the timing of the inclusion of this activity, and the need to establish rapport in a group before launching into potentially distressing topics. The six participants in this research study were known to one another (through their participation in the life skills course) – and appeared to have already established some rapport with one another. This may, however, not be the case in other settings in which this model is utilised, highlighting the importance of the facilitation of rapport building by the facilitator.

The group setting did, however, prove useful to participants in terms of feeling encouraged and motivated by their peers in subsequent sessions. Participants also found both telling and listening to career-related narratives from their peers aided in putting them at ease around their own career-related anxieties. They additionally reported to find value in the career information sharing made possible through the group setting.

As sessions progressed, it was noted that participants became more confident in initiating discussions with each other, and the amount of facilitation required decreased. During individual interviews, participants stated that a group setting, as opposed to individual career counselling, was more beneficial. However, following one of the sessions, two of the participants expressed interest in talking with me individually about personal difficulties, which they felt impacted upon their career development.

Related to this, and only during the individual interviews, all participants revealed aspects about their lived experiences that were observed to be sensitive and distressing in nature. This finding implies that the process of career exploration cannot be separated from discussing lived experiences, both positive and negative, which emerge during the process of reflecting on one's (career) development. This suggests that the process of career counselling cannot be divorced from the broader set of skills required in psychological counselling, and that one's career development is inextricably linked to one's overall lived experiences.

4.5 Content-related findings

In response to the broad research question of whether and how the examination of developmental-contextual factors facilitates career exploration, and the sub-question that sought to identify the contextual factors that have historically influenced the career development of the participants, the thematic analysis findings of the focus group discussions and post-experience interviews are presented below.

4.5.1 The child's family-of-origin

Five participants completed a family genogram exercise, which required them to identify the various careers of family members over three generations and reflect on their families' influence on their own career development. The occupations listed for their family members

included manual labourer, truck driver, seamstress, domestic worker or unemployed. The following themes emerged when asked to reflect on this activity.

4.5.1.1 Family of origin as insightful and motivating

In looking at the occupations of their family members, participants reported being shocked and discouraged at the types of occupations highlighted in their families' career histories, and the common issue of unemployment. Participants commented on not wanting to follow similar career paths or remaining unemployed.

“It is an eye opener. The careers that I see. I will never do that. But it makes me realise that I want a better career for myself” (P2).

“I can say on the other side that it helped me because times when you have no one to help you to teach you about when you are older you just realise that you have to do something on my own. I realise that I don't want to be like them, I want to be a better person” (P3).

For one participant, in reflecting on the careers of his family members, he felt that he was able to better understand his role within the family. For another participant who was estranged from his family, the absence of support for his career development served as a motivating factor in him wanting to improve his current situation. This finding is illustrated in the following extract.

“I think I understand myself better, but I think with this computer skills, being at the business it makes me a little bit upgrade from how must a business run. I am able to tell them which ways are better for them in order to do the business in a good way” (P1).

4.5.1.2 Absence of discussion about careers

When asked about what their relatives had told them about reasons to choose or not choose a career like their own, the participants reported that they had received no advice, or that their

relative had only told them to choose a career unlike their own, as illustrated in the extracts below.

“I haven’t spoken to them about such issues” (P2).

“They told me nothing” (P3).

“They want me to do better jobs than those they were doing” (P5).

4.5.1.3 Estranged or unknown family members

Most of the participants reported that many of their family members were either estranged or unknown to them, and that as a result they found the exercise to be challenging;

“It was difficult. I don’t know much about my mother’s side. I only know a lot about my father’s side” (P1).

“It wasn’t easy because I don’t know a lot about my family because they were not too much close to me. I never chat with them about important things (careers) or things that they did” (P3).

The themes that emerged from the family genogram exercise, which prompted the discussion of sensitive and distressing information, reveals the importance of contextual sensitivity when planning activities which aim to facilitate the exploration of career-related family histories. It is clear that the Vondracek et al. model was formulated in a context where there are ‘social capital’ influences that might enhance career planning for people in more privileged positions. This was largely not the case for this study’s participants – rather it was the opposite.

4.5.2 Child’s extra-familial network

The examination of their adolescent years, namely the influence of their school careers, peers and any work experience on their career development, led to an initial exploration of and reflection on their self-knowledge. Participants were asked to think about what their teachers had told them about themselves, what subjects they had and had not enjoyed, to think about

any achievements or special interests cultivated while at school or with friends. The discussion also included thinking about any formal or informal part-time work experience during this developmental period.

Based on this discussion, participants were asked to make posters listing their self-perceived talents and abilities, interests, and values based on the points of discussion listed above and reflect on any previous occupations that they had thought about pursuing. The themes that emerged when asked about how they experienced this exercise are presented next.

4.5.2.1 Improved self-knowledge and self-esteem

While completing this activity, participants reported finding the task of identifying their strengths as difficult.

“It was not easy. Ja. This one was a little bit difficult. Especially to calculate my strengths. Because for example I am not sure what I enjoy doing most of the time. Other people cannot think quickly and write things about themselves. So it is good to have a guide” (P1).

“It was kind of difficult. It is easy to write. But talking about my strengths and weaknesses. The struggle starts there. You try to find them. None. It was kind of difficult for me” (P6).

