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The Career Aspirations of Grade Seven Learners in a Community School

By

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SELF-REFLECTION

Although it is not commonplace to include a self-reflection in a document of this kind, I believe that the ability to reflect is critical to personal development and therefore I would like to share some of the experiences and lessons from the process of completing this minor-dissertation. To begin, the following excerpt from Biggam (2011, p. 203) pertinently describes my journey:

Throughout the life-cycle of your dissertation, from submitting your proposal to writing your concluding chapter, a wide range of conflicting emotions have been experienced: the excitement of starting a large research project; angst at trying to get a handle on your subject area; delight at reading the work of other, more experienced, researchers; confusion over the plethora of material; frustration at following blind leads; satisfaction in structuring one’s own thoughts and arguments; the pain of having to remove work that is, on hindsight, not relevant; and relief in completing the concluding chapter. Panic, pride, tedium, exhilaration … there are many nouns that could be used in equal measure to convey the feelings that you will have experienced in undertaking this dissertation.

Biggam’s excerpt (2011, p. 203) succinctly describes the varying and conflicting emotions that I have experienced along my research journey. Being a novice researcher is tough and there were many times when all I could see were disjointed lines that did not seem to come together to form a complete picture. A minor-dissertation is limited in nature and initially I found this difficult to get past. I became frustrated at times by the fact that my sample size was small and my initial idea of a comparative study was beyond the scope of a minor-dissertation. Having said that, I am grateful for these limitations as they have provided a boundary within which I had to work. The process of narrowing down a research topic and hoping that the research committee do not respond with “So what?” is harrowing, followed by the daunting task of putting together a research proposal. In writing a proposal, I learned from an insightful workshop I attended about the process of “funnelling”, starting with large-scale concepts and narrowing your information down to the point that you discuss your actual research topic. This however, is easier said than done.
The process of completing this minor-dissertation has involved much more than meeting the minimum requirements of my master’s degree; it has been a steep learning curve and one that has reshaped my thinking and built a foundation for future research endeavours. My knowledge of the research related to my topic has increased exponentially and I am inspired by some researchers who are making incredible strides in the field of career development. I have learned to accept constructive criticism and to separate my entire self from the research. This is difficult to do when you naturally invest so much of yourself into your work. However, I learned early on in this journey that I needed to maintain a healthy distance from the research so as not to take every piece of constructive criticism personally.

I have also learned that as a novice researcher, your first research endeavour is daunting in the sense that everything is a first and you learn the ropes as you go, making many mistakes along the way. This can provoke anxiety because, in my case, I had no prior research experience (at least not at a master’s level) or past “research success” to draw reassurance from. I have realised that the process of research is not linear, and there will be glitches. In this regard, I take comfort in Einstein’s words: “If you knew what it was you were doing, it would not be called research, would it?” (Goodreads, 2015). I have learned that the notion of perfection can be a stumbling block to progress and that sometimes the best chapters are those that you are the most decisive about and just “get done” without agonising over every sentence. In completing this dissertation, I have realised that perfection is not attainable but that excellence is.

Dr. Seuss said “Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the things you can think up if only you try!” (Goodreads, 2015). The process of producing this minor-dissertation has taught me to think — long, hard, deeply and critically, and to transition from simply descriptive writing to critical analysis. My supervisor has challenged me to answer the question “So what?” throughout my research, and this has taught me to think about what I am writing and why I am writing it. Purposeful, succinct information is what is needed, especially in a minor-dissertation.
Self-reflection throughout the research process has been key to remaining as unbiased as possible. Bracketing my own experiences and background was hard and as I was writing up my findings and integrating it with literature, I had to constantly be aware of not making unfounded inferences on behalf of the participants. I have found that having conversations with people about my research has helped me to keep reflecting and keep being curious. As people have shared their career dreams and their experiences of career guidance with me, it has challenged my thinking around my research topic and enabled me to gain a fresh perspective. I have learned that research is a privilege. It is a privilege to be given the opportunity to explore people’s stories and in the case of this research, their future hopes and dreams. This is precious information, not to be dealt with flippantly.

The journey of completing this research has taught me afresh the meaning of perseverance. There is an old song which was written by Billy Ocean around the time of my birth in which the chorus says “When the going gets tough, the tough get going”. The going certainly does get tough when completing a research endeavour, however that is when one has to “get tough” and keep going. A psychologist and mentor said to me “Keep doing what you are doing, keep making mistakes and just-keep-going”. This has been salient advice and has been comforting on the days when I really did not want to just-keep-going.

My supervisor describes a research endeavour as being like your child. You are involved in the process right from conception of the topic to completion and birthing of the final product. I can relate to this analogy and as Biggam (2011) so aptly states, the process is fraught with varying emotions and the relationship between the research and the researcher is often one of love-hate. I think it is only natural to become quite attached to your research (like a parent and child are to each other) when it has been an integral part of your life for such a long time, and personally, I feel a sense of pride as I fine-tune and polish this completed project, which is now ready for submission.

The once disjointed lines have now joined and the picture has colour. Just-keep-going.
DECLARATION

As the author of this minor-dissertation, I, Lucy Ann Robinson, declare that the work contained in this minor-dissertation is my own, original work and that it has not previously, whether in full or in part, been submitted to the University of Johannesburg or any other university for the purposes of a degree. Every effort has been made to reference all sources used and I have adhered to the highest possible technical and ethical standards. Data has not been fabricated or falsified and strict measures have been put in place to ensure that any form of plagiarism in this minor-dissertation is rejected. This minor-dissertation has been professionally edited and signed off by my research supervisor as complete.

Name: _______________________________

Signature: ____________________________

Date: ________________________________
AFFIDAVIT

AFFIDAVIT: MASTER’S AND DOCTORAL STUDENTS
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to confirm that I, Lucy Ann Robinson
(Full Name(s) and Surname)

ID Number: 8601070152084

Student number: 201300955 enrolled for the

Qualification: Masters in Educational Psychology

Faculty: Education

Herewith declare that my academic work is in line with the Plagiarism Policy of the University of Johannesburg which I am familiar with.

I further declare that the work presented in the Minor Dissertation (minor dissertation/dissertation/thesis) is authentic and original unless clearly indicated otherwise and in such instances full reference to the source is acknowledged and I do not pretend to receive any credit for such acknowledged quotations, and that there is no copyright infringement in my work. I declare that no unethical research practices were used or material gained through dishonesty. I understand that plagiarism is a serious offence and that should I contravene the Plagiarism Policy notwithstanding signing this affidavit, I may be found guilty of a serious criminal offence (perjury) that would amongst other consequences compel the UJ to inform all other tertiary institutions of the offence and to issue a corresponding certificate of reprehensible academic conduct to whomever requests such a certificate from the institution.

Signed at Randburg on this 25 day of October 2015.

Signature: [Signature]

Print name: Lucy Robinson

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The Career Aspirations of Grade 7 Learners in a Community School - Minor-Dissertation

ORIGINALITY REPORT

6% 4% 3% 3%
SIMILARITY INDEX INTERNET SOURCES PUBLICATIONS STUDENT PAPERS
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my God. You reserved a place for me and you are never too busy for me. Thank you for never giving up on me (even when I give up on myself) and for charting my path. Thank you for seeing the bigger picture and for your grace which is sufficient for every day. My faith and trust in you is my anchor.

To my supervisor, Dr D: thank you for your consistent support and for understanding me, quirks and all! I so appreciate your insightful comments and your thoughtful review of this research. Thank you for giving me the space to make this research my own, but for also stretching me to think deeply and creatively. Thank you for being available at all hours and for gently steering me in the right direction. I knew our first meeting in 2012 was no mistake and I suspect this is not the end of the road for us.

To my husband and best friend, Dan. Words will never do justice to the thanks that you deserve. Thank you for selflessly and joyfully supporting me to fulfil my dreams, for understanding my need to work, a lot, for making copious cups of coffee, giving plenty of hugs, for your stability and perspective, and for knowing when to propel me forward or to just listen. This is only to be expected from a man of your calibre. I love you.

Thank you to my parents, Patrick and Carol. You have been a pillar of strength, perspective, love and generosity. Thank you for demanding so little but giving so much. Knowing that you are always on the side lines cheering me on has been comforting and has enabled me to carry on when I have wanted to “call it a day”. Mom, thank you for always knowing what to say to make me laugh and for doing practically anything I asked of you. Your support is invaluable. Dad, thank you for your calm perspective, for always giving me time and for providing hugs when I was in a slump. I love you both.
To the rest of my family (both of origin and in-law), thank you for your prayers and support. You are one in a million and your words of encouragement have kept me going. Thank you for understanding my distraction and lack of availability with grace.

To Karen McCarthy, thank you for editing this research with such excellence and for taking a vested interest in it. You are talented beyond words and I appreciate that you were willing to do this for me. You have taught me to believe in myself and I appreciate and admire you, my friend. Thank you for challenging my thinking and for making me feel that my opinions are valuable.

To my other friends and colleagues whose interest in this research and in my post-graduate journey has motivated and supported me (there are too many to mention by name): thank you for your consistent support and for allowing me the space to be me and figure this journey out, whilst always being there to cheer me on. I appreciate you and I am so grateful to have you in my life.

To the staff at the community school, thank you for your willingness to allow me to conduct this research at your school and for your interest in and support of this research. You are part of my community and I look forward to our future endeavours.

Finally, to the research participants. Thank you for the time and effort it took for you to be involved in this research and for sharing your career hopes and dreams with sincerity and honesty. May you go from strength to strength as you pursue your career aspirations.
DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the research participants.

“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

Nelson Mandela

May you always have the courage to triumph over and conquer your fears, so that you may see your career hopes and dreams fulfilled.
ABSTRACT

The shift in career development in recent years towards a lifespan developmental concept of career behaviour (Watson, McMahon, Foxcroft & Els, 2010) where career development is viewed as occurring in stages, beginning in childhood and continuing throughout one’s life (Auger, Blackhurst & Wahl, 2005; Gottfredson, 1981), has meant that it has become increasingly more important to explore the career aspirations of primary school learners in order to assist learners in fulfilling their career goals. Studies show that children’s career aspirations are a reliable indicator of their future careers (Schoon, 2001; Seligman, Weinstock & Heflin, 1991; Trice & McClellan, 1993), and this contradicts the common misconception that children and adolescents are incapable of comprehending the world of work (Porfeli, Hartung & Vondracek, 2008).

Given the scarcity of literature on the career aspirations of primary school learners, there is a growing demand for research in this area in both an international and local context (Patton & Creed, 2007). Furthermore, research on the career aspirations of South African children from low socio-economic backgrounds is needed as the career research that has been done focuses on white, middle-class learners, and the relevance of this research to learners from differing socio-economic backgrounds is not clear (Arulmani, Van Laar & Easton, 2001; Venter, Watson & Fouche, 2006). The implications of such research could include the implementation of contextually-relevant career guidance programmes and support in order to assist learners to experience continuity in their career development and achievement of their long-term career goals.

Therefore, this research aimed to explore the career aspirations of grade seven learners at a community school. Set within an interpretivist paradigm, this research utilised a qualitative approach in order to conduct an in-depth exploration of the research topic. A generic qualitative research design was used to explore the career aspirations of the research participants because this design allowed for thorough exploration and included elements of description, interpretation and understanding (Merriam, 2009). Three grade seven learners from a local community school took part in this research and data collected included four specific data sets,
namely, a collage, questionnaire, sociogram and a focus group interview. The data has been analysed using qualitative content analysis in order to identify themes and recurring patterns as described by the participants.

From this research, it was found that first, the research participants had definite career hopes and dreams. These included aspirations towards a career that allows for independence and autonomy, aspirations towards a career that affords a better lifestyle, and lastly, aspirations towards a lasting career. Secondly, the findings of this research confirmed that family is a key influencer on the career aspirations of young people and although the participants did not aspire to any of their family members’ jobs, they admired personal character traits shown by family members, and these have influenced their career aspirations. Finally, findings showed that the participants are aware of certain barriers to their career development, however they are already cognisant of ways to overcome these barriers.

Recommendations based on the findings of this research are for structured, regular, and contextually-relevant career interventions to be put in place to “kick start” primary school children’s career development. These interventions should be made available particularly to children from low socio-economic backgrounds, as described in chapter five of this minor-dissertation and in keeping with Watson et al.’s (2010) call for a social justice perspective on career development. Furthermore, a course designed to assist learners to start their own businesses is recommended as part of this “kick start” programme and would be aimed at assisting grade seven learners to start their own, small businesses. Career counselling that focuses on career construction (Maree, 2013) is recommended and this would include the training of school counsellors, educational psychologists and teachers, to assist learners in their career development and the shaping of their career dreams. Family members could be included in this process as findings of this research show that their role is key in influencing their children’s career hopes and dreams.
KEYWORDS

Career development

Career aspirations (Synonymous with career hopes and dreams)

Lifespan developmental approach

Community school

Career guidance interventions

Social justice

Career circumscription and compromise
LIST OF ACRONYMS

STF – Systems Theory Framework
SASA – South African Schools Act
QCA – Qualitative Content Analysis
LoLT – Language of Learning and Teaching
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
CSI – Career Style Interview
CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The South African context is one of the most complex and economically unequal in the world, with a quarter of the population being unemployed and 20-30% of the population living in extreme poverty (Statistics South Africa, 2015). South Africa has a unique socio-political history and has inherited a legacy of inequality, particularly in terms of education. Two sub-systems of schooling exist in South Africa, one has been historically advantaged and the other historically disadvantaged. The historically advantaged system produces educational outcomes closer to those of developed countries, while the historically disadvantaged system produces a lack of proficiency in foundational skills (Fleisch, 2008; Van der Berg, 2008; Taylor & Yu, 2009). Almost half of the population in South Africa have received their education from the historically disadvantaged school system, which, according to Jansen (2009), is fraught with poor management, high drop-out rates, erratic teaching, low instructional time, a lack of resources as well as gangs, theft and drugs.

With the development of democracy in South Africa, education has been mandated through government policies such as White Paper 6 (2001) and the South African Schools Act No. 84 (SASA, 1996) as a key vehicle for the implementation of social justice. Social justice is a term used to define “actions that contribute towards affording equal access to all within a particular nation or society” (O’Brien, 2001 as cited in Watson, 2010, p. 24). As part of addressing the injustice in the disadvantaged school system, community schools were developed to provide alternative, quality education to learners from previously disadvantaged communities. Schools such as these have become a vehicle of hope for assisting young people to overcome the disadvantage of their background, and, over time, a key tool in the transformation of South Africa (Taylor & Yu, 2009). The community school referred to in this study was started in 2000 as a result of the influx of children who could not be accommodated by the one primary school in the nearby informal settlement. This particular community school aims to meet the needs of children and provide the life-enriching educational opportunities for them that many
South African youth do not have but need in order to develop into responsible, contributing and equipped members of society.

Career education forms an integral part of a learner’s overall development, particularly during adolescence (ages 12-20), where significant biological, cognitive, social and emotional changes take place as preparation for adult life begins (Geldard & Geldard, 2012; Watson, 2010). Although the Life Orientation curriculum in South African primary schools includes modules on “the world of work” as a way of introducing learners to careers (Department of Education, 2011), this does not seem to translate into practical, career guidance services. The services that do exist have been described as a “largely dispersed, devolved, ad hoc set of activities with little funding and no comprehensive source of information” (South African Qualifications Authority, 2009, p. 35). Watson (2010, p. 25) calls for a social justice perspective on career development which is defined as “one that exposes previously and currently disadvantaged children to the world of work, to career education, to tertiary institutions and career role models in ways that are contextually relevant and sustainable”. This perspective on career development has the potential to assist young people to rise above situations of poverty, crime and violence that can so easily ensnare them and that so often lead to the discontinuation of their education and career development, which often results in them being exploited with unskilled work, or simply sinking into unemployment. This new perspective begins with an exploration of young people’s hopes and expectations of pursuing a career in a certain field (Nagengast & Marsh, 2012), referred to in this study as career aspirations.

Many theories of career development acknowledge that early career development begins when a child first develops hopes and dreams for a career in a certain field (Gottfredson, 2005; Multon, 2000; Super, 1994). In recent years, there has been an increased demand both internationally and locally for information regarding the career aspirations of learners of primary school age as determinants of educational goals that shape an individual’s future and more specifically research that is contextually grounded in the context in which career development occurs (Patton & Creed, 2007; Schuette, Ponton & Charlton, 2012; Watson et al., 2010).
In considering the exploration of career aspirations in a South African context, I echo the call for ‘contextually rich’ research that is cognisant of the variety of ecologies or varying contexts (Nsamenang, 2009) within which one develops and exists, and which impact career development. In line with this view, Arulmani (2011a) states that a wide range of contextual factors are combined to shape a person’s attitude and mindset towards work, including factors like socio-economic status, culture, parental and family influence, and schooling.

This study sets out to explore the career aspirations of primary school learners, and this exploration will hopefully enable the implementation of contextually-relevant career intervention strategies in schools and communities. This is of particular importance in a South African context, where many children and adolescents have limited exposure to the world of work, to career education, to what is on offer at universities and other tertiary institutions, and to broader social connections and career role models (Akhurst & Mkhize, 2006, as cited in Watson et al., 2010). Furthermore, an exploration of the career aspirations of primary school learners allows for the nurturance of a sense of hope for the future and this in turn leads to a greater belief in one’s ability to overcome adversity (Ashby & Schoon, 2012). Finally, key stakeholders in education, such as educational psychologists, school counsellors, and educators could benefit from knowledge of children’s and adolescents’ career aspirations in order to assist them in gaining knowledge about careers, making important decisions regarding their future careers, overcoming potential career barriers and pursuing their aspirations with a sense of hope for the future (Auger, Blackhurst & Wahl, 2005; Flouri & Panourgia, 2012).

Having set the scene for the background to this research, the remainder of this chapter seeks to provide the reader with the motivation for this research, the problem statement explaining the gap in research and the importance thereof, the aims and objectives that this research intends to meet, the research design and methodology, and the ethical considerations. Certain key concepts referred to throughout this research are made clear for the reader and the chapter concludes with the clarification of the scope of the study.
1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THIS RESEARCH

My postgraduate training in educational psychology has placed emphasis on community psychology and on advocacy in community contexts (Pillay, 2003). Furthermore, much of my learning has been within an ecosystemic framework, and as a result, I have become acutely aware of the dynamic interplay and influence of various systems in an individual’s life (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002). I have a personal vision to optimise the wellbeing of communities with innovative and alternative interventions, designed in collaboration with members of those communities. This vision was birthed in 2013 when, with the help of sponsors and community members, a colleague and I established a counselling centre at the community school where this research took place. The project was part of our six month School Counsellor internship for our Honours in Educational Psychology Degree. This centre is a facility where various services such as assessments, counselling, learning support, group and family interventions are offered. We offered leadership training to the prefects at the school using a Creative Expressive Art approach (Levine & Levine, 1998) where we utilised contextual symbols and practices to explore aspects of leadership. The experience engendered a desire in me to become involved in other sustainable community interventions that will see young people empowered and their communities uplifted.