Once completed, participants reported that the exercise of mapping out their self-perceived talents and abilities, interests, and values was valuable in that it facilitated the expansion of self-knowledge and served as a boost to their self-esteem, illustrated in the following extracts.

“I was able to go deeper on what I really want and know what I can do now. Doing this made me realise what I really want” (P1).

“It is valuable. It helps you realise and reach out to the inner you and come together with who you really are and what you really want which will boost you at the end. It makes you feel better about yourself” (P2).

“I had to think hard. Who am I? It was kind of difficult. We don’t acknowledge some of the things that are good about ourselves” (P6).

The self-assessment activity of writing these aspects down was reported as being helpful in constructing a positive self-narrative, with the opportunity to self-reflect on one's strengths, abilities and interests as enhancing their self-confidence.

In exploring the influence of various contextual factors such as school, peer relationships and part-time work on their career development, the following themes emerged.

4.5.2.2 School

Half of the participants had not completed matric. This was either due to personal and family ill health or family difficulties. One of the participants had to leave school to take care of a family member in Grade 11, and subsequently failed her Grade 11 year. She rewrote her Grade 11 year, however the disruption in her schooling negatively impacted her learning and she continued to perform poorly, eventually failing her matric year. A second participant was seriously ill during his matric exams and failed the year. A third participant left school during matric to return home to Grahamstown to take care of his father who had been stabbed.

Few participants described positive experiences when recalling the influence of their teachers on their career development. Little or no career education or counselling was provided to the students during their school careers. One participant reported completing a once-off self-knowledge exercise during a Life Orientation class.

“We didn't look at jobs. If we did that at school, we would be somewhere. Everyone would be somewhere now” (P3).

“They told us nothing” (P6).

A common finding was that participants felt that they had been forced by their teachers to choose subjects that were of little interest to them during the subject choice activity for Grade 10 onwards. Participants felt that they were not well advised in relation to understanding how

their school subjects were related to further education and training or occupational roles the world of work.

“We were given a piece of paper with groupings of subjects. But it was not linked to jobs though. I think it would have helped. I have seen people change subjects in Grade 11. People need to be told that some subjects will lead you here” (P1).

“Even in Grade 10 when you are choosing your subjects no one cares to ask you, even the teachers. You choose what you think what will be best for you, what is easier. But what about the future of the student. That is why education is failing” (P6).

The above responses illustrate the disjuncture between the school environment and the world of work, in terms of the absence of career-related information, poor subject choice, resulting in the absence of opportunity for the development of realistic and suitable occupational aspirations.

4.5.2.3 Peers as a positive influence

Two of the participants spoke positively about the influence of peers on their career development. One participant reported using his peer group as a source of study support and a space where they could discuss future career ambitions and dreams.

“I was having two friends. We were having dreams about being pharmacists and scientists and we were studying together all the time. Then they separated us, and that is where the problem started. It was my first time to fail after that” (P1).

This illustrates the importance of peer support in managing one’s school performance, and in supporting the development of initial career aspirations.

4.5.2.4 Part-time work

None of the participants reported having been engaged in any formal part-time work during their schooling. They had, however, had informal ‘jobs’ in the family home such as caring for elderly relatives, doing the hair of the female family members, cooking on special occasions,

and taking care of younger children. These roles appear to have influenced two of the participants' career-related thinking. The first extract is from a participant who reported wanting to be a chef. The second extract is from a participant who had been attracted to 'helping people' in some way (i.e., police woman or soldier).

"I was knowing how to cook and loving cooking at home even though I was the youngest. People told me that I am good at it" (P2).

"They would ask me to do everything at home for my grandmother. Even today I still wash my dad's feet. I would say that I like helping people. But I don't want to work in a hospital" (P5).

4.5.3 Adult extra-familial network

The participants explored their past, present and future occupational identities and ambitions; and the current influences, opportunities, barriers and supportive factors in relation to their career development. The SDS and CIP 'Career Categories' list were used to facilitate the exploration of their occupational preferences and to expand their knowledge about the types of occupational roles that exist. Included below are tables that provide information on the career situations of the participants.

4.5.3.1 Occupational ambitions

When listing and discussing their 'occupational daydreams' (SDS activity), all participants identified up to three or four and as many as seven occupational roles. The roles identified and people and/or contextual factors that influenced these choices are presented in the table below.

Table 4.2 Current occupational ambitions of participants

Participant	Occupational ambitions	Influencing factors
Mr X	Entrepreneur, Software developer, Sound engineer,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peers (dreamt of pursuing a career in the sciences with friends),

	Pharmacist, Scientist, Forensics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work experience (was told by fellow shareholders that he showed an affinity for business related tasks) • Macro-system i.e., lack of employment opportunities and available funding and training for entrepreneurs (Necessitating entering into entrepreneurial career)
Ms K	Chef, Hairdresser, Entrepreneur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family of origin (told by family members that she demonstrated skill in cooking and hairdressing) • Macro-system i.e., lack of employment opportunities and available funding and training for entrepreneurs (Necessitating entering into entrepreneurial career)
Mr U	Entrepreneur, Preacher, Motivational speaker, Director of NGO (offering basic support to those living in poverty, i.e., food and clothing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family of origin and macro-system (Motivated to enter helping professions due to growing up in a difficult family environment and in poverty). • Peer (Encouraged to take on a religious role by a mentor and peer). • Macro-system i.e., lack of employment opportunities and available funding and training for entrepreneurs (Necessitating entering into entrepreneurial career)
Ms N	Carer, Nurse, Lawyer, Teacher, Soldier, Social Worker	None identified
Ms M	Police Officer, Soldier, Lawyer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macro-system i.e., limited employment opportunities in local area (Necessitating entering Public Services) • None identified (Lawyer)

4.5.3.2 Work experience

Only one of the participants reported being involved in an occupation on a permanent basis.