As part of my internship, I was required to do a certain number of Educational Psychological Assessments. The three participants in this study formed part of the group of children that I assessed, and as I got to know these learners, I became curious as to what their future hopes and dreams were in terms of a career. In conversations with the participants, I realised that each of them had aspirations that required further exploration if they were to be supported and developed going forward. It was then that my curiosity grew and the desire to pursue further research began.

1.3 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Given that in recent years there has been a shift in career development towards a lifespan developmental concept of career behaviour (Watson et al., 2010) where career development is viewed as occurring in stages, beginning in childhood and continuing throughout one’s life.
The Career Aspirations of Grade Seven Learners in a Community School

(Auger et al., 2005; Gottfredson, 1981), it has become increasingly important to explore the career aspirations of primary school learners in order to help them to fulfil their career goals. According to Auger et al. (2005), the importance of career-related decisions made during childhood has been supported by studies done with children and by retrospective studies conducted with adults. For example, an investigation conducted by Seligman, Weinstock and Heflin (1991) found that half of the study participants who were children believed they had already made decisions that would impact their future careers, and a retrospective study conducted by Trice and McClellan (1993) found that 23 percent of adults in their sample had made career decisions relating to their current professions in childhood. Finally, a longitudinal study conducted in the United Kingdom by Schoon (2001) with a large national sample indicated that career aspirations are indeed a reliable indicator of future careers. This contradicts the common misconception that children and adolescents are incapable of comprehending the world of work (Porfeli, Hartung & Vondracek, 2008).

This mistaken belief is evident in the large body of research on the career aspirations of high school learners (Auger et al., 2005; Schuette et al., 2012; Flouri & Panourgia, 2012), however, research conducted internationally and locally on the career aspirations of primary school learners is limited (Watson et al., 2010; Arulmani, 2011b). In fact, in South Africa, less than four percent of career research focuses on the career development of children, and the career research that has been done has focused on white, middle-class learners, and the relevance of this research to learners from differing socio-economic backgrounds is not clear (Arulmani, Van Laar & Easton, 2001; Venter, Watson & Fouche, 2006).

With the unique challenges that South Africa faces and the serious need for intervention in terms of career education in schools, research in the area of primary school learners’ career aspirations is necessary to assist them to overcome the challenges they face so that they are able to achieve their career goals, and experience continuity in their career development as far as is possible (Arulmani, 2011b; Watson, 2010). Given the high correlation between low socio-economic status and unemployment, often learners of lower socio-economic status need the most assistance in terms of career development (Chartrand & Rose, 1996). I therefore argue that a need exists for research that will shed light on the career aspirations of primary school learners and in light of this discussion, the main research question to be investigated in this research is: “What are the career aspirations of grade seven learners in a community school?”.
1.4 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THIS RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to explore the career aspirations of grade seven learners in a community school using Gottfredson’s (1981) theory of career development (explained in chapter two) as the theoretical framework. In addition to this aim, the objective of this study is to identify and consider various social, familial and contextual factors that impact the career aspirations of primary school learners.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Yin (2011) relates a research design to a logical plan for getting from one place to another, much like a map that gives a study direction. Figure 1.1 depicts a brief outline of the research design and methodology of this study. It should be noted that the concepts in Figure 1.1 have been described briefly and will be addressed in detail in chapter three.

![Figure 1.1 Diagram representing the Research Design and Methodology of the study](image)
1.5.1 Research paradigm

Guba (1990, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) describes a research paradigm as a basic set of beliefs that guide actions. As is shown in Figure 1.1, this research is situated within an interpretivist paradigm as it aims to capture aspects of the lives of the participants in order to understand and interpret meaning (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). Furthermore, the research falls within an interpretive theory of knowledge because the knowledge gleaned from this research will not only be constructed by an observable phenomenon, but also by a description of the participants’ beliefs, values, reasoning, meaning making and self-understanding (Henning et al., 2004).

1.5.2 Research approach

Within the interpretivist paradigm, a qualitative research approach was chosen for this research because the focus is seeking understanding and conducting an in-depth inquiry about the career aspirations of primary school children (Henning et al., 2004). In addition, the research findings emerged naturalistically as the research progressed (Yin, 2011). Given that qualitative research approaches are typically used to “explore new phenomena and to capture individual’s thoughts, feelings, or interpretations of meaning and process” (Given, 2008, p. xxix), this approach was deemed most appropriate.

1.5.3 Research design

Creswell (2013) states that a research design essentially points to the researcher’s approach to data collection, analysis and report writing. This research aimed to gain in-depth information regarding the career aspirations of a group of three grade seven learners from a particular community school and therefore a generic qualitative design was chosen. According to Merriam (2009) the basic or generic qualitative research design (these terms are used interchangeably but the term ‘generic qualitative’ will be used in this minor-dissertation) is common to educational research. Central to a generic qualitative research design is the premise that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds. As a result, a generic
qualitative design includes elements of description, interpretation and understanding (Merriam, 2009). Data is most often collected through interviews, observations and/or document analyses, as has been done in this research. The analysis of data involves identifying recurring patterns or themes that are supported by the data, and according to Merriam (2009), the overall result will be the researcher’s interpretation of the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon of interest. Although all qualitative research is concerned with how meaning is constructed and how people make sense of their lives and their worlds, the primary goal of a generic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). The aim of this inquiry was therefore to identify themes and recurrent patterns within the data in order to provide a rich description of the participants’ career aspirations.

1.5.4 Participants

In this research, purposive sampling was used, which, according to Morrow (2005), is employed within qualitative research to gain rich information. Rule and John (2011) state that in a purposive sample, participants are deliberately chosen because of their suitability regarding the research question. Therefore, to begin purposive sampling, one must first determine what selection criteria are essential. Participants in this study were three grade seven learners, ages 12 and 13 years, from a local community school in Gauteng. The participants underwent scholastic assessments conducted by myself in 2013 as part of my school counsellor internship and therefore rapport between the participants and I had already been established. Biographical information had been obtained for the participants from interviews conducted with their parents in 2013 as part of the assessment process. Further information regarding the participants will be provided in chapter three of this minor dissertation.

1.5.5. Data collection and analysis

Data collection took place at the community school over a period of three sessions on weekday afternoons after school hours. Once I had informed the principal and participants’ parents of the study, I received signed consent from them, as well as informed assent from the participants. Assent is a term which is used to express willingness to take part in research by individuals who are too young to give informed consent but who are old enough to understand the proposed
research in general (generally under 14 years of age) as well as its implications for them (Sibley, Sheehan & Pollard, 2012). Before data collection began, I met with the three participants to explain the research to them and to give them an opportunity to ask any questions or clarify any misconceptions. At this meeting, I arranged suitable times for the participants to meet after school on three afternoons and these were verified with their parents and the principal. We were initially going to meet over four afternoons, however the participants had a school outing on one of the planned days and therefore we met over three afternoons. A suitable venue at the school was organised by the principal and the participants were provided with refreshments and transport money to return home after each session. Data collection included the completion of a qualitative questionnaire, a collage and a career sociogram, as well as taking part in a semi-structured focus group interview. The semi-structured focus group interview was based on the participants’ collages and aimed at obtaining specific information related to the research topic through exploring what was “in and on the participants mind” (Patton, 1990, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 278) in relation to the research topic. Focus group interviews are particularly valuable in that participants get to hear one another’s responses and this enables rich conversation in that they make additional responses beyond their own initial responses (Merriam, 2009). These methods of data collection were chosen because it is believed that the triangulation of information allows for the provision of a rich description of the research topic that is trustworthy. A detailed description of each of the data collection methods used in this study will be discussed in chapter three. Data was analysed using qualitative content analysis (QCA) according to Creswell’s (2012, p. 237) steps for data analysis and is detailed in chapter three.

1.5.6 Trustworthiness in this study

There are four common criteria for establishing trustworthiness or ‘rigor’ in qualitative research (Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Myburgh, 2001). These are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. There are several ways in which the trustworthiness of a study can be upheld, some of which will be described in detail in chapter three. I will now briefly define each criteria and indicate how it was adhered to in this study.
Credibility refers to the accountability of the whole research process as well as the correlation between the findings of the study and the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). This will be ensured by a post-study meeting with the participants in order for the findings to be relayed to the relevant parties, and for comments and queries to be sufficiently addressed. If the participants cannot make a face-to-face meeting given that they have since left the school and are attending various high schools, this follow-up session may take the form of a telephone call. Furthermore, my effort as a researcher to accurately transcribe the interviews and keep a record of all documents will add to the credibility of this study. Transferability involves the level of applicability of this study to other studies (Strauss & Myburgh, 2001) and in this research transferability will be established by providing readers with a detailed account of the context within which this research will take place, as well as a rich description of the topic under investigation, to allow readers to compare this research with other situations (Shenton, 2004). Dependability is the extent to which the research findings would be consistent, should the research be replicated in similar contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and is closely linked to credibility. In this study, dependability will be upheld by the triangulation and overlapping of data collection methods, as well as a detailed description of the research design and processes involved in answering the research question. Finally, it was my intention to achieve confirmability in this study by remaining as neutral as possible, given that confirmability relates to a researcher’s ability to refrain from bias through reflective acknowledgment (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, an audit of my research, which includes detailed record keeping of the data collection process, interviews and documents such as the participants’ sociograms and collages, will be kept in order to ensure accuracy (Shenton, 2004). Finally, confirmability will be achieved by verifying the research findings with the participants.

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout this project. These included the necessity of explaining the research to the principal (in the form of a letter of request as seen in Appendix B1 and thereafter a face-to-face meeting before permission was granted to carry out this research – see Appendix B2) and the participants’ parents (via telephone and a letter as seen in Appendix C1), as well as obtaining informed consent from them. Informed assent (given that the participants are minors) was obtained from the participants themselves (after meeting with them to explain the research) where they agreed to take part in the project and for
the information to be used for research purposes. The consent and assent forms were written in language that could be understood by the participants and their parents (see Appendix C2). At the initial meeting with the participants, voluntary participation was highlighted as well as the participants’ right to withdraw at any time, without negative consequences. The participants were given an opportunity to ask questions related to the project and to voice any concerns they had. Importantly, the fact that they were not being given a mark for taking part in the study was highlighted to them. Furthermore, confidentiality would be maintained throughout the study and this included keeping all documentation anonymous and private. Participants will remain anonymous throughout this study and will be referred to as participant A, B and C. They have however been informed of possible limits to confidentiality. I have endeavoured to be respectful and honest at all times towards those involved in this research and have made every effort to meet the needs of the participants to allow for participation. Feedback to the participants, their parents and the school principal will be offered once this research is complete and copies of the final minor-dissertation will be given to the various parties to keep if they wish.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The term ‘career’ is synonymous with terms such as ‘work’ ‘job’ and ‘occupation’ in some contexts, and is embedded in prevailing philosophies, socio-economic influences, political factors and social practices (Arulmani, 2006). In this research, the term ‘career’ can be understood broadly as a pattern of work experiences over the entire lifespan of a person, an understanding of which is established alongside a grasp of the transitions from one stage of life to the next (Weinert, 2001). Furthermore, a person’s career becomes a story that they compile about themselves and that is shaped over their lifetime (Savickas, 2003).

Career development is a lifetime process that encompasses the growth and change of childhood, the formal career education at school, and the maturational processes that continue throughout a person’s working adulthood and into retirement (Baer, Flexer, Luft & Simmons, 2008, as cited in The National Qualifications Framework, 2012, p. 12).
Career aspirations within this study can be understood as a learner’s hope and expectations of pursuing a career in a certain field. Many of these are based on societal norms and parental expectations, and are influenced by different contextual factors (Nagengast & Marsh, 2012; Flouri & Panourgia, 2012). Having career aspirations helps learners set objectives and be motivated to meet their long term career goals (Quaglia & Cobb, 1996).

Community school refers to an independent school, subsidised by government funding, business sponsorships and community donations. The particular school that this research took place at provides education to underprivileged learners from surrounding informal settlements. In order for professionals working in such school communities to support learners’ long term career development, an initial understanding of career aspirations during childhood and young adolescence is important (Watson et al., 2010).

Social justice can be defined as actions that contribute towards affording equal access to all within a particular nation or society (O’Brien, 2001 as cited in Watson, 2010, p. 24). In terms of career development, social justice is a vehicle to expose previously and currently disadvantaged children to the world of work, to career education, to tertiary institutions and career role models in ways that are contextually relevant and sustainable (Watson et al., 2010).

Career guidance is defined by The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2002, p. 4) as a type of counselling that consists of four elements: (a) helping individuals to gain greater self-awareness with regard to their interests, values, abilities, and personality style, (b) connecting individuals to resources so that they can become more knowledgeable about jobs and occupations, (c) engaging individuals in the decision-making process in order that they can choose a career path that is well suited to their own interests, values, abilities and personality style, and (d) assisting individuals to be active managers of their career paths (including managing career transitions and balancing various life roles) as well as becoming lifelong learners in the sense of professional development over the lifespan. Career guidance can take different forms and should be altered to suit the needs of those receiving it.
1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Chapter One: Orientation to the research

This chapter has provided the context, as well as the problem statement and motivation for this research. The aim and objectives of the research have been covered, as well as the research paradigm, design and methodology. A brief diagrammatic description (Figure 1.1) has been included for clarity. Furthermore, I have discussed the ethical considerations that were adhered to in this research, and finally, key concepts have been defined. This minor-dissertation is divided into five chapters, with the remaining four chapters highlighting the following:

Chapter Two: Literature review

The second chapter provides the theoretical framework for this research and a review of literature related to the research topic. Career development, and more specifically career aspirations are unpacked and examined using Gottfredson’s theory of career circumscription and compromise as the theoretical framework. This theory was first developed in 1981 and further advanced in 1996 and 2005. Other theories of development are discussed and their relation to career development is explained. Both international and local literature on the career aspirations of primary school children is discussed, with a focus on the South African context. Finally, the importance of the career aspirations of primary school children as a reflection of hope for the future is examined.

Chapter Three: Research paradigm, design and methodology

The third chapter provides a detailed account of the methodology used in this research, which includes the research paradigm, approach and design. The aim of this research and the role of the researcher in qualitative research is considered with reference to ‘voice’ research and the importance of listening to the voices of the research participants. In this chapter, I provide a self-reflection as the researcher as a means of remaining conscientious throughout the research process. The setting and context of the research is described and a detailed account of the research process is included. The research methodology section includes a discussion of the data collection, analysis methods and processes used. Finally, an account of the trustworthiness of this research is given.
Chapter Four: Data presentation, data analysis and interpretation of findings

In the fourth chapter, findings from the collection of data will be carefully examined using qualitative content analysis. Three main themes and seven sub-themes have been identified and analysed. These themes and sub-themes are presented descriptively using the four data sets (questionnaire, collage, sociogram and focus group interview) and literature (from chapter two) has been integrated with the themes.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

The fifth chapter provides a conclusion to and overview of the research in its entirety. This chapter summarises the procedures used in this research, as well as the findings that emanated from the research question “What are the career aspirations of grade seven learners at a community school?” Furthermore, recommendations based on the findings of this research as well as recommendations for further research are made. The limitations and strengths of this research are discussed before drawing this minor-dissertation to a close.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has orientated the reader within this research. The background to the research has been set and the motivation thereof has been explained. The problem statement, which explains the necessity of this research, has been discussed. The aims and objectives of this research are stated and the research design and methodology utilised in this research is clarified using a diagram to provide an initial description of this. The ethical considerations in this research have been highlighted and key concepts have been clarified for the reader. Finally, this minor-dissertation has been dissected chapter-by-chapter. Chapter two provides a review of relevant literature that has informed this study and gives a detailed explanation of its theoretical framework.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the career aspirations of grade seven learners in a community school, and in order to do this, it is necessary to establish both a theoretical and a conceptual framework. This review of literature does not seek to provide information on all studies done in the field; it does however seek to provide an overview of some of the literature which is directly relevant to this study. The chapter begins with defining the term ‘career’ and takes into account different factors that influence this definition as well as emphasising the difference between ‘work’ and ‘career’. In addition to this, career development from a lifespan approach is discussed with a brief focus on theories which seek to understand career development in this regard. This leads to a detailed account of Gottfredson’s (1981) circumscription and compromise theory of career development, as this is the theoretical framework through which career aspirations are viewed in this research. Furthermore, adolescent development is discussed in terms of its relevance to the research topic from both a Eurocentric and an Afrocentric perspective, as well as the effect it has on the career aspirations of adolescents. Career aspirations from both an international and a South African perspective are discussed and the influence of factors such as socio-economic status, family, culture and schooling are detailed. Finally, the importance of primary school children’s career aspirations concludes this chapter with a focus on career aspirations as a reflection of hope.

2.2 DEFINING THE TERM ‘CAREER’

Arulmani (2006) explains that the idea of a career emerged out of a response to the needs expressed within a western, industrialised culture. Events in history such as the Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution transformed approaches to work and in turn changed people’s expression of work behaviour. As a result, the notion of a personal career became prominent. However, in non-western countries, the notion of choosing a personal career was not intrinsic to the culture and economic environment at that time in history, and therefore was
a foreign concept to many people (Arulmani, 2006). In countries like South Africa, for example, the concept of a career was foreign to many who were merely trying to survive in the Apartheid years, which was in contrast to developed countries where the concept of career was well established (Arulmani, 2006).

In defining the term ‘career’, one should be cognisant of the fact that the concept of ‘career’ is embedded in prevailing philosophies, socio-economic influences, political factors and social practices which work together to shape mindsets about careers (Arulmani, 2006). Defining the term ‘career’ is therefore difficult given the multidimensional and multicultural contexts careers now occur in. For example, Asians and Africans would tend to define ‘career’ and hold career beliefs that reflect strong family and community orientations, whereas westerners would tend towards a more individualistic definition of ‘career’ (Arulmani, 2001). Given that the concept of personhood in African cultures in situated within family and community, the concept of ‘career’ is relationally and socially embedded and the individual moves to the rhythm of a “communal dance” with the rest of the community (Ogbonnaya, 1994, as cited in Stebleton, 2007, p. 295). Having said that, in today’s world, with the rise of westernisation, industrialisation and globalisation, career choices have become a part of the reality of people living in developing countries. However, the expressions of ‘career’ still differ from context to context (Arulmani, 2006; Maree, 2013).

Arulmani, Bakshi, Leong and Watts (2014) state that the term ‘career’ can be plotted along a continuum, with career as it is defined by many western societies being on the one end and on the other end the term ‘work’, which denotes the absence of the notion of career. The term ‘work’ is often used to refer to unskilled labour, which is the occupation of the less empowered members of society. Along the continuum would be various manifestations of ‘career’, all of which are influenced by social, cultural, economic and psychological factors. In this research, the term ‘career’ is understood as a pattern (not always linear) of work experiences which spans across a person’s life and reflects a transition from one stage of life to the next (Weinert, 2001). Furthermore, a career is seen as not only a sequence of jobs, but a story or career narrative (Maree, 2011) that a person builds about themselves (Maree, 2011; Savickas, 2003; Weinert, 2001).
2.3 CAREER DEVELOPMENT FROM A LIFESPAN APPROACH

Watson et al. (2010) state that there is a general movement in career theory towards a lifespan approach in career development. This is an approach that considers career development as occurring throughout an individual’s life, from early childhood to adulthood. Super’s (1994) well-known theory of career development describes it continuing over one’s lifespan. Career development from Super’s perspective is characterised by a sequence of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement or decline, which are sub-divided into periods and characterised by developmental tasks. For example, Super (1994) describes a growth stage where children’s innate curiosity about the world around them translates into fantasy career aspirations and then an increase in the potential of pursuing a certain career (Watson et. al., 2010). Furthermore, in keeping with a lifespan approach to career development, but taking context into account, Patton and McMahon (2006) developed a systems theory framework (STF) of career development which provides an umbrella framework within which theories of career development can be placed. It emphasises the intimate connection between the individual and their environment throughout their lifespan and the effect that this has on their career development. Given the move in career psychology towards a lifespan approach, it has become increasingly important to explore the career aspirations of children and adolescents as an imperative part of their career development and a determinant of their long-term career success (Watson et al., 2010).

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - GOTTFREDSON’S THEORY OF CIRCUMSCRIPTION AND COMPROMISE

According to Schuette et al. (2012), the theory of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson, 1981) is one of the most prominent and well-cited theories that attempts to explain how children’s career aspirations develop. This theory describes how career choice develops in young people and focuses specifically on the content of young people’s career aspirations, and their course of development. In later years, Gottfredson (2005, as cited in Leung, 2008) added to her theory by further emphasising the role that both genetic make-up (interests, skills, values) and an individual’s environment play in their career development. She views the individual as an active agent who is capable of influencing their environment and in
this sense, she likens career development to a self-creation process whereby an individual looks for ways to express their genetic tendencies within the boundaries of their cultural environment.

The theory of circumscription and compromise (Gottfredson, 1981) has been distinguished from other career development theories for four specific reasons. First, career development is seen as an attempt to implement two selves: a social self and a psychological self. In other words, career choice is seen as an attempt to place one’s self within a broader social order. The theory places importance on the more public aspects of career choice such as familial background and social class, as opposed to aspects such as values and personality, which are often less overt. Gottfredson’s theory emphasises the creation of a social identity, which can be understood as that part of an individual’s self-concept that is derived from membership in a particular community, and Gottfredson (1981) asserts that career aspirations are highly influenced by a desire to establish and protect one’s social identity. In this research, aspects such as social class and family background may be expected to affect the participants’ career aspirations and ultimate choice of career. Furthermore, the notion of the individual within a broader social order is systemic in nature and relevant to this research in that each of the participants are situated within both micro (family, school) and macro (education system, poverty) systems that interact with one another and are bound to affect their career aspirations.

Secondly, the theory of circumscription and compromise focuses on how perceptions of self and occupations develop. This relates to cognitive development in that as a young person’s cognitive growth advances, they are able to perceive and understand the more abstract features of self, occupations and life that concern adults (Gottfredson, 1996, p. 182). In exploring the career aspirations of grade seven learners, this research considers, along with the participants’ stage of psychosocial and career development, their cognitive development and the impact this has on their career aspirations. According to Piaget’s stages of cognitive development (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969), the participants in this study are in the formal operations stage, where there is characteristically an increase in their ability to think abstractly, use metacognitive skills and weigh possibilities against reality (Cockcroft, 2009). Furthermore, thinking at this stage becomes more systematic and adolescents are able to plan and think ahead. In relation to this research, the participants are at a cognitive level where they typically are able to think abstractly about their career aspirations and they are able to “weigh up” the career possibilities based on various factors.
Thirdly, the theory of circumscription and compromise considers how occupational choice is a process of eliminating options and narrowing choice, which is a process that begins in childhood. This process of elimination and ‘narrowing down’ is referred to by Gottfredson (1981) as circumscription and it can be defined as the process by which young people narrow down their “social space” (Gottfredson, 1996, p. 187) to an acceptable size. Social space according to this theory relates to the range of career alternatives that a person may consider as acceptable. This ‘narrowing down’ process is a progressive elimination of occupations that an individual deems unacceptable for various reasons, until one particular occupation is chosen. The notion of social space is also referred to in Gottfredson’s (1996, p. 187) theory as the “zone of acceptable alternatives”. This ‘zone’ varies in size, location, clarity and stability according to aspects such as social class, ability and socio-economic status. According to Gottfredson’s (1981) theory, the research participants are in the stage where they should still be establishing their zone of acceptable alternatives.

Finally, this theory is distinguishable from others in that it pays attention to how individuals compromise their goals as they come to terms with the reality of implementing their career aspirations (Gottfredson, 1981). Compromise is defined as the process whereby young people surrender their preferred career aspirations for those that are more accessible, although possibly less compatible. Compromise can fall into two categories: anticipatory compromise, occurring when an individual anticipates external barriers to their chosen career, or experiential compromise where an individual actually encounters a barrier to their chosen career and has to choose an alternate career path. The idea of compromising career goals in relation to career aspirations is important in this study as this may prove to be a reality for pre-adolescents such as those in this research who are faced with challenges such as limited financial resources, difficult home situations and the pressure of supporting their families. Compromise can become particularly difficult for an individual when they are forced, due to external factors, to move outside of their zone of acceptable alternatives and to make a major compromise with regard to their desired career choice. This may in turn radically affect their self-concept (Gottfredson, 1996). The link between these four aspects of the theory and this research is critically discussed and integrated in the data analysis chapter.
2.4.1 Gottfredson’s stages of career circumscription

The theory of circumscription and compromise asserts that the development of career aspirations occurs in four stages, with each stage requiring a higher level of general mental development and personal integration. As an individual navigates the stages and gains a better understanding of themselves and their potential careers, so their “social space” or “zone of acceptable alternatives” becomes narrower (Gottfredson, 1996, p. 187). The four stages of career circumscription are based on the study of diverse issues including aspirations, young people’s perceptions of social class, occupations and the self. These stages and corresponding ages are indicated in Table 2.1 with the research participants’ stage of career circumscription indicated in blue.

Table 2.1: Stages of Career Circumscription (Gottfredson, 1996).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE NUMBER</th>
<th>ORIENTATION</th>
<th>AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage one</td>
<td>Orientation to size and power</td>
<td>Ages 3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage two</td>
<td>Orientation to sex roles</td>
<td>Ages 6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage three</td>
<td>Orientation to social valuation</td>
<td>Ages 9-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage four</td>
<td>Orientation to the internal, unique self</td>
<td>Ages 14 and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Gottfredson (1996), orientation to size and power takes place when a child is in their preschool years and consists of a shift from magical, intuitive thinking to one that recognises careers as adult roles. Children at this stage move from aspiring to be fantasy characters to recognising that there is an adult world and that a career forms part of that world. In the second stage of career development, children have begun to understand the concept of sex roles and therefore at this stage, career aspirations reflect a rigid adherence and concern for doing what a child perceives as appropriate for their sex (Gottfredson, 1996). However, it is vital to note that not all children conform to fixed categories of gender roles and therefore, in terms of their career aspirations, they may not always adhere to or be concerned with doing what is deemed appropriate for their sex (Loutzenheiser, 2015).
When individuals enter the third stage of career development – that of orientation to social valuation – children and adolescents start to become aware of and are sensitive to social valuation. This includes an awareness of an occupational hierarchy which determines how people are regarded by others. Individuals at this stage of career development have a greater awareness of their intellectual ability relative to their peers and their desire to compete for more difficult careers begins. In addition to this, young people at this stage develop an awareness of career choices that are acceptable and unacceptable to their community. This stage of career development involves the incorporation of new elements, such as social class and ability, into one’s self-concept and results in the rejection of careers that are of unacceptably low prestige (Gottfredson, 1981).

This stage of career development correlates with the participants’ stage of cognitive development, as set out by Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). At a formal operational level and as with Gottfredson’s (1996) third stage of career development, the participants are able to evaluate career choices and reject or accept certain careers. They are also able to incorporate new elements into their self-concept, and this is enabled by their stage of cognitive development.

Furthermore, at a Senior Phase level, the grade 7 Life Orientation curriculum contains a module called “the world of work” and learners are taught about different careers through various lesson activities related to career fields as well as the value of choosing a career that fulfils an individual’s personal needs and potential. This module also includes information on qualities relating to each field, work environment and activities in each career field, opportunities within each career field, and challenges within each career field (Department of Education, 2011). In this sense, the curriculum teaches adolescents to evaluate different careers and so they begin to “weigh up” acceptable and unacceptable careers, as stated by Gottfredson (1996).

The fourth and final stage of career development, according to this theory, takes place when an individual becomes orientated to their internal, unique self and becomes concerned with who they are as a distinct individual. Career exploration and aspirations are now confined to the zone of acceptable alternatives, established in the previous three stages, and the focus is on
careers that seem congruent to the sense of self that an individual desires to project. The process of compromise is initiated during this final stage of career development.

Although the theory of circumscription and compromise is a prominent theory of career development and has evidence of some relevance from empirical tests, Gottfredson (1996) acknowledges that there are elements that this theory ignores. For example, issues that may develop in adult career development are not considered; these include job satisfaction or career change. The theory also focuses primarily on the public aspects of self-concept (such as social class) rather than internal aspects of self-concept (such as personality) which are influential in directing an individual’s career aspirations. However, these have been focused on in more depth as Gottfredson has further developed the theory in later years (Leung, 2008). Furthermore, Leung (2008) states that Gottfredson’s theory has been criticised for two reasons. First, given that the variables of Gottfredson’s theory, such as prestige, circumscription and compromise, are difficult to make concrete, the theory can be difficult to test empirically. Secondly, the proposed developmental process lends itself more to a longitudinal study where individuals are tracked through the various career development stages as opposed to at one, isolated stage (Leung, 2008, p. 124). However, Gottfredson’s theory offers a unique perspective on career development, and usefully examines how her variables fit into an individual’s broader socio-economic, familial and cultural environment (Leung, 2008).

Although many western theories of career development have been criticised for being irrelevant within a South African context (particularly because they do not account for multicultural, socio-political and economic factors that pervade South African life (Watson et al., 2011)), the theory of circumscription and compromise is, in my opinion, relevant to a South African context in that it gives sufficient focus to broader environmental and societal issues, as well as to socio-economic status (Watson et al., 2011). Furthermore, the theory of circumscription and compromise is fundamentally developmental in nature, and it considers career development from childhood to adolescents and adulthood, and it focuses on career aspirations specifically. It is for these reasons that it was deemed most suitable as a theoretical framework for this research.
2.5 ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

The participants in this study were in the early adolescent stage of development at the time of this research (12 - 13 years of age). When exploring their career aspirations, it is necessary to take note of their developmental stage and its characteristics, and its relation to their career development. According to Geldard & Geldard (2012) adolescence is a stage (between the ages of 12 and 20) where significant biological, cognitive, social and emotional changes take place as preparation for adult life begins. Schoon & Polek (2011) state that adolescence is a critical juncture in the development of an individual’s career, given that the hopes and expectations expressed by young people during adolescence can potentially have important consequences for later development.

The research participants were Black-African males, one isiZulu, another isiXhosa and the third tshiVenda. In considering the developmental stage of the participants in relation to their career development, I have focused on two theories – one a predominantly western theory of psychosocial development which I believe is generalisable and therefore relevant to this research, and the other a theory of development from a more local perspective which I believe is both necessary and relevant given the background of the participants. It needs to be noted that although many theories of development (such as that of Erickson and Piaget) propose a linear progression of development, consideration of the influence that varying and unpredictable contextual factors (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) have on development is essential. The accumulative influences of an individual’s varying contexts can mean that development is often a non-linear process. In this research, Erickson’s stages of psychosocial development (Donald et al., 2002) have been used as a means by which to identify and compare the research participants’ varying stages of development, however I acknowledge that these stages are by no means an exhaustive account of the multifaceted individuals who agreed to participate in this study.
2.5.1 Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development

Erikson is an influential theorist who is renowned for his development of the psychosocial theory of human development (Donald et al., 2002). Important to Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development is the emphasis that is places on social context. Meece and Daniels (2008) note that Erikson’s theory acknowledges that relationships and societal expectations have an effect on an individual’s development. Similarly, Gottfredson’s (1981) theory of circumscription and compromise in career development takes into account the environmental and social issues that affect an individual’s career development. It is my contention that there is a discernible link between Erikson’s fifth stage of psychosocial development and Gottfredson’s third stage of career development, which I explain in the section that follows. Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development are summarised in Table 2.2 with the research participants’ stage of development highlighted in blue.

Table 2.2: Erikson’s Stages of Psychosocial Development as explained by Hook (2009, p. 301)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE NUMBER</th>
<th>LIFE TASK</th>
<th>AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage one</td>
<td>Basic trust versus mistrust</td>
<td>0-1 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage two</td>
<td>Autonomy versus shame and doubt</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage three</td>
<td>Initiative versus guilt</td>
<td>3-6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage four</td>
<td>Industry versus isolation</td>
<td>6-12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage five</td>
<td>Identity versus role confusion</td>
<td>12-19 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage six</td>
<td>Intimacy versus isolation</td>
<td>20-25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage seven</td>
<td>Generativity versus stagnation</td>
<td>26-64 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage eight</td>
<td>Ego integrity versus despair</td>
<td>65-death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early adolescence is the focus of this research and therefore I will concentrate on Erikson’s fifth stage of development: identity versus role confusion and its relevance to career aspirations. During this stage of development, which generally takes place from 12-18 years, there are rapid changes taking place on a social, emotional, cognitive and physical level. For adolescents, the formation of an identity is key at this stage and fundamental for entry into
adulthood. Furthermore, this stage includes figuring out what they are capable of in their own capacity as well as how this translates into what they can achieve as a member of society (Hook, 2009). There are many life choices that an individual will make during this stage, including purposefully seeking out career options and making career choices (Hook, 2009). Successful resolution of this stage results in a well-developed sense of identity that reflects individuality, continuity, and stability, whereas unsuccessful resolution can result in role confusion. Hook (2009) explains that this can surface in various ways, one being an inability to settle on a career. In this regard, it is my opinion that the exploration of career aspirations at the beginning of this developmental stage is key in assisting young people to establish a secure career identity.

At the identity versus role-confusion stage of development, social groups are important to an adolescent and significant emphasis is placed on what others think of them. The formation of in and out groups is prominent and peers become an important intermediary between the individual and society (Hook, 2009). Adolescents evaluate themselves against others and use this to establish a sense of self. In the theory of circumscription and compromise, Gottfredson (1981) asserts that at the third stage of career development – that of orientation to social valuation – the individual becomes sensitive to social valuation and becomes aware of which careers are deemed acceptable and which are deemed unacceptable within their context. In terms of career aspirations, the correlation between an early adolescent’s need to ‘fit in’ with their peer group, as well as their need for affirmation from others as to their future career choice/s is highly likely to impact their career aspirations. When exploring the career aspirations of learners at these stages of development, a researcher would need to be cognisant of the fact that peer agreement and validation would play a key role in defining what an individual aspires to be. Finally, successful resolution of this stage according to Erikson’s theory results in a secure identity and in relation to Gottfredson’s theory, a secure identity would allow for a smooth transition into stage four: orientation to the internal, unique self. With a secure identity, one would hope that an adolescent would have enough of an understanding of self to explore careers that are congruent with who they are, and not who their peers or wider social circle think they are.
2.5.2 Nsamenang’s theory of development – an African perspective

Nsamenang’s (1992) theory of development contrasts that of Erikson and other Eurocentric, stage-approaches to development. Nsamenang (2005) argues that the adoption of strictly Eurocentric theories of development results in the creation of minority-driven, homogenous views of human development that do not account for cultural differences that acutely affect the development of adolescents in the South African context. Nsamenang (1992) asserts that cultures infuse their own agendas onto human development insofar as various cultures may assign, recognise and define different developmental tasks to a set developmental agenda, thereby making development different for different cultural groups (Nsamenang, 1992). Nsamenang (1992) proposes a theory of social ontogenesis instead in which human development is inextricably linked to the ecology and social system within which development occurs. Ontogenesis in isolation relates to the developmental unfolding or lifetime development of an individual, however social ontogenesis relates to the development of an individual within a social system and it is the social ontogenesis that anchors human development (Nsamenang, 2005). This notion of social ontogenesis relates to both Gottfredson and Nsamenang’s theories in that they assert that an individual’s environment influences certain aspects of their development.

Nsamenang’s African perspective on human development consists of three broad phases which constitute the basic dimensions of personhood (Nsamenang, 1992). The spiritual selfhood begins at conception and ends with a naming ceremony, the social selfhood continues from the naming ceremony until death usually in old age and finally, the ancestral selfhood, which follows biological death and extends to the ritual initiation of the ancestral spirit into a higher spiritual realm (Nsamenang, 1992). Nsamenang’s (1992) theory of social ontogeny does not deny biology but asserts that personhood is contained in a human body which in itself contains a natural, ontogenetic path of development. Phase two of the three broad phases of personhood, referred to as social selfhood, develops through seven stages and at each stage of human development, according to Nsamenang (2005, p. 3) “there are distinctive developmental tasks that are defined within the framework of cultural realities and developmental agendas”. This is where this theory’s focus of development lies, and this focus differentiates it from individualistic accounts of human development, as laid out by theorists such as Erikson. In summary, Nsamenang (2005) asserts that as children actively engage in cultural life, they
gradually assume levels of personhood, identity and ways of being. Furthermore, Nsamenang (2005) states that within an African worldview, an individual can only achieve a sense of self through a community. Table 2.3 summarises the seven stages of social selfhood and the associated developmental tasks. The research participants’ stage of social selfhood is highlighted in blue.

Table 2.3: The Seven Stages of Social Selfhood according to Nsamenang (1992, p. 145-148).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE NUMBER</th>
<th>SOCIAL ONTOGENETIC STAGE</th>
<th>AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage one</td>
<td>New born</td>
<td>Neonatal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage two</td>
<td>Social priming</td>
<td>Infancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage three</td>
<td>Social apprenticing</td>
<td>Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage four</td>
<td>Social entrée</td>
<td>Puberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage five</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social internment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Adolescence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage six</td>
<td>Adulthood</td>
<td>Adulthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage seven</td>
<td>Old age and death</td>
<td>Old age/death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given that the participants in this research are adolescents and would therefore be in the fifth stage of social ontogeny (Nsamenang, 1992), I will briefly focus on a short explanation of this stage. Stage four and five are both transitional stages whereby an individual moves towards social maturity. It would be at this stage that most African cultures would practice initiation ceremonies (if still practiced) and this stage is characterised by accentuated efforts to allocate more responsibility to the individual and to begin incorporating them into adult social groups and roles (Nsamenang, 1992). This social internment stage is a period of intense social induction where an adolescent is trained and prepared for adulthood. The main developmental task at this stage is that of social induction to become a socialised intern, otherwise referred to as an emerging adult (Nsamenang, 1992). In terms of this research, it is important to note that as the participants enter the emerging adult stage and are incorporated into adult social roles, their career aspirations are likely to be shaped. As the participants form a secure identity and sense of self after successful resolution of Erikson’s stage five and as they are successfully initiated into adult life (Nsamenang, 1992), it is likely that they will be exposed to careers from
an adult perspective and possibly take on certain work tasks, so they will begin to evaluate what are socially acceptable and unacceptable careers (Gottfredson, 1996).