The remaining participants had held temporary contractual positions or were occasionally hired for contingent work positions, that is, there existed no explicit or implicit contracts for long-

term employment or minimum hours. Participants noted that they entered these roles not out of interest, career ambition or choice, but out of necessity to alleviate financial difficulties and reduce the possibility of living in poverty. Their work experiences are presented in the table below.

Table 4.3 Adult work experience of participants

Participant	Occupational role
Mr X	Shareholder at Poultry Co-operative
Ms K	None
Mr U	Casual manual labourer
Ms N	ATM assistant, casual domestic worker
Ms M	Domestic worker, baby-sitter, sales representative for an insurance agency

When asked about their thoughts and the influence of the SDS activity on their career-related thinking, the following themes emerged from the participants' responses.

4.5.3.3 Enhanced self-knowledge

Participants reported finding the activity of reflecting on their various career ambitions, the discussion of SDS three-letter summary codes and the exploration of the matched occupations as useful. The SDS three-letter summary codes were found to enhance the participants' abilities to articulate their self-knowledge.

"I think that this was true (SDS three-letter summary code) and what I already know about myself. I like to investigate. I spend my time on computers. It was confirming what I know about myself" (P1).

"I totally love it. It was something like I couldn't even forget about it. It is talking about me. This is the real me" (P2).

"Do you remember when you asked why others don't wanna share their ideas or information, something like this can give them something to say. They know who they are but they don't know how to tell it. How to share. So it helped us a lot. Because for example I knew some of these thing. But others they click with what I think I already know. I was like yoh, this is me" (P3).

“I was shocked. Coz like when I was doing this exercise I didn’t know that at the end you will give us codes that explains in a more specific way about us. I didn’t expect that. So, it was a shock. Artistic, social, enterprising. I didn’t know those things. I just know I am me. You could never describe yourself in this way. It was good. Now I know myself better” (P6).

The activity thus appeared to reassure and confirm some participants’ self-knowledge, but also enabled others to articulate aspects of their interests more confidently.

4.5.3.4 Expanded knowledge about the world of work

Participants also found the exploration of the world of work and the numerous types of occupation roles helpful in expanding their knowledge about the types of career opportunities that they might explore. Limited knowledge about occupational roles was described as a barrier to their career development.

“I think it is lack of knowledge about jobs, you only know about the one that everyone is talking about but not the one that you are really interested in” (P2)

“I found them very good (SDS Occupations Finder and CIP Career Categories) because when you don’t know what you want to do and you get this kind of thing or if you don’t get the job you are looking for you will know where to knock next time” (P3).

“I didn’t know most of the jobs on the lists” (P6).

4.5.3.5 Distinction between life roles and career roles

When discussing and reflecting on their SDS three-letter summary codes, participants commented that the activities and occupations seemed more representative of themselves outside of work, rather than being representative of their actual career-related ambitions.

“Some of these describe me as a person more than as a job” (P2).

“We might like something, but we don’t want to do it for a living” (P6).

The above comments illustrate some disjuncture between self-perception and the occupational world.

4.5.3.6 Improved career planning capabilities

Included below is a table providing information about their previous career decision making practices.

Table 4.4 Previous career decision making practices of participants

Participant	Previous career decision making practices
Mr X	“All I can say is that I’ve failed in the past, by failing Grade 12 my life changed as a whole, I’ve didn’t made any attempts to be truthful in approaching my career”.
Ms K	“I’ve used the term of telling myself that this won’t work because when it comes to maths and accounting I’m clueless so as time went I know exactly what I love and wanted to do, I guess that was last year (2015) but I only left school 6 years back (2010)”.
Mr U	“I just looked at what is close to my heart. Everything I’m doing is about helping so I followed my heart”.
Ms N	“To stick on what I wanted and believing on my self”.
Ms M	“Poverty. Nothing more. I had to, I had no choice”.

Participants reported finding the opportunity to reflect on their past, current and future career situations useful. The opportunity to retrace their career decision-making processes in the past, and reflect on their current career ambitions, appeared to provide structure and direction, from which they could identify and thus reflect on previous career related decisions, and identify and put into practice some necessary steps to achieve their career ambitions.

“I was more focussed on poultry farming. I had forgotten what I want to really do. Which is to do Science or Pharmacy. When my business is successful I wanna go back to school. But I am not sure. I think I must upgrade my IT. Maybe I must study further things that are more collected” (P1).

“It made me realise that I didn’t do this and that. And that is where you came in and encourage us to fix where we did not do right. And then you were there to direct us

back into the way of going to reach our successes. I always wanted to be a lawyer but, in my mind, I've been telling myself that I wanna be a cop or a soldier then I will see where it takes me to be a lawyer. What it means now is that what I love most is at the back of my mind now" (P6).

When discussing the contextual factors within their adult extra-familial networks, the following themes emerged with regards to the influence of interpersonal relationships and other networks on their career development.

4.5.3.7 Interpersonal relationships

All participants indicated that they currently live in their family of origin home, which includes extended family members such as cousins, aunts and uncles. The expectation of making a financial contribution towards the running of the household was common among the participants. They highlighted that this expectation placed pressure on them to put their own career goals and aspirations on hold, to engage in any work that became available to them at any given moment.

"My father was not here in Grahamstown when I became a share holder in the cooperative. I was helping him while he was not here. But what I really wanna do is computing" (P1).

"I have the role that I wanna fulfil which is being a breadwinner at my home. At this point, eish, times are hard, and we are struggling, someone has to come in and put something on the table" (P6).

These comments illustrate their desires to contribute to their families, and the role of this in their motivations.

4.5.3.8 Networks

As previously noted, the research participants had all completed a life skills course prior to their involvement in this study. When reflecting on the availability of external resources in

facilitating career development, participants highlighted the importance of networks and organisations (i.e., the participant recruitment site).

“Not knowing and not asking for advice from people. Even this year if I had not been here (the participant recruitment site) I would still be sitting at home – not knowing that there are interesting things that I could do” (P2).

The above responses illustrate that the career-related decision-making process is influenced by factors both inside and outside of the control of the individual. The absence of work experience and career-related information, largely outside of their control, act as constraints; however, the desire to contribute to their families’ function as motivating factors in influencing decision-making processes. Interpretation of and reflections on the SDS results and on their career development to date provided perspectives on their current situations and aided in future career planning.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the process-related and content-related findings of this research study. In the following chapter, Chapter 5, these findings will be discussed in light of the research questions and aims, making reference to the existent literature on career development theory and interventions in South Africa.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the findings of this research study in light of the research questions and aims. The principal findings will be presented and discussed in reference to the literature on career development theory and counselling practice presented in Chapter 2. In conclusion, this chapter will discuss the strengths and limitations of the framework, and implications for career counselling practice. As the data analysis was investigative and exploratory, no causal explanations are proposed.

5.2 Meaning of findings in relation to the research questions

The aim of this research study was to investigate whether and how the examination of developmental-contextual factors facilitates career exploration by implementing the Vondracek et al. (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development as the basis of a career intervention programme. Further aims were to identify the contextual factors that influence career development. The principal findings and main conclusions are presented below.

5.3 The utility of the framework

The examination and discussion of developmental-contextual factors were found to facilitate career exploration in the following ways:

5.3.1 Enhanced self-knowledge, self-esteem and refined career identity

The various activities utilised in the programme enhanced the participants' self-knowledge. The family genogram activity (session 1) allowed for the acknowledgement of the historical inequalities experienced by their families both broadly and in specific reference to career

development. This reflection facilitated a sense of purpose in relation to the participants own relationship to the world of work, and the intersect between their lived experiences in relation to their career identities.

Although no causal explanations are offered here, and considering the wealth of literature that highlights the influence of family structure and processes on career development constructs (Whiston & Keller, 2004), more specifically career-decision making self-efficacy (Hargrove, Creagh, & Burgess, 2002 cited in Miles & Naidoo, 2016), the findings of this present research study suggest that the absence of or limited family influence on career development functioned as a barrier in their career development. Studies have also shown that career-related support and expectations of family members influence adolescents' career development to a greater degree than demographic variables (Paloş & Drobot, 2010). A recent study (Albien, 2013) supports this conclusion, with findings demonstrating the significant role that parents and family member serve in the career development of adolescents.

Given then the assumption of the value and impact of parental and familial involvement in career-decision making and development, while remaining cognisant of South Africa's history of oppression, which negatively impacted the career capital of many individuals (i.e., the parents and older family members of young South Africans), the potential value in adopting career development intervention strategies that provide information to and include parents or family members cannot be ignored.

The person-centred life-span approach of the framework encouraged the participants to take a meta-perspective of their own career development influences and current situations spanning developmental periods. In reflecting on their past, present and future selves, a sense of perspective was developed, which allowed for refined career identities and possibly improved self-esteem. This is thought to be because of the examination of their past, present and future

career aspirations, the remembering of more optimistic periods in time, and through the identification of their strengths and abilities, they constructed a more positive and coherent self-identity. The participants were afforded an opportunity to reflect anew on their life design process and identities.

Furthermore, the SDS activity proved a useful tool in providing a point of reflection for those participants who found the articulation of self-knowledge a challenge. It should be noted, however, that the enhanced or confirmed self-knowledge developed largely through the reflection on and discussion of the three-letter summary codes. This highlights the importance of employing a quantitative-qualitative approach when utilising objective measures such as the SDS.

Although widely and commonly criticised as prescriptive and insensitive to non-Western contexts, there appears to be value in the utilisation of assessment tools when used in a combined approach, especially when any existing self and career-knowledge is limited. Furthermore, considering the current efforts to develop and refine local psychometric instruments, the dismissing of psychometric instruments in career assessment and counselling may be premature. The utilisation of the SDS and CIP 'Career Categories' list promoted an increase in their knowledge about various occupational roles.