2.6 CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Career aspirations can be understood as one’s hopes and expectations of pursuing a career in a certain field. Many such aspirations are based on societal norms and parental expectations, and are also influenced by various contextual factors (Flouri & Panourgia, 2012; Nagengast & Marsh, 2012. Although having career aspirations does not guarantee work in a certain field, a sense of hope and expectation for the future motivates a person to meet their long term educational and career goals (Schuette et al., 2012; Quaglia & Cobb, 1996). Career aspirations can be likened to a life compass, giving a person direction in terms of their output of time and energy (Ashby & Schoon, 2012). The importance of exploring career aspirations lies in the fact that maintenance and nurturance of these aspirations can lead to a greater sense of well-being and a more positive sense of self (Ashby & Schoon, 2012). Although I acknowledge that career aspirations are influenced and sometimes thwarted by elements such as limited financial resources, family, societal and cultural expectations, as well as the quality of education received, I argue that if we are to attempt to assist young people in realising their career goals, an understanding of their future hope and expectation is crucial.

2.6.1 An international perspective on career aspirations

According to Patton and Skorikov (2007), there is a dearth of literature with regard to the career development of children and adolescents and more specifically with regard to their career aspirations and expectations (Patton & Creed, 2007). This is problematic, given the importance of career aspirations as shown in most theories of career development such as that of Gottfredson (1981) and Super (1994). Patton and Creed (2007) state that there is a move towards placing greater emphasis on the role that context plays in the development of adolescents’ career aspirations. Furthermore, Schoon and Polek (2011) state that research is needed which assesses the link between career aspirations and the attainment of those aspirations. Studies of this kind are finally beginning to emerge (Rojewski, 2005, as cited in Patton & Creed, 2007).
Schoon and Parsons (2002) state that there has traditionally been an emphasis on individual factors in studies of the development of occupational aspirations, and they argue that this emphasis tends to elide the constraints of the social circumstances within which adolescents aspire. Furthermore, there is an awareness internationally that for many adolescents, “vocational development depends more on existing opportunity structures than choice” (Schoon & Parsons, 2002, p. 262). Research by Furlong and Cartmel (1995, as cited in Patton & Creed, 2007) indicates that the occupational aspirations of adolescents as young as 13 years of age are constrained by their perceptions of local work opportunities.

Empirical studies on the career aspirations of primary school children have been conducted in countries such as Australia, China and the United Kingdom, and have focused on career aspirations as indicators of future careers, as well as the influence of aspects such as gender, self-efficacy and socio-economic status on adolescents’ career aspirations (Creed, Yin & Hood, 2009; Patton & Creed, 2007; Schoon, 2001). This research shows that stereotyping plays a role in adolescents’ career aspirations. A study of 498 Chinese high school students (Creed et al. 2009) found that although both males and females aspired to enterprising careers, males typically aspired to investigative careers, whereas females aspired to conventional careers. Research by Rojewski and Yang (1997, as cited in Patton & Creed, 2007) found that self-esteem had a minimal effect on American adolescents’ career aspirations, but interestingly, Lapan, Adams, Turner and Hinkelman (2000) found that grade seven learners expressed a higher sense of self-efficacy when they believed their aspirations matched the conventions associated with their gender.

According to Patton and Creed (2007), socio-economic status has long been identified as an influence on career aspirations, however it has been infrequently researched. Research that has been done indicates that higher socio-economic status has a positive effect on the ultimate fulfilment of career aspirations, whereas lower socio-economic status correlated with a perceived lack of parental support, which negatively affected the attainment of career aspirations (Mc Whirter, Hackett & Bandalos, 1998, as cited in Patton & Creed, 2007). Finally, a 17 year longitudinal study conducted by Schoon (2001) in the United Kingdom (UK), with a national representation of 7649 individuals born in the UK, indicated that career aspirations are indeed a reliable indicator of future careers. Continued study in this area is necessary for many
reasons, one of which is support and intervention in terms of helping adolescents achieve their career goals.

2.6.2 Career aspirations in a South African context

South Africa has a unique socio-political history and has inherited a legacy of inequality in terms of employment, socio-economic status and education which provide a complex and challenging context for career development to take place (Watson, McMahon & Longe, 2011). For example, in recent decades, over one third of a million school-age children have remained out of school and of the children in school, the success rate of progression through grades is considerably low (Govender, 2009, in Watson et. al., 2011). When exploring the career aspirations of primary school children, it is essential to consider the context an individual is embedded in given that “South Africans are faced with unpredictable contextual factors that often negate the conceptualisation of linear individual career development” (Watson & Stead, 2002, p. 28). These contextual factors include but are not limited to socio-economic status, poverty, and education, and these form potential barriers to the achievement of an individual’s career aspirations. More specifically, career barriers can be defined as “events or conditions, within the person or in his or her environment, that make career progress difficult” (Swanson & Woitke, 1997, p. 434). Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2000, p. 38) state that “people are less likely to translate their career interests into goals, and their goals into actions, when they perceive their efforts to be impeded by insurmountable barriers or inadequate support systems”. Gottfredson (2005) describes career barriers as the primary reason for individuals compromising their career goals.

2.6.2.1 The influence of socio-economic status on an individual’s career aspirations

Socio-economic status can be understood as “the social standing or class of an individual or group, often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation” (American Psychological Association, 2007, p. 1). It has consistently been identified in research as an influence on the development of children’s career aspirations (Watson et al., 2011). Socio-economic status correlates closely with poverty, unemployment and education, all of which are factors that influence the career aspirations and development of young people in South Africa.
According to McGrath and Akoojee (2007, p. 421) between 45% and 55% of the South African population are poor, and between 20% and 30% of this population live in extreme poverty. This means that between 18 and 24 million people in South Africa are poor, and between 8 and 10 million are living in extreme poverty. The inequality in South Africa is amongst the worst in the world (McGrath & Akoojee, 2007), and poses a challenge to the career development of many young people who find themselves in poverty-stricken situations. This is confirmed by Statistics South Africa (2015), whose current measurement of poverty in South Africa is at 56.8%.

There is a strong link between poverty, inequality and unemployment in South Africa (McGrath & Akoojee, 2007), with the current unemployment rate sitting at 25% (Statistics South Africa, 2015). This poses a serious challenge for young people whose parents are unemployed and who do not have the means to see their career aspirations fulfilled. This disadvantage is compounded by the fact that access to quality education in South Africa is not possible for a large majority of the population, which in turn often means that individuals resort to unskilled labour and the discontinuation of career aspirations and goals. Watson (2010) states that there is a general consensus in career psychology that there has been a move away from a social justice perspective and that as a result of this, there is a call for the field to move towards the inclusion of marginalised, poor individuals of a lower socio-economic status who form the majority of many societies (Blustein, 2001 in Watson, 2010, p. 24). O’Brien (2001, as cited in Watson, 2010, p. 24) defines social justice as “those actions that contribute towards affording equal access to all within a particular nation or society”. However, Watson (2010) asserts that if we are to move towards a true translation of this in terms of career services, it is essential that broader systemic issues are understood, as these impact on the career aspirations and development of young people. As previously noted, the South African context is a complex one in that our society is divided along many lines, with a minority living in first-world contexts and the majority living in third-world contexts (Watson, 2010). In relation to this research, it is hoped that through the exploration of the career aspirations of learners who are marginalised and from low socio-economic backgrounds, measures can be put in place to assist individuals (such as the research participants) achieve their career goals.
Current research on the career aspirations of primary school children remains problematic because the socio-economic status of samples are not specified (Watson et al., 2011). The participants in this study all come from low socio-economic backgrounds and reside in local informal settlements. The influence that this context plays in their career aspirations is therefore important as Arulmani (2001) asserts that there is a trend of children from low socio-economic backgrounds, whose parents are illiterate and unemployed, to exhibit a high tendency to prematurely discontinue their education and to enter the world of work as unskilled labourers.

2.6.2.2 The influence of family on an individual’s career aspirations

According to Hartung, Speight and Lewis (1996) there is a dominant perception in society that career choice is an individual process of self-discovery based on interests, values and aspirations. Although there is an undeniably individual element to career choice, it is also a communal, interpersonal process (Hartung, et al., 1996) and therefore when exploring the career aspirations of primary school children, one cannot negate the interdependence of aspects of a person’s context such as poverty, schooling and family in shaping their aspirations.

In South Africa, family has been identified as a key social influence on the career aspirations of young people (Watson et al., 2011). According to Watson et al. (2011), there is a general consensus in literature that children’s occupational aspirations are consistent with the occupations of their parents, however this is mediated by their perception of their parent’s occupational satisfaction. Matsebatlela (1986, as cited in Stead, 1996) states that there is a general expectation of parents who are unskilled labourers, or unemployed, for their children to aspire to careers that will provide a steady income and that embody a professional status. According to Stead (1996), this may be due to the fact that a large number of family members are trapped in positions of unskilled or semi-skilled work as a result of apartheid restrictions placed on their education and career development. Given the emphasis in many Black-African cultures on the self in relation to others (Mwamwenda, 1995), the influence of family on an individual’s career aspirations is an important factor to consider.
2.6.2.3 Culture and career aspirations

Stead (1996) states that culture is an important aspect of career development as its values and constraints shape an individual’s career aspirations. Given its multidimensionality and fluidity, as well as the limitations of individual perspective, culture is a difficult concept to define. However, it is generally described as the attitudes, behaviours, traditions and knowledge a certain group of people abide by, and these characteristics are passed on from one generation to the next (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2007, as cited in Visser & Moleko, 2012). Stead (1996) explains that the apartheid regime in South Africa sought to polarise culture and accentuate its differences rather than similarities. Although there is much debate with regard to what constitutes the term “African culture”, Black-African culture has been seen to embody a communal perspective of dependence and cooperation and can be likened to an intricately woven tapestry (Nsamenang, 1992), whereas White-African culture has been identified as emulating a western, individualistic way of being. With this cultural “dualism” in mind (Bojabotseha, 2011, p. 1), it is necessary to consider how a collectivist cultural background as opposed to an individualist one may influence the career aspirations of primary school children. This is especially significant given that the participants in this study come from tshiVenda, IsiZulu and isiXhosa backgrounds. Hartung et al. (1996) assert that cultural variables such as individualism and collectivism mediate vocational behaviour and cause individuals to bring differing expectations, aspirations and values to the career development process. Table 2.4 summarises the main differences between an individualist and a collectivist culture as outlined by Hartung et al. (1996).

Table 2.4: Cultural Dualism as outlined by Hartung et al. (1996, p. 87-96)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Collectivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual before group</td>
<td>Group before individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural patterns that promote emotional detachment and independence</td>
<td>Cultural patterns emphasising social integrity and regard for in-group norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual attitudes, private interests and personal goals govern behaviour</td>
<td>Group norms, shared interests and common goals govern behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When considering the influence of a communal culture on career aspirations, one must bear the concept of ‘Ubuntu’ in mind. According to Chaplin (1996, p. 1) the spirit of ‘Ubuntu’ is encapsulated in the Xhosa term “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu” which can be interpreted as “people are people through other people” or “I am human because I belong to the human community and I view and treat others accordingly”. By definition, the ‘Ubuntu’ worldview implies a sense of interdependence and of the self being inextricably linked to a wider community (Chaplin, 1996). This could mean that an individual’s aspiration towards a certain career may not be purely an individual decision, but one that is embedded in and influenced by a community and characterised by features of collectivism, as outlined in Table 2.4

Having said this, one needs to consider that culture may only account for some influence in career development and provides only partial evidence as to certain career aspirations and career choice (Hartung et al., 1996). Hartung et al. (1996) state that research has tended to dichotomise individualism and collectivism and has therefore not accounted for cultural groups that exhibit both individualistic and collectivist tendencies. For example, a person living in an individualistic culture may base their vocational choices on the norms and expectations of their reference group, such as their family. Therefore, when considering the influence of culture on career aspirations, it should not be emphasised over other relevant aspects.

2.6.2.4 The influence of schooling on career aspirations

School has been identified as another social influence on an individual’s career development (Watson et al., 2011). The participants in this study come from a community school in Northern Johannesburg. In this research, a community school can be understood as an independent school subsidised by government funding as well as community and individual donations. The
particular community school the participants attend provides education to underprivileged learners who live in the surrounding informal settlements. Generally speaking, schools can be seen as social institutions that provide a platform for career development to take place (Shumba & Naong, 2012) and are in a position to influence the career aspirations of learners through the curriculum, career guidance programmes and the provision of career role models (such as teachers). Career role models may play an important role in assisting young people regulate their career aspirations, especially given that research has observed a trend towards high levels of unrealistic occupational aspirations, particularly amongst more disadvantaged learners (Watson, 2010). Furthermore, interaction and socialisation with peers at school is also a way in which an individual’s career aspirations are communally developed and shaped (Adragna, 2009) and school provides a space where this can take place.

A distinguishing feature of the community school the research participants attend is the fact that the school is small and offers quality education from qualified teachers who take a personal interest in each learner. Given that the school is small, the learners and teachers have good rapport and through this, the teachers are able to nurture the career aspirations of the learners and provide guidance where needed. Furthermore, the relationship the school has with corporates and other smaller companies gives their learners opportunities that most learners from community or informal settlement schools would not have. Given that the school is located outside of the main informal settlement and in a generally secure location, the learners at the school are not exposed to the same level of violence, crime and adverse conditions that exist in many “township schools” (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011) and are therefore given the opportunity to learn and develop in a secure environment.

According to Watson (2010), in South African schools, the implementation of contextually-relevant career guidance programmes remains relatively dysfunctional. Schools are not providing learners with adequate guidance to see their career aspirations fulfilled and Watson (2010) states that career counselling approaches are largely decontextualised and serve a minority of advantaged learners. What is required is the implementation of relevant career guidance interventions to assist individuals in realising their long term career goals, and I believe this starts with an exploration of young people’s career dreams and goals. According to Arulmani (2011b), there is a growing need for approaches to career guidance that serve
individuals from differing backgrounds and resonate with the background of individuals. This includes having knowledge about the ways of life and the world views of the community of the individual to whom the career guidance is given (Arulmani, 2011b). Watson (2010) concurs with Arulmani (2011b) by stating that one of the ways in which South Africa can move towards a social justice perspective in terms of career psychology is to redefine career psychology in developing countries by instituting inclusivity and better access to career guidance programmes (Watson, 2010). An exploration of the career aspirations of young people will hopefully start the process of laying the foundation for these types of career guidance programmes to be implemented in primary schools.

2.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN’S CAREER ASPIRATIONS

In line with a lifespan approach to career development, in recent years researchers have placed an emphasis on the exploration of primary school children’s career aspirations as a means to inform relevant interventions by which to assist in the attainment of long term career goals (Arulmani, 2011b; Schuette et al., 2012; Watson et. al., 2010). Although some may question the relevance of primary school children’s career aspirations in determining career choice, literature shows that an exploration of career aspirations at a young age is a key starting point in the career development process (Schuette et al., 2012; Flouri & Panourgia, 2012).

2.7.1 Career aspirations as a reflection of hope

Given the fact that children in primary school are relatively young and are at a stage where they are figuring out what career aspirations are acceptable and unacceptable (Gottfredson, 1996), their aspirations may reflect their sense of hope for the future, rather than a realistic sense of a possible career (Flouri & Panourgia, 2012). This fits with Gottfredson’s stages of career development and is indicative of an ongoing process of the incorporation of new elements into one’s self-concept, and the altering of the zone of acceptable alternatives (Gottfredson, 1996). In the rationale for his book on counselling for career construction, Maree (2013) summarises the important role that career aspirations play in children’s lives by giving them a beacon of hope for the future. This is especially true for those children who live in difficult circumstances.
He writes “whereas the reality of trauma, pain and hurt can never be ignored or made up for, adversity can be turned into triumph, defeat into victory and loss into gain, by contributing socially to alleviating the hurt and pain of others; by enabling those who have suffered to persist and never accept defeat” (2013, p. 3). In my opinion, an exploration of the career aspirations of young people is essential to assist them to persist and triumph over obstacles that may stand in the way of them achieving their career dreams and goals.

2.7.1.1 Career aspirations and self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara and Pastorelli (2001) as an individual’s belief in their ability to succeed in a specific situation and to produce a desired outcome. It is closely linked to notions of hope, resilience and self-perception, in that an individual’s perceived self-efficacy directly influences their career choice and development, as well their commitment to achieving their career goals (Bandura et al., 2001). Individuals with a high self-efficacy tend to have broader career aspirations and exhibit greater staying power (resilience) to achieve their career goals in the midst of challenges (Bandura et. al., 2001). Therefore, an understanding of primary school children’s career aspirations will enable school personnel (teachers, school psychologists) and significant caregivers outside of school to help young people to maintain a healthy self-efficacy in order to better their chances of seeing their long term career goals realised.

2.7.1.2 Career beliefs

Career beliefs are defined by Arulmani (2011a, p. 25) as “a conglomerate of cognitions about career decisions and planning”. When exploring the career aspirations of primary school children, the notion of career beliefs becomes important insofar as they “colour” the way in which an individual deals with their career development, and the challenges it presents. Research by Arulmani (2011a) has indicated that career beliefs could be classified into specific themes, namely: proficiency beliefs, control and self-direction beliefs, common practice, and persistence beliefs. Proficiency beliefs describe an individual’s willingness to submit to the formal training programmes needed for qualification in a certain field. Control and self-direction beliefs refer to those beliefs that impede on an individual’s sense of control and self-direction, and are presented by different life situations. Common practice is described by Arulmani (2011a) as the unwritten norms that shape a person’s career preparation behaviour
and influence their choice of career. For example, Arulmani (2011a) explains that in middle-class India, an intelligent individual is expected to either study medicine or engineering. Finally, persistence beliefs relate to a person’s determination to work towards future career goals in spite of barriers encountered along the way. This is closely linked to self-efficacy in that a person with a high self-efficacy would probably have higher persistence beliefs than a person with a low self-efficacy. Exploring the career aspirations of young people may prove to be important for professionals who will assist in developing positive career beliefs and reframing negative ones that may hinder career development.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This review of literature has provided an overview of some pertinent literature that informs the focus of this research. Consideration has been given to the term ‘career’ in a broad sense, as well as to career development from a lifespan approach. Gottfredson’s (1981) theory of circumscription and compromise has been explained in detail as it is the theoretical framework of this research. This framework has been linked to adolescent development according to Erikson (1950) and Nsamenang (1992). The concept of career aspirations has been explored both from a South African and a more international perspective, and the importance of primary school children’s career aspirations has been discussed with emphasis on career aspirations as a reflection of hope for the future.