5.3.2 Improved career planning

The life-span view inherent in the framework, which allowed the participants to reflect on key points of their career development, facilitated improved career planning skills through retrospective reflections and discussion about the future. The group setting and co-reflection by facilitator and participants on their career development allowed for the illumination of motivations underpinning their previous and current career-related decisions. The examination of past and present career-related decision-making provided structure and direction in

formulating the necessary steps for future career-related planning. For example, in examining aspects such as their school careers, participants were encouraged to confront the more difficult aspects of their career development, such as not completing school. Although difficult, such aspects needed to be confronted in developing their career development strategies.

Savickas and Porfeli (2012) suggest that discussions focused on the processes of career related decision-making that take place within a group setting may be very useful to improving the career adaptability of individuals. Career adaptability requires a readiness to cope with the changing work and working conditions, identifying future dilemmas and knowing how to take action to increase personal control over their career-related future (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2016).

Participants constructively challenged and offered alternate perspectives on each other's choices and decisions. Through challenging and reflecting on career-decision making, the group setting encouraged participants to utilise problem solving skills. The group setting and the reflection on macro-systemic barriers that the framework encourages, are perhaps the valuable aspect of the framework in responding to the development of the need for individuals to be more adaptable.

5.4 The relevance of imported theories of career development and practice

The assumption of career maturity, career choice and career development as progressing in a linear fashion were concepts that were not in accordance with the lived experience of the participants. Findings from this research study demonstrated that the notion of 'choice' as a valid career-related construct to be irrelevant in a context where career-related decision making was driven predominantly by macro-level influences such as limited employment opportunities and poverty. Furthermore, the lack of career information or the opportunity to engage in work experience available to participants, served as barriers in supporting their reaching 'career

maturity'. This finding is represented in the literature, which highlights the problematic nature of constructs such as these when positioned within a context occupational deprivation, where individuals receive limited career counselling, and within a restrictive socio-economic climate (Stead & Watson, 1998).

The utilisation of an imported instrument (the SDS) was problematic. The completion of the inventory proved challenging to the participants due to the concepts and content of the inventory being irrelevant and unfamiliar. The occupations listed in the SDS 'Occupations Finder' were found to be outdated and proved not to be useful in exploring the various potential occupational opportunities. In this regard, the CIP with its list of locally produced occupations was found to be more useful. This is concurrent with the findings of recent research studies which argue for the development of local instruments which are contextually valid and relevant to current developments in the world of work.

5.5 Contextual influences on career development

In response to high levels of unemployment, the rapidly changing world of work, limited employment opportunities, and limited opportunities for further education at a tertiary level, current youth unemployment rhetoric, representative of policy and macro-level institutions, encourages young adults and adolescents to entrepreneurship and self-employment. For a discussion see Gwija, Eresia-Eke and Iwu, (2014) and Hughes and Schachtebeck (2017).

When exploring the career aspirations of participants, a common finding was that the option of entering an entrepreneurial occupation had been seriously considered. When prompted to explore this option further through discussion, it was found that participants' practical knowledge and a coherent identity as an 'entrepreneur' were undeveloped and limited. One of the participants, however, provided information that suggested that within the local community, the financing of entrepreneurial initiatives was available.

Entrepreneurial careers and the availability of entrepreneurship education and training programmes in South Africa, however, remain an area that requires attention, with current content and quality of entrepreneurship education programmes being inadequate (Matlay, 2006 cited in Leffler, Svedberg & Botha, 2010). A disjuncture therefore appears to exist between the career preparation in schools and the opportunities and demands of the world of work.

This finding suggests that the development of practices that support the integration of school subjects to the world of work, in addition to providing up-to-date and contextually relevant career-related information is vital; this may ensure that individuals possess the necessary self and career-related knowledge and skills in utilising the developing and emerging training and funding opportunities for young entrepreneurs. In addition, it seems that in the community setting the participants appear to have few role models who have succeeded in enterprise, so following up and building on such connections and the coaching of people by those who have succeeded needs to be carefully considered.

5.6 Limitations of the intervention

Findings suggest that the facilitation of the intervention by an individual with counselling skills is necessary. The inclusion of a psychometric instrument in the intervention would require a registered psychometrics or psychologist carry out the administration. This poses a limitation on the type of person able to facilitate the programme. It is recommended that the intervention be carried out in a resourced venue, with computer access and internet connectivity provided in the very least. This places a restriction on the types of contexts necessary for the optimum running of the programme.

5.7 Implications for practice utilising this framework

In reflecting on the strengths and limitations of the intervention, implications for further interventions utilising this framework are as follows:

Findings support a combined quantitative-qualitative approach to career assessment and counselling, concurrent with practice recommendations as found in the literature. If available, the utilisation of a locally developed instrument (i.e. the SACII or SAVII) is preferable. It is argued that this will allow for greater efficacy in career assessment and counselling practice, with superior validity in the assessment of career interests, and the provision of relevant occupational role information that reflects the local context (Rabie, 2017).

Literature highlighted the negative impact of unemployment on mental health and wellbeing, with findings demonstrating the potentially distressing nature of career exploration activities for individuals. Implications for practice are that future career development interventions are facilitated by an individual competent in, at the very least, basic counselling skills. Notwithstanding the availability of a facilitator with these skills, appropriate referral information for such services is recommended.

Related to this finding is the importance of careful planning and the sequence in which activities are introduced and completed. It is recommended that the family genogram exercise not be introduced first, and that the facilitator explore the meaning of 'family' – normalising non-normative and non-Westernised family systems. It is hoped that these steps will reduce the potential of individuals becoming distressed, and through the exploration of culturally familiar familial systems, enhancing the exploration of early influences on career development.