Chapter three will provide the reader with a detailed explanation of the research methodology that was utilised in this research. Furthermore, chapter three will expand on the methods used for data collection, analysis and interpretation in this research.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed account of the methodology used in this research, which includes the research paradigm, approach and design. I also consider the aim of this research and the role of the researcher in qualitative research. In this regard I refer to the notion of ‘voice’ research and the importance of listening to and making space for the voices of young people. I also provide a self-reflection as the researcher in this inquiry, as a means of remaining conscientious throughout the research process. The context of the research has been detailed in an attempt to provide the reader with a clear picture of where the research took place. I then move on to provide a detailed account of the research process, which includes entrance into the community school, detail about the research participants, and ethical considerations. The research methodology section includes a discussion of the data collection and data analysis methods and processes used. Finally, I give an account to support the trustworthiness of this research by looking at four criteria, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Guba (1990) as cited in Denzin and Lincoln (2005) states that a research paradigm can be defined as a set of beliefs that guide actions and are characterised by human construction. According to Henning et al. (2004), a research paradigm can be thought of as a framework or worldview within which one’s research is positioned in a specific discipline or subject. As a researcher, it is important that I make explicit my view of the world within which my research is conducted because it provides a theoretical orientation for my research which involves making known the interrelated assumptions, concepts and propositions that constitute this world view. The reality that I perceive is no doubt filtered through my own constructed identity, and the influence of my individual perspective and my perception of a phenomenon can never be negated, no matter how objective I try to be. It is with this in mind that an interpretivist
The Career Aspirations of Grade Seven Learners in a Community School

A framework was chosen for this study, as this would best aid in the exploration of the career aspirations of grade seven learners at a community school.

Henning et al. (2004, p. 19) refer to an interpretivist framework as one which is concerned with understanding realities whilst acknowledging that there are multiple realities, many of which may never be completely understood or taken as absolute truth, given the element of human bias and differing perspectives. This is true in this research insofar as it must be acknowledged that the career aspirations of each participant cannot be taken as absolute truth, but rather as subjective truth influenced by human perspective.

Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107) state that within an interpretivist framework, such as that chosen for this research, there are three main elements which work to define the paradigm. These are: ontology; epistemology and methodology. Although these concepts are specific to scientific research, they are often referred to in qualitative research as relativist ontology, subjectivist epistemology and naturalistic methodology (Lee, 2012).

According to Henning et al. (2004), ontology is concerned with the nature of being. The ontological question a qualitative researcher asks is “what is the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). Specific to an interpretivist framework is the notion of relativist ontology which holds the assumption that there are multiple realities and therefore when conducting research from within this framework, the researcher understands that a representation of a reality can only be an approximation of truth and cannot be taken as absolute truth. Therefore, in this study it is accepted that the career aspirations portrayed by the three participants cannot be taken to generically represent the career aspirations of all grade seven learners.

Subjectivist epistemology is understood as the process of how we come to know and furthermore, emphasises the interactive nature of the relationship between the inquirer and the respondent (Lee, 2012). It considers the question “what is the nature of the relationship between ‘the knower’ and what can be known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). The subjective element becomes evident when the inquirer and the respondent co-create understanding as they interact with one another. As the researcher, I need to be aware of and acknowledge that the results of this research will be shaped by the relationship between me and the research participants. The dynamic interaction between the researcher (inquirer) and the participants (respondents) is
contextually based and it is therefore essential that I acknowledge the bias that I may carry, even subconsciously, about the context within which the participants in this study are situated and acknowledge the impact this has on the results of this research.

Naturalistic methodology can be defined as the practice of coming ‘to know’ through the methods used in the research inquiry (Lee, 2012) and seeks to answer the question “How can the inquirer (knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). From a methodological point of view, an interpretive inquiry takes into account that the interactions that take place between the inquirer and the respondent exist within a specific context. A qualitative researcher is concerned with the freedom and natural development of action and representation (Henning et al., 2004), and it is therefore necessary for research to take place in a naturalistic setting. This research took place at the participants’ school and it is hoped that conducting the research in an environment that is familiar to the participants would allow for a more natural emergence of understanding.

3.3 A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Henning et al. (2004, p. 3) state that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research lies in the quest for understanding and in-depth inquiry. Qualitative research allows for differing views on the research topic and allows participants to give their views in an open-ended way. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research addresses the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. It is the different constructions of meaning that participants generate as they interact with the world that qualitative researchers are interested in (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2002). A qualitative research approach was deemed most suitable to exploring the career aspirations of grade seven learners from a community school. A summary of the characteristics of a qualitative research approach as outlined by Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2002) and its applicability to this study can be seen in Table 3.1.
## Table 3.1: A Summary of the Characteristics of a Qualitative Research Approach and its Application to this Research. Adapted from Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of qualitative research</th>
<th>Application to this research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Researchers attempt to understand the meaning people have constructed about their world and their experiences. Depth of understanding is key.</td>
<td>I am interested in gaining in-depth understanding of how the participants have constructed meaning in their worlds. This includes being cognisant of the contextual background of the participants, which is discussed further on in this chapter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis.</td>
<td>I am the ‘human instrument’ in this study who has the ability to respond and adapt within the data collection process. I am also able to expand on my understanding through verbal and non-verbal communication with the participants. This involves clarifying, member checking (soliciting feedback from the participants as a way of verifying research findings) and summarising data (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). Furthermore, I have to be careful to identify and monitor my biases which may affect the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The process of qualitative research is inductive.</td>
<td>This means that as a qualitative researcher, I will build concepts, hypotheses, abstractions and theories from details gained. Whilst deductive researchers aim to find data to match a specific theory, as a qualitative researcher I am interested in finding a theory to correlate with my data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The product of a qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive.</td>
<td>This study aims to provide a rich description of the research question through the various means of data collected from the collage, questionnaire, sociogram and focus group interview. I am interested in the process, meaning and understanding gained from gathering data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Qualitative research involves fieldwork.</td>
<td>As a qualitative researcher, I physically went to meet with the participants at their school to collect data. This is a natural and familiar setting for the participants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 A GENERIC QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2013) states that a research design essentially points to the researcher’s approach to data collection, analysis and report writing. Given that this research aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the career aspirations of grade seven learners, it was decided that a generic qualitative research design fitted best. The generic qualitative research design is common to educational research and typically seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved (Merriam, 2009). Data is most often collected through interviews, observations and/or document analysis. Furthermore, the analysis of data involves “identifying recurring patterns or themes that are supported by the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). Although all qualitative research is concerned with how meaning is constructed and how people make sense of their lives and their worlds, the primary goal of a generic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). This research aimed to get an in-depth understanding of a certain phenomenon, namely the career aspirations of grade seven learners in a community school, and furthermore, to understand what this phenomenon meant for the participants involved.

3.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVE

This research aimed to explore the career aspirations of three grade seven learners in a community school. In addition to this aim, the objective of this study was to identify and consider various social, familial and contextual factors that impact the career aspirations of primary school learners. In gaining insight into the career aspirations of these learners, I hope to be in a position to discover knowledge that could be used to better understand the phenomenon of career aspirations and, more broadly, the career aspirations of primary school children from community schools.

3.6 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Henning et al., “the interpretive researcher searches for ways in which the social actors make meaning on the stage of action that she is observing” (2004, p. 81). Creswell (2013) adds that this active, interpretive process means that the biases, values and judgement of the
researcher become explicit in the research report. Therefore, in order to remain as reflexive as possible, it was necessary to consider the notion of ‘voice’ in research (Thomson, 2008) as well as a reflection on myself as the researcher.

3.6.1 Listening to the voices of the participants

The notion of ‘voice’ in research carries a few meanings. First, ‘voice’ in its literal sense relates to the speech and perspective of the speaker. Secondly, ‘voice’ can include the feelings associated with the speaker’s words, and thirdly, ‘voice’ attests to the right to speak and be represented (Thomson, 2008, p. 4). Research can be seen as a way of giving ‘voice’ to people by listening deeply to the voices (both spoken and unspoken) of the participants in this study, as well as truthfully representing them.

As a way of mitigating the potential risk of unequal power relations between myself and the participants during the data collection process, I was cognisant of Welty and Lundy’s (2013) model of ‘voice’. This model posits that there are four elements to making participants heard: space, voice, right of audience, and influence. I attempted to give the participants the space to share their views and to feel that their views were acknowledged and listened to. One of my aims during data collection was to create an environment where the participants felt confident sharing their views because they had the security of knowing their views were being respectfully heard. Allowing participants the right to a voice meant that as a researcher I needed to create an inclusive environment where the maturity of the participants’ answers was not judged. The participants were assured that there was no right answer to the questions I asked but that their opinion and experience was all that mattered. During data collection, I was aware of upholding the participants right of audience, which Welty and Lundy (2013, p. 3) refer to as “a guaranteed opportunity to communicate views to an identifiable individual or body with the responsibility to listen”. As the researcher, I was tasked with the responsibility of sincerely listening to the participants and to their points of view. This included conveying both verbal (such as summarising and reflecting) and non-verbal signs that I was actively listening to them. Finally, during data collection I attempted to create an environment where the participants felt that what they shared carried influence. This included creating a sense that the participants’ views mattered and carried weight. This was achieved, for example, by affirming their views during the interview. The participants also affirmed one another, and this was encouraged.
3.6.2 Reflecting on the researcher herself

Theron and Malindi (2012, p. 98) state that constructive relationships between researcher and participants rely in part on self-reflection. This involves the researcher asking themselves questions like: who are you, and what experiences, prior training, beliefs and biases do you bring to the relationship with the participants? Furthermore, how might what you are frustrate or undermine participants’ collaboration? This calls for reflection on aspects such as race, religion, culture, sex, socio-economic status, education, age, and positions of power, and this reflection is essential for a good qualitative study (Creswell, 2013). In addition to this, a researcher should be cognisant of what assumptions they hold about the participants and whether these are based on stereotypes, ignorance or intimate knowledge.

Throughout this research, I needed to be aware and respectful of the fact that I differ to the research participants on the grounds of race, culture, sex, age, education and socio-economic status, and consider the impact that this could have had on the research. In my opinion, the fact that I was known by the participants (having been a student school counsellor at their school) enabled them to engage with me more comfortably than if I had been a stranger to them. Having said that, I was aware of the fact that I was still an outsider coming into the participants’ space and their use of the word ‘teacher’ when engaging with me showed that they considered me to be in a position of authority. I do however believe that my prior training as a primary school teacher and school counsellor helped me facilitate the rapport building process with the participants and the creation of a safe space within which we could share with one another.

Besides being referred to as ‘teacher’, I was aware of the previous context within which the participants knew me – that of school counsellor and ‘assessor’. An awareness of the potential power dynamics that this brought (as discussed previously in relation to ‘voice’), as well as how my perceptions and interpretations were being filtered throughout the research process was important. Conversations and reflections with my research supervisor throughout the research process were valuable in terms of remaining reflexive and honest.

Finally, being “culturally competent” (Theron & Malindi, 2012, p. 99) meant I needed to keep in mind the possibility that research participants often view researchers as highly educated, and consequently try and impress or please them. Furthermore, in certain cultures, educated people must be deferred to and therefore quiet, respectful behaviour, little eye contact and
monosyllabic answers are required (Theron & Malindi, 2012, p. 100). During this research, there were occasions when the participants showed little eye contact and gave one-word answers. I needed to counter this by requesting them to elaborate.

### 3.7 SETTING AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

By giving a description of the physical and social context within which the research was undertaken, I attempt to provide a “thick description” of the research inquiry, which involves giving an account of the phenomenon that is coherent and gives more than empirical content (Henning et al., 2004, p. 6). Giving the reader a ‘picture’ of the context serves to enrich the meaning that is attached to the participants’ perspective of the research topic.

This study was undertaken at an independent subsidised community school, North of Gauteng. The school is situated in a bustling area alongside a main road which is home to restaurants, shopping complexes, car repair shops and a well-known independent school. The school is on the same premises as a local Baptist church and provides education to approximately 270 learners from Grade 00 - Grade 7 who come from nearby informal settlements. The school was started in 2000 by a group of people from the Baptist church who recognised a need for children from the nearby informal settlements to receive quality education. There are approximately 30 staff members, including teachers, volunteers, teacher assistants, administrative staff and basic support staff. The language of instruction at the school is English, although the Home Languages of the learners vary and include isiZulu, isiXhosa, tshiVenda and Setswana. The teaching staff is multi-racial and includes people from varying backgrounds.

### 3.8 THE RESEARCH METHOD

#### 3.8.1 Gaining entrance into the community school

Creswell (2009) states that part of a qualitative researcher’s role is to discuss the steps taken to gain entry to the setting and to secure permission to study the informants or situation (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, as cited in Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, Creswell (2009) asserts that it is important to gain access to research sites by seeking the approval of “gatekeepers”. In the case of this research, after receiving ethical clearance from the university (Appendix A1) the process
of gaining entry began with a formal request to the principal of the school who is the main “gatekeeper”.

After requesting permission to carry out my research at the community school in a letter addressed to the principal and the management committee (Appendix B1), I met with the principal to explain the nature of the research and to get permission to carry out the research at her school. Further details about the study, ethical considerations, as well as dates and a venue for me to proceed with the data collection were discussed. I explained the purposeful nature of the sampling in this study to the principal, and that I intended only to include those grade seven learners that I had assessed the previous year as part of my school counsellor practicum. After permission from the principal was obtained (Appendix B2), I began the process of obtaining permission in writing from the participants’ parents (Appendix C1) and the participants themselves (Appendix C2). I initially spoke to the participants’ parents telephonically to explain the research and then sent home consent forms to be signed which included a description of the research. The informed consent forms were returned by the participants and a meeting was set up with the three proposed participants one afternoon after school to discuss the research. I explained the details of the inquiry, asked if the participants would be willing to take part, and answered questions pertaining to the research process. The participants agreed to take part in the study and signed informed assent forms at our meeting. At this point I could begin data collection which took place approximately one week after this meeting.

3.8.2 The research participants

According to Seidman (2006), it is the job of a researcher to showcase the experiences of the research participants in enough depth and detail so that those who read the research can connect to the participants’ experience and deepen their understanding of the issues that are reflected. This research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the career aspirations of grade seven learners from a community school, and therefore purposeful sampling was used to best answer the research question. Merriam (2009, p. 77) states that purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that “the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned”. Furthermore, Patton (2002, as cited in Merriam, 2009) states that the power of purposeful sampling lies in the selection of information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal. When utilising purposeful sampling, certain criteria is used to select participants (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). In this research,
the participants were in grade seven at the specific community school and they had undergone a scholastic assessment with me as part of my school counsellor practicum the year prior to this research. In the section that follows I will give a brief description of the participants selected for this research. For the purposes of anonymity I refer to them as Participant A, Participant B and Participant C.

Participant A lives in a nearby informal settlement with his mother and older brother. His mother and father separated when he was six years old. His father works as a security guard and his mother has been employed as a domestic worker since participant A was four years old. Participant A’s home language is tshiVenda; however Setswana, isiZulu and English are also spoken at home. He attended the community school for nine years. He really enjoys dancing and playing soccer.

Participant B lives in the same informal settlement as participant A. He lives with his mother and younger brother and sister. Participant B’s parents are separated and he does not often see his father. His mother and her partner are both currently unemployed. His biological father is a security guard. Participant B’s home language is isiXhosa, however English is also spoken at home. Participant B attended the community school for eight years, since Grade R.

Participant C lives in a nearby informal settlement (different to that of Participant A and B) with his mother and younger sister. His father passed away when he was four years old. Participant C’s mother works as a teacher assistant at a private school in the area. She also runs a small transport business fetching children from school. His home language is isiZulu, although English is also spoken at home. Participant C attended the community school for nine years, since Grade 00. He is passionate about playing soccer.

**Figure 3.1: Participants background information**

### 3.8.3. Data collection

In this study, multiple methods of data collection were used in order to acquire rich information, obtain more valid responses and strengthen the analysis of the data. These methods included a questionnaire, a career sociogram, a career collage and a focus group interview. The use of multiple methods of data collection is in keeping with the concept of ‘triangulation’ which, according to Merriam (2009), is one of the most established ways in which a qualitative researcher can increase the credibility of their findings, especially given that they can never capture an objective truth or reality (Merriam, 2009, p. 215).
3.8.3.1. Questionnaire

During the first session of data collection, the participants were each given a qualitative questionnaire to complete (Appendix D1). I designed the questionnaire based on the Career Style Interview (CSI) by Savickas (1998, as cited in Taber, Hartung, Bridick & Rehfuss, 2011) and in consultation with my supervisor. It consisted of 17 questions related to aspects such as family background, career role models, academics, leadership, hobbies, influences on career development, career values and interests, and finally hopes and dreams for a future career. I went through the questionnaire with the participants before they filled it in. This was necessary given that English is not their first language and therefore clarification was needed on certain questions. The participants took approximately 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire and at the end of the session I gave them an information sheet to take home with them which would inform the completion of the career sociogram in the second session (Appendix D3).

3.8.3.2 Career Sociogram

A consideration of the influence of family on career development forms part of a holistic approach to career exploration and adds depth to the career planning process (Chope & van Velsor, 2010). An understanding of how family background, history, mobility, support, conflict, nurture, and exposure impact career development is integral, and a career sociogram – also referred to as a career genogram – can provide some of this information. A career sociogram is a graphic representation of the social relations between groups of people (Chope & van Velsor, 2010). It is derived from family systems therapy and provides information regarding the influence of immediate and extended family on career decision making (Chope & van Velsor, 2010). A career sociogram is represented specifically with the careers of one’s family in mind as a means of gaining knowledge about dominant career choices within the individual’s context, fulfilled or unfulfilled career dreams, and the impact of these aspects on the individual. Chope and van Velsor (2010) state that a career sociogram informs the exploration of current as well as historical, multigenerational career development patterns.

In the second session, the participants returned their sociogram information sheet (Appendix D3) and given that I had assessed all three participants the year before, I already had a genogram for each of them. With permission from the participants and their parents, I took the
information from the form they filled in and added it to the existing genogram as a way of streamlining the process (the participants assisted me in doing this). See Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 of the participants’ career sociograms. The names of the participants have been erased to maintain confidentiality.

3.8.3.3 Career Collage

Collages have been described by Fritz and Beekman (2007) as a form of pictorial storytelling. Assembling a collage allows people to reflect on a topic and identify images that are significant to them, and this in turn may enable a person to discover, explore and express goals and qualities within themselves (Watson & McMahon, 2010, p. 103). During the second session of data collection, the participants completed a career collage that depicted their career aspirations. They were encouraged to include pictures, words and/or phrases that indicated their
future hopes and dreams in terms of a career. In consultation with my supervisor, I decided to use collages as a means of facilitating a more informal and less structured research activity in the hope that the participants would find it easy to express themselves while engaging in this activity. The collages formed the basis for the focus group interview which took place during the third and last data collection session. See Figures 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 for photographs of the participants’ collages.

3.8.3.4 Focus group interviews based on the participants’ career collage

Fritz and Beekman (2007) have observed that it is common for people to discuss the content of their collages upon completion. In this way, people are given the opportunity to tell their story and are able to identify themes and patterns that are meaningful to them.
This storytelling took place in the form of a semi-structured focus group interview. Punch (2011) asserts that focus group interviews are a powerful method of qualitative data collection where about six to eight people are interviewed as a group. In this study, the focus group consisted of the three participants and even though this is smaller than usual (although there is no set rule as to how many people to include), this interview strategy was deemed most appropriate because the participants had certain characteristics in common which related to the research topic. Focus groups interviews proved useful in this research because the participants got to hear one another’s responses and were thereby prompted to make additional responses beyond their own initial responses (Merriam, 2009).

Merriam (2009, p. 89) asserts that a semi-structured focus group interview has the following characteristics: the interview guide includes a mix of more or less structured interview questions, all questions are used flexibly, usually specific data is required from each participant, a large part of the interview is guided by a list of questions to be explored, and finally, there is no predetermined wording or order to the questions. The questions used to provide initial structure to these focus group interview included, but were not limited to “Tell me about your collage”, “Explain how these pictures/quotes/words describe what you aspire to be” and “Is there anything in this collage that tells me what could influence you becoming what you want to become?” (See Appendix D4).

Appendix E1 is an excerpt of the transcription of the focus group interview that took place with the participants. The questionnaires, career sociograms, career collages and the focus group interview were used in the data analysis process and in the identification of themes, the findings of which are detailed in chapter four (See Appendix E2 & E3).

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is defined by Flick (2014, p. 5) as “the classification and interpretation of linguistic or visual material in order to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it”. It aims to describe, compare, explain and/or develop a theory (Flick, 2014). Qualitative data analysis is an inductive process, which means that the analysis begins when the researcher compares one unit of data to another in an attempt to find patterns which are eventually coded into themes as the data analysis progresses (Merriam, 2009).
In order to explore and identify the career aspirations of grade seven learners, it is necessary to interpret the collected data by coding and categorising the underlying patterns. Therefore, qualitative content analysis (QCA) was used to analyse the data in this research. Essentially, qualitative content analysis is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data through assigning different parts of the material to the categories of a coding frame (Schreier, 2014, p. 170 as cited in Flick, 2014) and then using these codes to generate themes and descriptions for analysis.

In this research, data was analysed according to Creswell’s (2012, p. 237) steps for data analysis and is explained in Table 3.2. An inductive ("bottom up") process was used to analyse the data in this research.

**Table 3.2: Steps for Data Analysis as outlined by Creswell (2012, p. 237)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Collect data based on the research question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data was collected in three sessions with the three grade seven participants after school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data collection methods included: questionnaire, sociogram, career collage and focus group interview.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Prepare and organise data for analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I organised the data into three folders and each participant’s questionnaire, sociogram and collage were placed in a separate folder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The focus group interview was video-recorded and sent to an outside party to be transcribed verbatim. A confidentiality agreement was signed by the transcriber (Appendix A2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Permission for transcription was granted by the participants and their parents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Read through all the data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I read through all the data to gain a preliminary sense of the information contained in each of the documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I listened to the video-recording of the focus group interview again in order to fill in gaps that were inaudible for the external transcriber. I then read through the transcription again to get a sense of the whole conversation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Code the data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I colour coded the focus group interview transcription, working at a phrase and sentence level to segment and then label the segments with codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I examined the codes for overlap and redundancy and then collapsed them into broad themes (Creswell, 2012, p. 243).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## The Career Aspirations of Grade Seven Learners in a Community School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 5</th>
<th>Use codes to generate themes for analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 5</strong></td>
<td>Use codes to generate themes for analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 6</strong></td>
<td>Identify and discuss interrelated or interconnected themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 7</strong></td>
<td>Interpret the meaning of themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- See Appendix E1 for an example segment of the initial coded interview transcription.
- I tabulated key information from the focus group interview (collages included in this), sociograms and questionnaires to assist in the comparison of information and the identification of preliminary themes. The preliminary themes were collapsed into broader themes. See Appendix E2.
- I re-visited the focus group interview transcription several times as coding and the identification of themes took place.

- Through the coding process, I narrowed down the data into a few themes (discussed in chapter 4) and other irrelevant data was disregarded.
- Codes that the participants discussed most often and had the most evidence to support them were used to create main themes (Creswell, 2012, p. 245).
- The triangulation of data was important in identifying the main themes and some of the sub-themes that overlapped were merged to avoid redundancy.
- This was done with the help of my research supervisor.
- Three main themes and seven sub-themes were identified. I tabulated information from each of the data sources according to each participant and according to each theme and sub-theme in order to verify the relevance of the themes and to check that there was triangulated evidence for each main theme and sub-theme.
- I created tables for each main theme (three in total) and sub-theme (seven in total) using detailed information from the collage, the focus group interview, the questionnaire and the sociogram. There were instances when a data set (the collage for example) did not relate to a specific theme and in these cases information from the other three data sets was sufficient. See Appendix E3 for an example of these tables.

- The tabulation of the themes and sub-themes allowed for the interconnectedness and interrelation of themes to be more easily identified.
- The themes were interpreted based on the literature and theoretical framework provided in chapter two as well as on other pertinent literature.
3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness involves the rigor of research and, according to Merriam (2009), is upheld by ensuring adherence to strict ethical standards. As mentioned in chapter one, there appears to be a broad consensus in literature that the terms credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability have become adopted in qualitative research as measures of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Myburgh, 2001; Shenton, 2004; Merriam, 2009 and Gray, 2012). Merriam (2009, p. 211) states that these terms have replaced terms such as internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity. It should be noted that according to Merriam (2009), different criteria for the trustworthiness of qualitative studies can be employed, depending of the design of the study and the identification of critical elements and interpretations. I have chosen to use the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as first laid out by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and expanded on in more recent literature.

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility is the congruence between the research findings and phenomenal reality. In other words, in order to establish credibility, one must ask ‘how consistent are the findings with reality?’ (Merriam, 2009). Although qualitative researchers can never capture an objective truth, there are ways in which a researcher can ensure the credibility of their findings (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the first method of ensuring credibility relates to the concept of triangulation. Triangulation refers to a process where multiple measures are used to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 2009). The various methods of data collection used, namely a questionnaire, career collage, career sociogram and focus group interview, meant that the research question could be explored via multiple means. Multiple methods of data collection ensured that I was able to check what a participant said in the interview against their responses in other formats, for example. Another aspect that was employed in this study to add to its credibility was reflexivity. This is a term which Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 213) define as “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the human instrument”. I attempted to remain reflexive throughout the research process by acknowledging my preconceived ideas and biases and through discussion with my supervisor. Finally, my supervisor’s continual review of this research as well as the critical reading of the editor added to its credibility.
3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability can be defined as the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. In other words, how generalisable are the results of a research study? (Merriam, 2009). Although qualitative research is not able to provide results that are completely applicable to other situations, it can highlight relevant issues that arise in similar contexts (O’Leary, 2008). In this study, I have attempted to achieve transferability through a “thick description” (Merriam, 2009, p. 227) of what is said, written or created (in the case of the collages) by the participants, but also the context within which it is said. A description of the research setting and the participants was included as it adds to the transferability of this inquiry; providing the reader with a detailed description of the research setting, the participants, the data collection methods and most importantly the findings of this study, it will be possible for them to determine if the study can be transferred to their own situation.

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability involves the extent to which the research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 2009). Dependability is concerned with whether the study would yield the same results should it be repeated (Merriam, 2009). Ensuring dependability in a qualitative study is difficult given that human behaviour is never static and that qualitative researchers seek primarily to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it (Merriam, 2009). These individual experiences are by nature singular and uniterable. In light of this, Lincoln and Guba (1985), who first coined the term ‘dependability’, conceptualised the term as a measure of whether the results of an inquiry are consistent with the data collected. That is, rather than striving for outsiders to achieve the same findings, a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense and are consistent and dependable (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). I was cognisant of this notion in my study and attempted to achieve dependability through the triangulation of data, through supervisor and editor reviews, through remaining self-reflexive throughout the process, and finally, through an audit trail. An audit trail in this research was achieved by keeping a detailed record of how data was collected and how I came up with the themes of my findings (Merriam, 2009, p. 223).
3.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is referred to by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the criterion of neutrality and is further defined by Shenton (2004) as a researcher’s ability to refrain from bias through reflective acknowledgment. In this study I attempted to obtain confirmability through an audit trail of my inquiry, as described previously, as well as through a reflective account of thoughts and observations throughout the research related to aspects like my role as the researcher, the participants, and the dynamic between us. Aspects of power relations and ‘voice’ and the limitations thereof were reflected on and have been discussed as a way of enhancing the confirmability of this study. Confirmability was also achieved through multiple methods of data collection, as well as through continual checking and re-checking of themes and patterns during data analysis until a point of saturation was reached (Merriam, 2009) and no further themes could be identified. Finally, a telephone conversation with the participant’s (although I could only get hold of two of the three participant’s) added to the confirmability of this research.

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Certain ethical standards were adhered to throughout this research and are based on the work of Babbie and Mouton (2001). These include: ethical clearance from the University of Johannesburg’s Higher Degrees Committee, voluntary participation, no harm to participants, anonymity and confidentiality, not deceiving subjects, and analysis and reporting.

Before the commencement of this research, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Johannesburg’s Higher Degrees Committee (ethical clearance number 2014-064). At the start of the research process, I had a meeting with the three potential participants and asked if they would like to take part in the study. At this meeting I discussed the concept of voluntary participation and explained that they would not be penalised if they decided not to participate, or if at any time they wanted to withdraw from the study. The participants were concerned that they would be receiving an assessment mark for participation in the study, and I clarified that this would not be the case at our initial meeting. It was necessary to assure participants that their involvement was not compulsory, given that social research often requires a significant
portion of the participants’ time and energy, and it would be unethical to exploit a position of
authority to coerce them to participate (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The concept of ‘no harm to participants’ relates to the fact that participation in a research study
should never hurt the participants in any way – physically or emotionally. This includes
revealing information about the participants that may be of an embarrassing nature (Babbie &
Mouton, 2001). Furthermore, researchers need to guard against the psychologically harm
participants may sustain during the research process as a result of being asked to reveal
sensitive information. This may include revealing income status or facing aspects of themselves
or their background that are difficult and emotionally charged (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Babbie and Mouton (2001) explain that the ethical considerations of voluntary participation
and no harm to participants can be formalised as informed consent. In this study, written
informed consent was obtained from the participants’ parents, and informed assent (given that
the participants are minors) was obtained from the participants after meeting with them to
explain the project. No harm to participants was also ensured through the analysis and reporting
of data with honesty and integrity.

Anonymity and confidentiality refers to the protection of participants’ interests and well-being,
as well as their identity (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). A degree of anonymity and confidentiality
in this study has been upheld by withholding any identifying information that may lead to the
participants being recognised by the public. This includes their names or family members’
names, the name of the school and the school personnel.

The deception of research participants could include giving false information as to the reason
for the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In this study, I attempted to be as transparent with
the participants as possible. At the initial meeting I was honest about the reason for and aim of
the research, as well as what the process would entail. I carried this frankness throughout the
study and made an effort to ‘check in’ with the participants after each data collecting session
to ascertain whether they had any questions or concerns.

Finally, Babbie and Mouton (2001) identify analysis and reporting as an important ethical
consideration in research. This includes obligations to your participants as well as to colleagues
in the scientific community. Babbie and Mouton (2001) include the following under analysis
and reporting: the reporting of negative findings is just as relevant as positive findings and
should not be withheld for fear of public response; the reporting of research findings should not masquerade as a carefully planned analytical strategy when those findings arrived unexpectedly; and the researcher’s maintenance of objectivity and integrity which includes technical standards, acknowledgement of study limitations, the fabrication or falsification of data and readiness on the researcher’s part to disclose the research methodology and data analysis techniques. In this study, the findings have emerged naturally and in my consideration of aspects such as the ‘voice’ of participants (as discussed previously) as well as reflecting on myself as the researcher, have formed part of my attempt to conduct this study with objectivity and integrity.

This minor-dissertation has been professionally edited to ensure the highest possible level of technical and language proficiency (See Appendix A3). Furthermore, the limitations of this research have been acknowledged and are discussed in detail in chapter five. In addition to this, the rejection of any form of plagiarism also forms part of the ethics around analysis and reporting (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), and I have attempted to adhere strictly to this ethical consideration and to acknowledge the authors that I have consulted in completing this minor-dissertation.

3.12 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have clarified the research methodology employed in this study. The aim of this research was to explore the career aspirations of grade seven learners in a community school, and therefore the research was conducted in an interpretive paradigm within a qualitative approach. Furthermore, a generic qualitative research design was deemed most suitable for this research. I have included a reflection on myself as the researcher as well as a description of the setting and context of the research. The process of data collection and analysis has been detailed and measures of trustworthiness implemented in this research have been discussed in detail. Finally, ethical considerations and adherence to these standards in this research have been detailed.

Chapter four provides the reader with a detailed, critical analysis of the data as well as an explanation of the findings of this research. Furthermore, literature which was reviewed in chapter two is integrated with the findings.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This research aimed to explore the career aspirations of grade seven learners in a community school and in this chapter a detailed and integrated understanding of the data collected is presented. Given that this study is qualitative in design, the information in this chapter has evolved from a cross pollination of what the participants have said with existing literature (linked to the review of literature in chapter two) and related to the themes that have been identified. My intention is to present the findings according to the themes and sub-themes that emerged after analysis of the data, keeping in mind that the participants represent a small sample and not all grade seven learners. I acknowledge as the researcher that the information that has been analysed and presented in this chapter has been filtered through my expertise and personal experience, and that reflexivity has been key in presenting the findings with integrity.

4.2. OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Chapter three has provided the reader with a detailed explanation of the data collection methods and analysis techniques utilised in this research, the findings of which are presented in this section. Briefly, data was collected with the three grade seven participants over three sessions using a questionnaire, sociogram, collage and a focus group interview based on the collage. Data has been analysed using qualitative content analysis and following Creswell’s (2012, p. 237) six steps for data analysis as discussed in chapter three.

4.3. PRESENTATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

Three main themes and seven sub-themes emerged in this research from the analysis of the collages, sociograms, questionnaires and the focus group interview, and are outlined in Figure 4.1.
Theme 1: Career hopes and dreams
- Sub-theme 1.1. Aspiration towards a career that allows independence and autonomy
- Sub-theme 1.2. Aspiration towards a career that affords a better lifestyle
- Sub-theme 1.3. Aspiration towards a lasting career

Theme 2: The role of family in shaping career aspirations
- Sub-theme 2.1. Family influence on career aspirations
- Sub-theme 2.2. Admired characteristics shown by family members

Theme 3: Counting the "cost" of career aspirations
- Sub-theme 3.1. Perceived barriers to career aspirations
- Sub-theme 3.2. Overcoming perceived barriers to career aspirations

Figure 4.1 Main and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of data

Theme 1 as well as its three associated sub-themes relate directly to the research question, which asks “What are the career aspirations of grade seven learners in a community school?” Themes 2 and 3, as well as their associated sub-themes, are indirectly related to the research question, however, the triangulation of data was such that it warranted these being main themes. Themes 2 and 3 strongly influenced the participants’ career hopes and dreams, thus making them pertinent to the research question. This is in line with literature by Nagengast and Marsh (2012) and Flouri and Panourgia (2012), who state that career aspirations are influenced by aspects such as societal norms, parental expectations and contextual factors.

4.4. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Throughout the section that follows, reference is made to the various data sets utilised in this research and for ease of reading, are referred to using an abbreviation. The letters at the beginning of the abbreviation refer to the specific data set (focus group interview, questionnaire, collage, sociogram) to which reference is being made, followed by the participant (PA, PB, PC) or researcher (R). When referencing or quoting from the focus group interview and questionnaire, page numbers (represented by “p.” and the corresponding page number) have also been included. Table 4.1 provides a key for the abbreviations used in my discussion.
It should be noted that not all data sets yielded findings for every sub-theme and therefore only the relevant data sets have been discussed under each sub-theme. Furthermore, as part of the data analysis process, as the researcher, I detailed aspects of the participants’ collages that appeared to tell a particular story related to the research question. This formed part of the interpretation of data and was based on my personal insight (Creswell, 2013). However, my interpretation of these stories was verified and in some instances changed by the participants during the focus group interview as they reflected on their collages and told the actual story behind each picture, word, and phrase. This measured my interpretation against the participants’ interpretation – an important part of data analysis according to Creswell (2013, p. 189).

Table 4.1: *Key to the Abbreviations used in this Discussion*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Set</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collage</td>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Collage Participant A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CPB</td>
<td>Collage Participant B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>Collage Participant C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Interview</td>
<td>FGIPA</td>
<td>Focus group interview Participant A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FGIPB</td>
<td>Focus group interview Participant B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FGIPC</td>
<td>Focus group interview Participant C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FGIR</td>
<td>Focus group interview Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>QPA</td>
<td>Questionnaire Participant A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QPB</td>
<td>Questionnaire Participant B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QPC</td>
<td>Questionnaire Participant C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociogram</td>
<td>SPA</td>
<td>Sociogram Participant A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPB</td>
<td>Sociogram Participant B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPC</td>
<td>Sociogram Participant C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.1 Theme 1: Career hopes and dreams

The first main theme that emerged after the analysis of data was “career hopes and dreams”. This theme unpacks the career aspirations of the grade seven learners in this study under three sub-themes, namely, aspiration towards a career that allows for independence and autonomy, aspiration towards a career that affords the participants a better lifestyle, and finally, aspiration towards a lasting career. In the discussion that follows and as explained in the literature review of this research, career aspirations are understood as a person’s hopes and expectations of
pursuing a career in a certain field (Nagengast & Marsh, 2012; Flouri & Panourgia, 2012) as well as the outcome of pursuing a certain career.

When discussing the career hopes and dreams of the participants, it is necessary to bear their stage of development in mind, as this has a profound influence on their career aspirations. According to Gottfredson’s (1996) stages of career circumscription and compromise, the participants are currently aware of an occupational hierarchy and are in the process of evaluating which careers are socially acceptable and which ones are not. Furthermore, in relation to Erikson’s psychosocial stages of development, the participants are in the process of the formation of a secure identity and they are purposefully seeking out career options (Hook, 2009). It is the formation of a secure identity that will assist the participants in this research, to settle on a future career. From an African perspective, Nsamenang (1992) states that the development of the self is inextricably linked to community, culture and the fulfilment of certain key roles. Family therefore plays a significant role in the career aspirations of the participants in this study.

4.4.1.1 Aspiration towards a career that allows independence and autonomy

a. Evidence according to the collages

Detailed analysis and triangulation of data from the participants’ collages, the focus group interview based on their collages, the questionnaires, and the sociograms suggested that all three participants aspire towards a career that will give them independence and autonomy. Independence can be understood as the freedom from the control of others and the autonomy to think, feel and make decisions on one’s own (Russel & Bakken, 2002). In Participant A’s collage, the words “managing your own company” and the word “own” are handwritten by the participant, indicating that he does not want to manage a company but his own company (CPA). The addition of the word “own” is indicative of his desire for ownership, autonomy and independence. Furthermore, above the words “mechanical” and “engineering of vehicles”, Participant A has the words “THE CAREER” indicating that a career in mechanical engineering is possibly the one that will afford him independence and autonomy (CPA).
Participant B’s collage also contains elements that relate to the aspiration towards a career that allows him independence and autonomy. The phrase “I have a dream” on his collage suggests that he has a dream for his future and that he is taking ownership of his future career (CPB). This phrase connotes confidence in his future aspirations. Furthermore, the words “your say” may be indicative of a desire for autonomy and having a voice (CPB) and this could also relate to participant B’s desire for others to ‘have a say’.