A profile of career-related information relevant to the local context of future career development interventions, prepared in advance, will serve as a useful adjunct to the programme in addition to alleviating the potential burden on the facilitator to function as a principle source of continuous career-related information during the programme. Although this framework reflects principals of empowerment and capacity building, it is recommended that 'homework' tasks be balanced with the provision of information readily in remaining

sensitive to the limited human capital, career capital, mobility capital and social capital that characterises the contexts of many disadvantaged South Africans.

As this research functioned to carry out an initial customisation and trial of the framework, it is recommended that the structure of the programme, the types of activities included and the 'discussion' prompts be refined through the incorporation of the insights and reflections generated from this study. For example, the inability to complete homework tasks within limited time periods suggests that the staggering of sessions along a lengthier period of time may enhance the structure of the programme. Considering the influence of family on the career development of individuals, further research and practice around this framework which focusses on the inclusion of family members in the intervention may prove a worthwhile activity.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Career education in South Africa has historically utilised theories of career development that take decontextualised and overemphasised individualistic approaches to career education (Stead & Watson, 2002). A more contextualised approach to understanding and informing career development theory and career counselling within South Africa has long been and continues to be advocated for (see Maree, 2013; Stead 1996). Considering this, this research study aimed to customise and trial the Vondracek et al. (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development with a group of employment-seeking young adults at a local community-based setting.

6.2 Limitations of the study

As this research study was a qualitative and exploratory investigation, the scope of the research was narrow, and sample size small. There were thus specific aspects of the constitution of the group that limit transferability of findings to other groups. The findings can therefore not be generalised or transferred and are thus not representative of the general population, or of all unemployed young adults.

However, in line with the aims of much exploratory research (Bhattacharjee, 2012) this study did generate initial findings in contributing to the paucity of literature about the career development of disadvantaged young adults in the South African context.

Furthermore, the scope of this research study did not allow for the discussion of aspects such as age and gender, which could have contributed to a richer exploration of influences on career development of young adults.

6.3 Reflections on the research process

As facilitator and researcher, the simultaneous dual processes of providing career counselling, in insuring that the ethical principal of beneficence be upheld, while simultaneously ensuring that the necessary data was collected in meeting the aims of the research study, proved challenging. At times, the difficulty in balancing the two processes in the focus group setting seemed to cause some frustration to participants, as well as place unnecessary burden on the researcher.

The sharing of career-related information by participants was limited. This necessitated that I invested time outside of the research meetings, in sourcing general career-related information, and investigate career opportunities specific to the local context. This is believed to be in part due to the fact that the participants had had little to no previous career education or counselling, in addition to their reduced social capital in comparison to those in more privileged positions, such as myself.

As I am a first language English speaker with limited proficiency in isiXhosa, the research study was conducted in English. At times this appeared to result in a barrier in communication between myself and the participants. The selection criteria had specified that participants be proficient in English, and all participants were, however certain English terminology was unfamiliar to second and third language English speakers, which interrupted the discussion process at times. Although language acted as a barrier at times, it also fostered the development of rapport between the participants and myself. The participants demonstrated great patience and indulged my curiosity into the language and cultural meanings and differences of certain phrases and concepts.

Additionally, the value of collaborating with the recruitment site cannot be overstated. The community-based organisation provided both the opportunity for participants to attend a life

skills course which complemented the career exploration programme, in addition to providing necessary access to computers and internet connectivity during the research meetings.

Overall, the process of conducting the research and collaborating with the young adults offered an invaluable first-hand knowledge about the career-related and wider lived experiences of a group of people that I otherwise may not have come into contact with in my professional capacity. Additionally, I gained professional insights about working in the field of career development. For example, I realised that my own ideas around the neutrality of ‘careers’ as a subject transformed. This transpired following the discussion about careers in one’s family, which had been distressing to participants. My assumptions had affected my level of sensitivity, in not being aware enough of the possibility of this discussion causing distress. This highlighted the disjuncture between my positionings and those of these young adults.

I urge future trainee psychologists, to consider interventionist research such as this, when selecting a research project. Although challenging at times, due to the many necessary logistical considerations in collaborative research, and initially feeling intimidated at the idea of facilitating a group of people, I strongly feel that my overall training as a counselling psychologist was greatly enhanced because of this experience.

6.4 Recommendations for future research and practice

The findings of this research study indicate that the utilisation of the Vondracek et al. (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development provided a positive experience for participants and was a valuable model in facilitating career exploration. It is therefore recommended that future research utilising the framework should be carried out. It is further recommended that researchers collaborate with existing community-based organisations. It is, however, recommended that within further research similar to this study, that the processes

of data collection, and career counselling, be discussed with participants beforehand more explicitly to avoid potential frustrations.

Furthermore, in aiming to contribute towards the development of psychological theories in the local context (Naidoo & Kagee, 2009), it is recommended that further research be completed across other age and cultural groups. The development of theory specific to the South African context could contribute to the development of career counselling and assessment tools that are both sensitive and relevant to our population.

On a practical level, as not all career exploration research is facilitated and conducted by a Counselling Psychologist, it is recommended that the availability of counselling services be integrated into the planning of future research and practice related to career exploration in recognition of the intersect between careers, the world of work and overall mental health and wellbeing. Further research and practice focussing on the development of career development interventions inclusive of family members, i.e., parents or caregivers is recommended, in taking an approach supporting the career-related counselling needs unique to the South African context, may be of value.