Participant C’s collage includes some pictures and phrases which link to aspiration towards a career which allows for independence and autonomy. This participant included a picture of a business man and mountain climber who are alone and this could be representative of independence and freedom (CPC). In the corner of his collage is the phrase “growing black enterprise” which talks to the idea of empowerment and growth in autonomy for black-owned businesses. Participant C’s handwritten words “bright ideas” and “master mind” could relate to the bright ideas he has for his future, indicating independent thought in terms of his future. Finally, Participant C included a picture of a man with a briefcase walking along a path alone and there is a bear on the side of the path eating money that is in a bucket (CPC). This picture could represent a sense of walking independently towards a career dream and the bear eating the money could on the one hand be indicative of a possible barrier to the achievement of this participant’s career aspirations, and on the other could represent a desire for surplus rather than simply surviving. To eat money could be deemed wasteful, but in a sense, having the option to do so indicates freedom.

b. Evidence according to the focus group interview

There was evidence throughout the focus group interview from all three participants that pointed to their aspiration towards a career that would afford them independence and autonomy. When telling me about his collage, Participant A’s first response was “Just like managing your own company of computers and stuff” (FGIPA, p. 2). Participant B said “I want to do business. I want to own a business” (FGIPB, p. 13) to which I responded “So like participant A, do you also want to own a business?” (FGIR, p. 13), and he said “Yes, I want to own a studio and a clothing shop…and there’s like making my own label” (FGIPB, p. 14). Like Participants A and B, when asked to tell me about his collage, Participant C said “I want to be
a business man involved in sport and I want to try rock climbing” (FGIPC, p. 32). In response to my question regarding aspiration towards owning a business one day, Participant C said “Yes, I want to have my own business” (FGIPC, p. 33). I probed as follows: “And you want your business to be in sport, is that correct?” (FGIR, p. 33), to which he responded “Like inventing ah, glasses. So I put here dynamic vision. I want to invent glasses and design clothes. Yes and start maybe an engineering company, but I’m not ready for it, but I am ready for designing stuff” (FGIPC, p. 34).

When asked about specific elements of their collages, it was evident that each of the participants had chosen specific phrases, pictures and words that represented their desire to one day be independent and have the freedom to make decisions in a future career. For example, when I asked Participant A about the phrase on his collage which reads “managing your own company” with “own” written by hand, he answered by saying “Teacher, it’s like managing your own company and owning your own company and not working for someone else...and working for your own self and have employees, ja...it’s my biggest dream” (FGIPA, p. 8). When I followed up with “What kind of company would you like to own one day?” (FGIR, p. 10) participant A responded with “An engineering company” (FGIPA, p. 10). I then asked “What has inspired you, where do you think the idea (to own your own company) has come from?” (FGIR, p. 11) and participant A answered with “Teacher I think it’s because I don’t like want to fall under a person’s need, like I’d like to fall under my own need, my own company” (FGIPA, p. 11).

It became evident from the focus group interview that when considering their career aspirations, the participants aspired to independence and autonomy (both in terms of thought and behaviour), for themselves and for others. Explaining the phrase “your say” written in capital letters on his collage, Participant B said “And here it’s like when I start doing, doing what I am doing like opening the company. Like I say what I feel” (FGIPB, p. 14-15). Participant B added to this by saying “And here the people that will be working for me they can speak like – they have to have a say, like if they are – they don’t feel free, they can say” (FGIPB, p. 15). Participant B then confirmed that he values people being able to speak their minds and ‘have their say’ and there is a sense here of giving others the freedom to speak their mind and think independently. Participant C explained his reasoning for including the phrase “master mind”, which is handwritten on his collage, and said “I wrote master mind because teacher, I
want to create something” (FGIPC, p. 43). This links to the idea of independent thought and using one’s own, independent mind to create new ideas.

Towards the end of the focus group interview, I asked the participants what they were taking away with them from the interview, or in other words, I asked them to share something that they had learned from the discussion. All three participants’ responses related to the sub-theme of aspiration towards a career that will give them independence and autonomy. In reflecting on and summarising my understanding of the participants’ responses, I made comments and asked questions such as “And guys all of you have said that you want to one day own your own company, and we spoke about how that talks to wanting to be independent. Like you said Participant A, you don’t want to have be under someone’s name” (FGIR, p. 47) to which he responded with: “Yes, I want to work for myself” (FGIPA, p. 47). “Would you (Participant C) agree with Participant B in terms of wanting a career that allows independence?” (FGIR, p. 47), “Ja, I would” (FGIPC, p. 47). As can be seen, the participants mostly answered affirmatively to my summarising and reflecting. Participant B gave a fairly detailed explanation of what he had learned from the discussion, which further supports this sub-theme: “I’ve learnt the chef thing (he included the word “chef” on his collage)...like if someone is not there then you can cook a meal for yourself” (FGIPB, p. 45). He added to this “And not depending on someone...you can do things on your own” (FGIPB, p. 46).

c. Evidence according to the questionnaires

Evidence from the participants’ questionnaires correlated with the findings of the collages and the focus group interview in confirming their aspiration towards a career which will give them independence and autonomy. One of the questions asked “In your future career, do you want to be in a leadership position? If yes, please explain” (Q, p. 3), to which Participant A answered “Yes, because I want to own my own business” (QPA, p. 3), Participant B answered “Yes, because I want to own a business for making my family proud” (QPB, p. 3), and Participant C answered “Yes, I want to lead people in handling shares and showing them the ropes” (QPC, p. 3). The participants were asked where they see themselves in 10 years’ time and all three gave answers which further supported this sub-theme. Participant A answered “...working for myself in a business and owning a shop of my own” (QPA, p. 6), Participant B said “...trying
to discover my own business and making it” (QPB, p. 6), and Participant C said “…having a well-known famous business. I also see myself inventing the latest technology” (QPC, p. 6).

d. Evidence according to the sociograms

The sociogram proved to be a useful tool to understand the participants’ families of origin and the potential influence that their families and family background have had on their career aspirations. This is in keeping with literature by Watson et al. (2011), which states that in South Africa, family is a key influence on the career aspirations of young people. This also proved to be true during the focus group interview and is discussed in further detail in subsequent sub-themes.

Analysis of the sociograms pointed to some pertinent information with regard to the research topic and although this information was not always explicit, there were implicit findings that supported the various themes and sub-themes. Participant A’s mother’s current job is that of a domestic worker and by nature this is a job which allows little independence and autonomy. It is not particularly high paying and one is under the direct authority of an employer. However, his mother’s dream job is to be a nurse, which is a more prestigious job that gives a person mastery of certain skills (gained through a formal qualification) which in turn allows for autonomy and independence. Participant A’s father’s current job is that of a security guard, for which he is poorly compensated, and his is a job where one is dictated to and at the mercy of a boss (SPA). It is likely that his parents’ current careers have played a role in shaping his desire to have independence and autonomy, as well as the prestige that comes with owning your own company and not working for someone else in a subservient position.

Participant B’s mother is currently unemployed, and although literature by Arulmani (2011b) states that children whose parents are unemployed tend to exhibit a high tendency to prematurely discontinue their education and enter the word of work as unskilled labourers, this participant said he has a dream for his future career and wants to own a company one day. ¹ As

¹ It is possible that the regularly-used phrase of “owning a company” is something that the participants influenced one another to say during the focus group interview. However, they completed their collages and questionnaires individually and independently, and therefore I believe their desire to “own a company” is legitimately their own.
this participant would have witnessed in interactions with his family, being unemployed is disempowering and can erode one’s sense of autonomy and independence. Participant B may be aware of this and therefore could be even more intent on a career that is going to afford him what his mother has gone without. Both his parents’ dream jobs (his mother’s is to be a television presenter or actress and his father’s is to be a personal trainer or health and fitness instructor) relate to the sub-theme of independence and autonomy in terms of mastery of skills, as well as the capacity to earn a decent salary. Participant B’s father is also a security guard, which is low on the job spectrum in terms of capacity to earn and ability to exercise independence and autonomy. Interestingly, both Participants A and B mentioned in their questionnaires that they would not like to be security guards. This shows that they are aware of what a career such as this entails and they do not want the same for their future. This illustrates the influence family has on a young person’s career aspirations (Watson et al., 2011).  

Participant C’s mother is currently a teacher assistant at a private school. Although this participant’s mother has the most autonomy and independence of the participants’ parents, she is still an assistant and not in full control of the class, having to defer to the class teacher at all times. Her dream job is to be a teacher and have her own class. This relates to the idea of independence and wanting the autonomy that comes with having one’s own class as well as having the title of ‘teacher’. Participant C’s father is deceased, however, his dream job was to own a printing company. This also gestures towards the idea of ownership, autonomy and having the freedom to act independently.  

4.4.1.2 Aspiration towards a career that affords a better lifestyle  

a. Evidence according to the collages  

On his collage, Participant A has pasted pictures of two computers, a Land Rover and a fancy house which depicts a luxurious, upper-class lifestyle. This participant currently lives in a nearby informal settlement where he does not have much in terms of material possessions. These pictures are possibly an indicator of the lifestyle that this participant hopes for, and he possibly aspires to a career that will afford him these kinds of material possessions. Interestingly, under the picture of the Land Rover and next to the picture of the house, this
participant has stuck the phrase “A home that defines you”, which could mean that the home and other material possessions that he hopes to acquire would be things that would define who he is. There is a sense here of a belief that external things define who he is as a person and this alludes to the idea of one’s self-worth being linked to their career. The phrase seen on Participant A’s collage which reads “Secure your home with the ultimate global safety system”, could again link to the idea of being afforded a better, more secure life that a certain career would provide for. He may therefore aspire to a career that would give him the financial freedom to secure his home, have a big home, drive a Land Rover and own computers. There is aspiration here towards a career within a certain income bracket that would allow him to live a “better life” than his current situation in the informal settlement where he has very few material possessions and where his safety may be at risk. This sub-theme links to Flourisi and Panourgia’s (2012) suggestion that primary school children’s career aspirations may be a reflection of hope for the future, rather than a realistic determinant of possible career. In other words, the participants’ hope for their future includes the accumulation of material possessions that symbolise a better life, rather than the reality of a specific career choice.

The picture in the top left hand corner of Participant B’s collage shows a resort with a pool and outside area that is particularly glamorous. This may depict the lifestyle that this participant hopes that his career will one day afford him. Next to this picture he has stuck the phrase “A model life”, which, considering this sub-theme, may be one that is better in that it affords him both external (material possessions depicted also by the picture of the Land Rover and fancy house) and internal (financial peace of mind including ability to provide for his family etc.) means. The phrase “I have a dream” could relate to his dream life, or his dream for a better life. Participant B has stuck the word “ahead” in the bottom right hand corner, which could relate to the idea of getting ahead (of where he is now) in his career in order to have a better lifestyle. Finally, the phrase “your future is created by what you do today, not tomorrow” may represent the fact that this participant is willing to work hard to create a future that will mean a better life for him. This quote links to Bandura et al.’s (2001) research on self-efficacy in that there is a sense from this quote that this participant has a belief in himself and his ability to produce a desired outcome if he is pro-active. These authors argue that self-efficacy is defined by an individual’s belief in their ability to succeed in a specific situation and to produce a desired outcome, which is what this participant displays by the use of this phrase on his collage.
Participant C’s collage includes a picture of a man in a suit, a rock climber and soccer teams, as well as the word ‘chef’. This may be indicative of certain careers that this participant believes will afford him a better life than he currently has. The picture of the man walking along the path with a briefcase in his hand (previously referred to) could relate to the idea of a better life in that he may be walking towards his dream career and all that that entails. If the bear eating the money in the same picture symbolises a potential barrier to the fulfilment of this participant’s career dreams and therefore to a better life, walking in the opposite direction of the bear (as the man in the picture is doing) could indicate overcoming these barriers and enjoying a better life. Finally, the phrase “growing black enterprise” in the bottom left hand corner could connect to wanting to grow black enterprise in order to live a better life.

b. Evidence according to the focus group interview

The focus group interview confirmed this sub-theme and it became clear that the three participants aspire to a career that will afford them a better life. Participant A explained the phrase on his collage which reads “Secure your home with the ultimate global safety system and said “Because I know out there, there’s many robberies and stuff” (FGIPA, p. 4), and when asked if he feels safe where he currently lives, he said “No, not really” (FGIPA, p. 4). This is an example of how the participants’ current circumstances influence their future hopes and dreams. When asked to explain the phrase “A home that defines you”, Participant A commented by saying “It’s like a home that satisfies you if at where you live is fine for your life” (FGIPA, p. 5). This is in direct contrast to this participants’ current living circumstances in a nearby informal settlement and suggests that he is not satisfied with this current living conditions. This again relates to the literature on primary school children’s career aspirations as hopes and dreams for the future rather than a realistic sense of a future career (Flouri & Panourgia, 2012). When explaining the picture of the fancy lodge on his collage, Participant B said “This here is a house that like it’s an idea of what I want to do, I want to design my own house” (FGIPB, p. 12). He continued “Yes, and here it’s I must have good ideas to the house so that it could be like this” (FGIPB, p. 13). Like Participant A, this participant desires a home that is on a completely different level to his current home in an informal settlement, which corresponds with a desire for a career that would afford him a better lifestyle. Participant B corroborated this when he said “And for here (pointing at the picture of the sunset) I want like
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my own space, like my own large space and my house must be like where the sun sets down, just like this” (FGIPB, p. 25-26).

The phrase on Participant B’s collage which reads “A model life” relates directly to this sub-theme and he encapsulated it by saying “And here it’s like I want to have a good life... a model life” (FGIPB, p. 23). “A model life, okay and what does that look like for you?” (FGIR, p. 23), I asked, and he responded “Like it’s a life that I have always wanted” (FGIPB, p. 23). This statement indicates that he aspires towards a life that is better than his current life. All three participants spoke of smart cars, which they would like one day, and this relates to the fact that they all aspire to material possessions that are far above what they currently have access to. Pointing to the Land Rover, Participant B said “And this it like the car that I want” (FGIPB, p. 23). When I asked Participant B if a Land Rover is his dream car he said “It’s a Range Rover but it’s not like this one... Look teacher, I want – actually I want 4 cars. Like the first one it is a Benz and the second one a BMW and then the third one it’s a range rover and then a jeep” (FGIPB, p. 24). Participant A, in conversation with Participant B about the 4 cars he wants, said “I want a GTI and a BMW” (FGIPA, p. 25), and Participant C said “I want a BMW and a Land Rover” (FGIPC, p. 25). It is evident from the participants’ collages that their desire for a better lifestyle hinges on material possessions. This is captured in Participants A and B’s choice of the phrases on their collages which read “A home that defines you” and “A model life”. This supports the findings of Watson et al. (2011), who state that socio-economic status consistently has an impact on children’s career aspirations. In this case, the participants’ low socio-economic status seems to have influenced them in their aspiration towards a career that would give them a better lifestyle in terms of a luxurious home and smart cars.

c. Evidence according to the questionnaires

Participant A and C’s responses to the question “Where do you see yourself in 10 years’ time?” (Q, p. 6) incorporated and confirmed their desire for a better life in terms of material possessions when they said “I see myself getting married and driving my own cars” (QPA, p. 6), and “I see myself inventing the latest technology and having a nice big house and the latest, fancy car” (QPC, p. 6).
d. Evidence according to the sociograms

When considering the participants’ desire for a career that would afford them a better lifestyle, it is interesting to look at their sociograms and the influence that their family background may have had on their desire for a better lifestyle. Table 4.2 indicates the jobs that the participants’ parents and grandparents have/had. It is evident from the contrast between participants’ career aspirations and their families’ current jobs that the participants aspire to careers that will afford them a much better lifestyle than they have been afforded.

**Table 4.2: Current Jobs of Participants’ Family Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Maternal Grandmother</th>
<th>Paternal Grandfather</th>
<th>Paternal Grandmother</th>
<th>Paternal Grandfather</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Domestic worker</td>
<td>Security guard</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Chief’s wife</td>
<td>Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Security guard</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Pensioner on grant</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Teacher assistant</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Arulmani (2006) points out, the idea of a career has only developed in recent years, as approaches to work have changed, and therefore people’s expression of work behaviour has changed. Furthermore, a personal career is not intrinsic to countries like South Africa, and the jobs that the participants’ family members have are not their desired careers but rather a means to an end, given their access to education and socio-economic status. However, their jobs appear to have influenced the participants’ aspiration towards a career that is going to give them a better lifestyle than that of their parents. Although Gottfredson’s (1996) theory of circumscription and compromise asserts that children from low socio-economic backgrounds do not aspire to hold more prestigious careers than their parents or significant care givers because they fear failure and separation from their family, the findings of this research contradict this assertion. The participants in this study appear to aspire towards careers that hold more prestige than those of their parents or close family members.
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These findings also correlate with Savickas (2003) and Maree’s (2011) view that a career is an individual construction which is intimately linked to a person’s life story. It would appear that the research participants are not constructing their career narratives based on those of their parents or family members. Rather, they see their current circumstances as something to be overcome, which is what a successful career could enable.

4.4.1.3 Aspiration towards a lasting career

A third sub-theme that became evident was that of an aspiration towards a career that would last. Even in primary school, the participants are “weighing up the odds” of certain careers and “are not willing to take” (FGIPA, p. 6) certain careers due to the concern that it will end prematurely.

a. Evidence according to the collages

The words “Mechanical Engineering” as well as “Managing your own company” on Participant A’s collage may indicate a career that he sees as lasting. Interestingly, both Participants A and B included a picture of a soccer cake with sparklers on it with the words “Soccer party” (CPA) and “Fun soccer party” (CPB) written next to the pictures. This may represent the opposite of a lasting career, one that might be fun (association of soccer with a party) but is not lasting. Participant C also included soccer as a career option in the form of a soccer team and a picture of the front cover of a magazine with a soccer player on it. The inclusion of these pictures may also be indicative of the participant’s current stage of development and the fact that they are young adolescents who presumably like playing soccer. The pictures of the big house, Land Rover and computers on Participant A’s collage, as well as the fancy lodge and Land Rover on Participant B’s collage may represent material possessions that they could acquire if they have a lasting, secure career. The picture referred to previously of the man walking with a briefcase along the path on Participant C’s collage, although linked to other themes, may represent walking towards a career that will not end, given that the path in the picture keeps going and there is no end in sight.
b. Evidence according to the focus group interview

When I asked Participant A about the soccer cake picture and the words “Soccer party” on his collage, he responded by saying “Here it’s like a career that a person would choose” (FGIPA, p. 5). I then asked “Would you choose to be a soccer player?” (FGIR, p. 5), to which he responded “Ja, but I’m not willing to take it” (FGIPA, p. 6). I requested further clarification by asking “Can you explain that to me?” (FGIR, p. 6) and he clarified by explaining “That’s because like having winning careers, when you are done with soccer, in soccer your career can end. After you career ends, you must like maybe think of ideas that if your career ends now you at least have some ideas like business and stuff, ja, so I don’t choose soccer. I’m not willing to take it…in case it ends” (FGIPA, p. 6-7). Participant B held similar views when he explained the picture of the boy kicking a soccer ball on his collage. He said, pointing to the picture, “And this will like be my second opinion [option]” (FGIPB, p. 18), to which I responded “Okay, can you tell me about that please?” (FGIR, p. 18), and he answered “Like my first it’s music, then business and then art. And this is my last one” (FGIPB, p. 19) (Pointing to the picture of the boy kicking a soccer ball).