Career-related decision making begins as early as Grade 9 during the subject choice activity. As is evident from the research findings, subject choices not only have implications for the successful completion of matric but are inextricably linked to further education and training opportunities. It is therefore recommended that career counselling is provided as early as Grade 9 with a focus on subject choice and an initial introduction to the world of work.

It is also recommended that career-related interventions during school focus on developing an appreciation by learners of the applicability of school subjects to the world of work, in addition to providing up-to-date and contextually relevant career-related information. Developments in the South African job market continue to occur due to the increasingly skills-intensive

orientation of South Africa's economy. The content of career development interventions and career and subject education in schools, in assuring their utility, needs to reflect such developments.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



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RESEARCH PROJECTS AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

01 February 2017

Jacqui Akhurst
Department of Psychology
RHODES UNIVERSITY
6140

Dear Jacqui

ETHICAL CLEARANCE OF PROJECT PSY2016/12

This letter is to re-confirm that your research proposal with the following students as co researchers Modipadi Phala and Georgia Roberson with tracking number PSY2016/12 and title, 'Implementing a developmental-contextual framework for young people's career explorations', served at the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of the Psychology Department of Rhodes University on 6 April 2016. The project has been given ethics clearance.

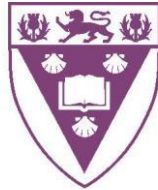
Please ensure that the RPERC is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Bohmke'.

Mr Werner Bohmke
ACTING CHAIRPERSON OF THE RPERC

APPENDIX B: PERMISSSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



RHODES UNIVERSITY

Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO RECRUIT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS FROM [NAME OF NGO]

☐ Tel: (046) 603 7417 ☐ Fax: (046) 603 7614 ☐ Email: g14r7568@campus.ru.ac.za

[Address of NGO]

[Date]

Dear [Name of Director],

My name is Georgia Roberson and I am a Masters Student in Counselling Psychology at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape (South Africa), under supervision of Professor Jacqui Akhurst. I am conducting, as part of the requirements of my degree, a research project which aims to facilitate career exploration through interactive learning, by means of focus group discussions.

The primary aim of this research is to customise and trial a group-based career exploration model based on the Vondracek et al. (1986) Developmental-Contextual Framework of career development. This approach has features that emphasise participants' interactive learning from each other through focus group discussions - attending five focus group discussions, over the course of five consecutive weeks. I would very much appreciate being given permission to recruit participants from the [name of NGO]. Ethical clearance has been granted for this research project in April 2016 by the Research Projects and Ethics Review Committee (RPERC) of Rhodes University.

Participants will be provided with information about this study and what their involvement will consist of. Participants will be asked to contribute to focus group discussions through the exchanging of ideas and personal experiences surrounding career choice, career aspirations and career interests. Participants will also be required to complete various activities on their own between meetings, which relate to career exploration, their experiences of career-related decision making and career-related thinking. This research project requires that volunteers are

over the age of eighteen. The focus groups will be conducted in English and require that participants are able to converse in English. I hope that participants will benefit from their involvement in being provided a space in which to explore and reflect on their career-related decisions and thinking, aiding in their self-knowledge surrounding careers, and provide the opportunity to practise and develop various career related skills (through homework assignments), and facilitating peer learning.

Participants' involvement in this study would be entirely voluntary. This means that they are free to withdraw at any time and there will be no penalty for doing so. While participants may be asked to contribute to discussions surrounding themes of a personal nature, they may also choose not to contribute about aspects of their life which they do not feel comfortable discussing. The focus group discussions will be audio recorded. All audio recordings will be stored in password-protected files. All names of participants and [name of NGO] will not appear in any research document

If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor, Professor Jacqui Akhurst. If you are in agreement with my recruiting participants from [name of NGO], please sign the attached permission-to-conduct-research form.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Georgia Roberson

Masters Counselling Psychology

Tel: 079 802 3492

Email: g14r7568@campus.ru.ac.za

Professor Jacqui Akhurst

Project Supervisor

Tel: 046 603 7084

Email: j.akhurst@ru.ac.za

PERMISSION-TO-CONDUCT RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

I, [name] the Director of [name of NGO], hereby grant permission for Miss Georgia Roberson to recruit participants from [name of NGO] for the purposes of conducting focus group discussion related to career decision-making and thinking.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RHODES UNIVERSITY - DEPARTMENT OF
PSYCHOLOGY

AGREEMENT BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I _____ (participant's name) agree to participate in the research project of Georgia Roberson on career development and exploration.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 0798023492 or g14r7568@campus.ru.ac.za. The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s) and is under the supervisions of Professor Jacqui Akhurst in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on j.akhurst@ru.ac.za.
2. The research is interested in exploring the various sociocultural and environmental factors the impact and influence one's career related decision-making and thinking.
3. My participation will involve contributing to focus group discussions through the exchanging of ideas and personal experiences surrounding career choice, career aspirations and career interests. I will also be required to complete various activities between meetings, which relate to career exploration. My participation will involve attending five focus group discussions, over the course of five consecutive weeks. Each of the focus group discussions will last for approximately two hours, between 14:00 and 16:00 on Monday afternoon's beginning on the 1 August 2016 until the 29 August 2016. The focus group discussions will take place at the Assumption Development Centre - Nceme Street, Grahamstown, 6139, South Africa.
4. I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my

participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction. Counselling services will be made available by the researcher should I experience any distress, embarrassment or offence as a result of participation.

6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
7. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.
8. If you would like to receive a summary of the completed project report please indicate by ticking 'Yes' or 'No' below and include your email address to which a summary report may be sent.

YES	NO

Email address: _____

Date: _____

Participant: _____

Researcher: _____

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

Age _____

Highest Grade Completed _____

1. Home

Where is your home/where do you come from? _____

Home language? _____

Do you have electricity at home? _____

Do you have TV at home? _____

Do you have tap water? _____

Do you own a mobile phone? _____

Do you have access to the internet? _____

APPENDIX E: CAREER KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE

I have had previous career education and/or counselling.	
I have adequate self-knowledge to choose a career.	
I have an adequate understanding of the career planning process.	
I am satisfied with my knowledge of careers and the world of work.	
I am knowledgeable about career-related resources.	
I am knowledgeable about online career-related resources.	

APPENDIX F: FAMILY GENOGRAM



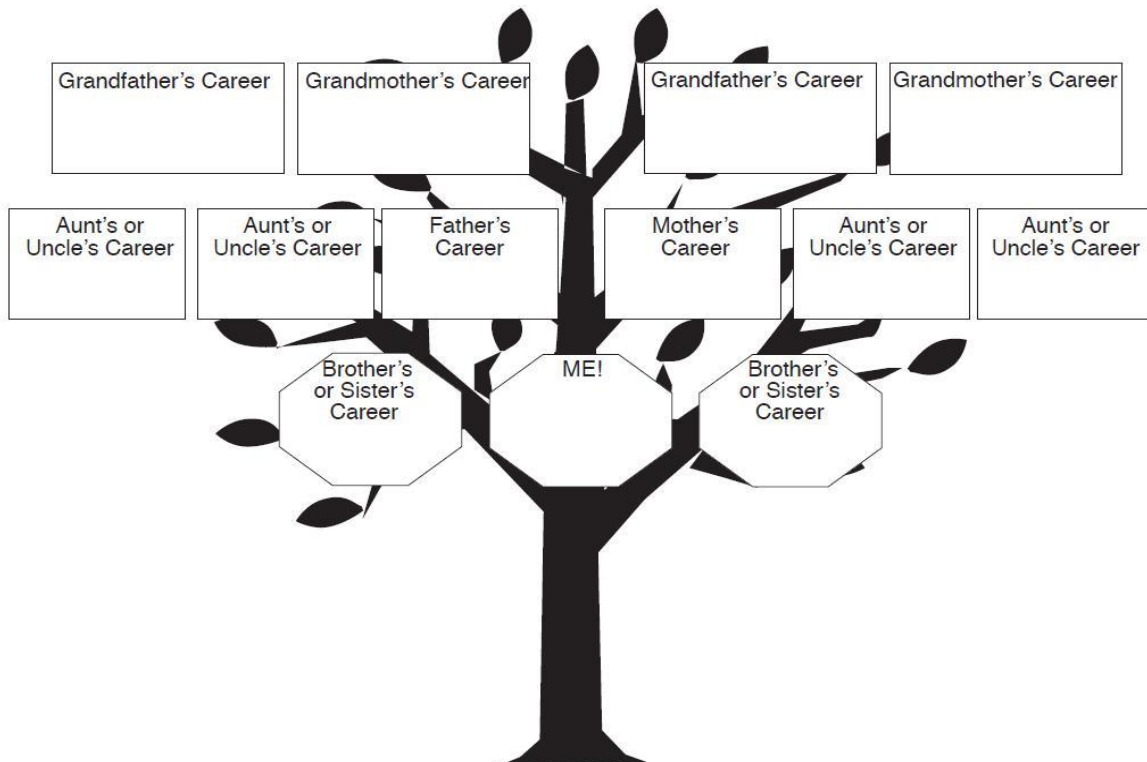
CAREER CONNECTION



Career Family Tree Worksheet

Take a look at the careers chosen by your grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives.

It's fun to think about how family members' career choices have influenced their lives—and it may help you identify things you want and don't want in a career. Fill in each box with the career of the listed person. Add boxes for more aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers, and sisters if you can.



Are there career areas that several of your relatives have pursued? If so, list them here.

How have your family members' career choices changed over time?

What do your relatives tell you about reasons to choose or not choose careers like theirs?

APPENDIX G: FINAL TEMPLATE

1. Family of Origin: Child	1.1. Insight
	1.2. Absence of discussion about careers
	1.3. Estranged family members
	1.4. Discussion of family as distressing
2. Child Extra-Familial Network	2.1. School
	2.1.1 Absence of career education
	2.1.2 Subject choice
	2.1.3 Peer support
	2.1.4 Failed matric year
3. Adult Extra-Familial Network	3.1. Enhanced self-knowledge
	3.2. Occupational choice and decision-making
	3.3 Limited occupational role knowledge
	3.4. Lack of work experience
	3.5 Interpersonal relationships and networks
4. Macro Level Factors	4.1. Economic conditions
	4.2 Lack of employment opportunities
	4.3 Poor quality of education
	4.2 Technological advances