Later in the focus group interview, Participant B echoed Participant A’s comment when he said, pointing again to the picture of the boy kicking a soccer ball, “It’s just this one is too short” (FGIPB, p. 30). I affirmed this statement by saying “Yes, like Participant A was saying, you don’t know when it’s going to end” (FGIR, p. 30), to which he replied “Yes, but while I am playing soccer, I will start my business (points at the word “business” on the collage)” (FGIPB, p. 30). Participant A liked this idea and responded to Participant B by saying “That’s great, like you know that if your career for soccer is going to end at least on the side you know that at least I have a business” (FGIPA, p. 30). Participant C included pictures of a soccer team and a magazine cover page of a soccer player and when asked about this he said “I also want to be on the cover of a magazine…maybe as a soccer player or a person giving advice” (FGIPC, p. 35). He did not overtly state that he would not “take soccer” as the other participants did for fear it would not last. He did not however focus on soccer as a career and expressed more interest in it as a hobby.
Participant C made an interesting point when explaining his reason for sticking the phrase “baby boomer” on his collage. He said, “Teacher I want to start from the bottom up” (FGIPC, p. 42). This could illustrate wanting to build a solid foundation for his career in order for it to last a long time. Participant B encapsulated this sub-theme succinctly at the end of the focus group interview when I asked what the participants were taking away from the discussion. His response was, “Teacher I have learned that in life, with any career you must first value [evaluate] it and see how long it is going to last...and then make a decision about whether you are taking it or leaving it. But like even though you take it, you should have like a plan B...and not only depend on this one, knowing that if this one should end, you can also depend on the one that’s on your side” (FGIPA, p. 48-49).

It was clear in the interview that the participants felt strongly about the security and longevity of their future career. Quite maturely, they were able to make a distinction between careers like soccer, which are enjoyable and could bring them fame (they could appear on the cover of a magazine) and careers that are more likely to last. They were also able to think about ways that they could supplement a career in soccer by starting a business on the side, showing their desire for a lasting, secure career. This links directly to Gottfredson’s (1996) point that at this stage of career development (orientation to social valuation) the participants are figuring out what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of a future career. In doing so, they are incorporating new elements into their self-concept and in turn altering the “zone of acceptable alternatives” (Gottfredson, 1996). This is also referred to by Gottfredson (1996) as the process of circumscription or “narrowing down”. It is at this stage that the participants are, according to Gottfredson (1996), becoming more aware of an occupational hierarchy and they are cognisant of how they are regarded by others. This also correlates with their stage of cognitive development, as outlined by Piaget and explained by Cockcroft (2009), in which adolescents are able to think abstractly about possibilities based on reality. This links directly to a distinctive feature of Gottfredson’s (1996) theory in that she accounts for the fact that as a young person’s cognitive growth advances, so their ability to perceive and understand the more abstract features of self and careers increases.
c. Evidence according to the questionnaires

Interestingly, question 1 on page 5 of the questionnaire (Q, p. 5) asked the participants to tabulate careers that they want to be in and those they do not. It was apparent that the participants have a clear idea of careers they do not want. For example, Participant A stated that he does not want to go into a career in sport, Participant B said he does not want to become a domestic worker, and Participant C said he would not like a career in teaching, among others. In relation to the sub-theme of an aspiration towards a lasting career, the careers mentioned here are probably viewed by the participants as not being lasting. They are therefore undesirable. We know from the focus group interview that a career in sport may be desirable but not secure enough for the participants. Table 4.3 signposts the participants’ most desired careers based on their questionnaires. Careers that were desirable to two or all of the participants are colour coded for ease of reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOST DESIRABLE CAREERS ACCORDING TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANT A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from Table 4.3 that all three participants desire a career in business, and drawing on evidence from the focus group interview, there is a sense from the participants that a career in business is considered by them as a secure, lasting career. Engineering is a desirable career for Participants A and C, which is in itself a generally secure and lasting career. Participant A confirmed his desire for a career in engineering when he answered “To become the best
mechanical engineer in the whole world” (QPA, p. 5) when asked to describe his hopes and dreams for his future career. In response to the same question, Participant B answered “I hope that I will achieve my dream and dream big and persevere and make my family proud and be a business man” (QPB, p. 5) and Participant C said “To have a good job that is suitable to my family. I dream to have a wonderful family and later on to start having a business with a major shareholder in the company. I will try to save money” (QPC, p. 5). Furthermore, in response to the question that asked where the participants see themselves in 10 years’ time, aspects of their responses relate to the idea of wanting a career that they perceive as secure and lasting: “...working for myself in a business and owning a shop of my own” (QPA, p. 6), “...trying to discover my own business and making it” (QPB, p. 6), “...having a well-known famous business” (QPC, p. 6). Given that the participants will only be 22 and 23 years of age in 10 years’ time, they might still be studying, especially if they pursue the careers they have described. However, 10 years seems like a long time to young people, and they may think that this goal is achievable in this time due to a lack of understanding of the massive undertaking involved. According to Piaget’s theory of cognitive development (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969), the research participants are only just starting to think more systematically and be able to think and plan ahead, thus they are able to generate hypotheses as to what they will be doing in 10 years’ time, however to project further than that may have proved difficult for them.

d. Evidence according to the sociograms

Considering the information in Table 4.2 regarding the jobs that the participants’ family members currently have (those that are employed), it is evident that their jobs are not secure. Although Participant C’s mother probably has the most secure and potentially lasting job as a teacher assistant, it is interesting that in his comments, Participant C did not see this as a lasting and secure career and in fact, he placed in on the list of his undesirable careers in his questionnaire. It is therefore likely that the participants’ desire for a lasting career has been influenced by their family background, particularly where there have been family members that have been unemployed, as Participant B’s mother and maternal grandmother are. In addition, some of the participants’ family members who are deceased were unemployed before they passed away. At this stage the participants in this research have clear aspirations for their future despite their family backgrounds and low socio-economic status. Going forward,
however, career support will play an important role in ensuring that the trend of children from low socio-economic backgrounds (particularly with illiterate and unemployed parents) discontinuing their education and becoming unskilled workers (Arulmani, 2001) will not continue.

4.4.2 Theme 2: The role of family in shaping career aspirations

In discussing the sub-themes under this second main theme, the focus group interview, questionnaires and sociograms have been used. The participants’ collages are not specifically referred to here because on their own and without the focus group interview, information could not be inferred with regard to this theme. The findings of this research confirm that family do indeed influence an individual’s career aspirations and this correlates with literature by Hartung et al. (1996) and Watson et al. (2011), who state that career choice is not only an individual process, but is also communal and interpersonal. The data yielded two sub-themes, namely: family influence on career aspirations, and admired characteristics shown by family members.

4.4.2.1 Family influence on career aspirations

a. Evidence according to the focus group interview

Watson et al. (2011) state that there is a general consensus in literature that children’s occupational aspirations are consistent with their parent’s occupations, but this is effected by their perception of their parent’s occupational satisfaction. The findings of this research confirm this statement in that none of the participants aspired to any of their family members’ occupations and this was partly based on a lack of parental job satisfaction. Instead, Participants A and B aspired to their parents’ dream jobs, as discussed during the focus group interview when I asked “Participant A, are there any family members whose career you would like to follow?” (FGIR, p. 53), to which he responded “Teacher I think a soldier. It’s my father’s dream” (FGIPA, p. 53). I asked participant B the same question to which he answered “And Participant B, are there any family members whose careers you would like to follow?” (FGIR, p. 52), and he said “Ah…presenter” (FGIPB, p. 52). I then asked “And whose career was that?”
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(FGIR, p. 52) and he answered “It was my mom and dad’s dream job” (FGIPB, p. 52). It is clear from the participants’ responses that they both aspire to their parents’ dream jobs, but not to their actual jobs. Participant A and B’s fathers are both security guards and Participant B’s mother is currently unemployed. Participant A stated in the questionnaire that being a security guard is an undesirable career for him. When Participant C was asked if there are any family members’ careers that he would like to follow, his response was “I have no one” (FGIPC, p. 51).

It was evident in the focus group interview that the participants’ family members have encouraged them to “achieve their dream” and have cautioned them not to make the same mistakes that they have made. This was confirmed by Participants A and B when they described what was pertinent with regard to their families’ influence on their career aspirations. “What stood out for me is like they [his parents] told me like I should work hard and get degrees so that I can achieve my dream and don’t be the same like them” (FGIPA, p. 58). “Ja, they don’t want me in their – they don’t want me to look like their background, ja so like their background...and ask for something for them and for my brother and my sister” (FGIPA, p. 58). Participant B responded with, “They said I must not make the same mistakes as they did” (FGIPB, p. 54). He continued by saying “Both of them, they were actually achieving but something stood in their way and I don’t know what. Yes, then they said it was a mistake. They said they cannot stop me from living my life, but they want me to know what is right and what is wrong, and mistakes, like when you make a mistake, and I can ruin my life by that mistake” (FGIPB, p. 55). When Participant C was asked to respond he said “Ah no teacher” (FGIPC, p. 56) and shook his head. Participant A and B’s responses are congruent with Matsebatlela’s (1986, as cited in Stead, 1996) statement that there is a general expectation of parents who are unskilled labourers or who are unemployed that their children enter into careers that will provide a steady income and bestow professional status.

b. Evidence according to the questionnaires

There was evidence in the participants’ answers to some of the questions that pointed to the influence of family on their career aspirations. As mentioned, Participant A stated in the questionnaire (QPA, p. 2) that he would not want a career in security, which is his father’s
current occupation, and Participant B mentioned that he would not like his oldest aunt’s work (she is a domestic worker) because “it can’t support me” (QPB, p. 2). Interestingly, Participant C mentioned in the questionnaire that teaching is an undesirable career for him (QPC, p. 5), and this is his mother’s career. It is clear that all three participants have negative perceptions of their family members’ careers and do not aspire to them. They do however, admire personal characteristics shown by family members. This will be discussed in the following sub-theme.

Although Participant A mentioned that he does not aspire to his father’s current job, he did state in the questionnaire that his father has influenced what he wants to become one day in that his father “is good at mechanical engineering so I want to be like him when I grow up” (QPA, p. 4). The same is true for Participant B, who stated that his aunt has influenced him because “she was growing up poorly but she said she is going to make something out of her life” (QPB, p. 4). These responses allude to the next sub-theme of admired characteristics. Finally, Participant C said “my mother influenced me to study and have my own, famous business and that time measures for everything” (QPC, p. 4). These responses are indicative of the fact that the participants’ family members have indeed played a role in shaping their career aspirations.

When asked about the influence that his family and upbringing have had on what he wants to become one day (Q, p. 4), Participant A answered “I think it’s because I see a lot of people fixing cars that’s why I want to be like them” (QPA, p. 4), showing that his context has influenced his aspiration with regard to his future career. Participant B answered “I am growing up in a family that wants his/her child to achieve their goals and persevere and not do the mistakes they’ve done” (QPB, p. 4). This shows that his family are cognisant of the mistakes they have made and the repercussions thereof, and do not want the same for their son. Participant C answered “My background has influenced me to look where I came from and focusing in the future” (QPC, p. 4), exhibiting an awareness of how his background could be a hindrance to his career development, however he is looking ahead to the future. Finally, in two of the participants’ explanations of their hopes and dreams in terms of a future career, it was evident that family is indeed a consideration. Participant B said “I hope that I will achieve my dream and dream big and persevere and make my family proud and be a business man” (QPB, p. 5) and Participant C said “To have a good job that is suitable to my family. I dream to have
a wonderful family and later on to start having a business with a major shareholder in the company. I will try to save money” (QPC, p. 5). There is a sense from these comments that these participants consider their families as they discuss their future hopes and dreams, and that it is important to them that their family approves of them and their future career.

c. Evidence according to the sociograms

Table 4.4 gives an indication of the participants’ family member’s current jobs (as seen in Table 4.2, but with an addition of each of the family members’ dream careers). Although in some contexts the term ‘career’ is synonymous with that of ‘work’ or ‘job’ (Weinert, 2001), for the purposes of this research, a delineation is made between the terms. A career can be understood as a pattern of work experiences which spans a person’s life. Furthermore, a career is not isolated jobs, but rather an interwoven, long-term story of “work life” that is built throughout one’s life (Savickas, 2003; Maree, 2011), and is usually driven by a sense of passion and ambition. A job, on the other hand, can be thought of as a short-term “means to an end” that is often done out of necessity rather than passion or ambition (Arulmani et al., 2014).

Table 4.4: Participants’ Family Members’ Actual Jobs versus their Dream Careers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participant A</th>
<th></th>
<th>Participant B</th>
<th></th>
<th>Participant C</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual job</td>
<td>Dream career</td>
<td>Actual job</td>
<td>Dream career</td>
<td>Actual job</td>
<td>Dream career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother</strong></td>
<td>Domestic worker</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Presenter</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Actress</td>
<td>assistant</td>
<td>own class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father</strong></td>
<td>Security guard</td>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>Security guard</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Own a printing company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>trainer or fitness instructor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maternal grandmother</strong></td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maternal grandfather</strong></td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paternal grandmother</strong></td>
<td>Chief’s wife</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Pensioner on grant</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paternal grandfather</strong></td>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As previously mentioned, Participant A states in the focus group interview that there is a part of him that aspires to his father’s dream career of becoming a soldier, however he does not want to become a security guard. Participant B stated that he also aspires in some way to his mother’s dream job of becoming a presenter. Participant B mentioned that his oldest aunt is a domestic worker and he does not aspire to that because it cannot support him (not documented in Table 4.4) (QPB, p. 2). In the questionnaire, Participant C mentioned that he does not aspire to a career in teaching, which as can be seen in Table 4.4 is his mother’s dream job. Interestingly, Participant C’s father’s dream job was to own a printing company and Participant C, along with the other two participants, aspires to own a company one day. For Participant C, the memory of his father, who is deceased, and his dream of owning a company is likely to have influenced his own aspiration. It is also of interest that none of the participants’ family members for whom information was given are currently pursuing their dream careers. One can imagine that this fuels their encouragement of the participants not to make the same mistakes they did and not to let obstacles stand in the way of them achieving their career aspirations. This reality of the participants’ family members being trapped in positions of semi or unskilled work may be a result of apartheid restrictions placed on their education and the subsequent discontinuation of their education (Stead, 1996).

The fact that many of the participants’ family members’ dream jobs are unknown may indicate that the idea of aspiration towards a dream career was not talked about nor recognised or even relevant. Various contextual factors would have made the pursuit of a career impossible and ‘making ends meet’ would have been an overwhelming necessity. In addition to contextual factors, it is also necessary to note the changing world of work as the global economy has developed (Maree & Di Fabio, 2015). The participants in this research have a different perspective of work and a career to their family members, given the different historical context they live in; their exposure to various career and work-related opportunities through school and the like, work to shape their career aspirations.
4.4.2.2 Admired characteristics shown by family members

As previously mentioned, although none of the participants aspire to any of their family members’ current careers, it became clear, particularly during the focus group interview and the questionnaire, that the participants admire personal characteristics of certain family members. These “character qualities” appear to have inspired the participants to reach their career aspirations, despite obstacles that may stand in their way. This correlates with the notion of personhood as described by Nsamenang (1992) in his theory of human development: as an adolescent is immersed in the world of the emerging adult, so he or she learns certain ways of being through observing the behaviour of those within their community. This includes qualities such as determination, responsibility, and perseverance despite hardship, to name a few, which adolescents attempt to emulate and which form part of their future career aspirations.

a. Evidence according to the focus group interview

Although Participant A was not particularly forthcoming in the focus group interview with regard to this sub-theme, Participants B and C made some interesting comments which highlighted specific characteristics in their family members that they admire. I said to participant B “I remember you spoke of your aunt and how she has inspired you” (FGIR, p. 30), and I then asked “Can you tell us a little more about that?” (FGIR, p. 31), and he explained “Like she is the second born of my grandmother and she chose to go on no matter what. Yes and all of them in my family they didn’t have a chance to go to school, but some did, so my aunt did not but she made something and um now she has bought a car and she is in Cosmo and she works here at Lifestyle” (FGIPB, p. 31). It is evident that while Participant B does not want his aunt’s career, he admires her determination and perseverance through difficult circumstances to get where she is today. Participant C stated that he admires certain characteristics in his mother when asked, “Participant C, you’ve told me before that you admire your mom’s career. Can you tell me about that?” (FGIR, p. 56), and he said “Because she worked hard. Teacher because she worked hard to be where she is today” (FGIPC, p. 56). This participant has confirmed that what he admires about his mother’s career is not the actual work but rather his mother’s hard work.
b. Evidence according to the questionnaires

One of the questions in the questionnaire was “Have any members of your family influenced or currently influence what you want to become one day? If so, please explain” (Q, p. 4). Participant A answered “Yes my father influenced me because he is good at mechanical engineering so I want to be like him when I grow up” (QPA, p. 4). It is evident from this answer that Participant A admires a certain skill that he sees in his father. As previously stated, his father is a security guard, which is a career Participant A has clearly stated he does not want to pursue, however, he admires skills that his father possesses and this has influenced him to consider mechanical engineering as a future career. Participant B’s answer to the same question was “Yes my aunt was growing up poorly but she said she is going to make something out of her life” (QPB, p. 4). His aunt is currently a manager at a local garden centre and when asked in the questionnaire if there is anyone in their family whose work or career they admire, Participant B wrote (in relation to the same aunt) “I admire my aunties career. She always gets serious about her work and she loves it very much” (QPB, p. 1). It is clear from these answers that Participant B admires the personal qualities of determination, focus and resilience that his aunt has displayed in her career development. This participant does not aspire to his aunt’s job, but admires “character qualities” that she has shown, which have influenced him as he considers his future career. As mentioned in the previous sub-theme, both Participant B and C’s families have encouraged them to show the perseverance despite hardship, as well as gratitude and determination as they consider their future careers. The participants exhibit an awareness of this: “I am growing up in a family that wants his/her child to achieve their goals and persevere and not do the mistakes they’ve done” (QPB, p. 4) and “My background has influenced me to look where I came from and focus on the future” (QPC, p. 4). Although research by Mc Whirter, Hackett & Bandalos, 1998, as cited in Patton & Creed, 2007 found that lower socio-economic status correlated with a perceived lack of parental support, which negatively affected the attainment of career aspirations, it would appear that the participants in this research who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, perceive support and encouragement from their parents to attain their future career dreams and “not to make the mistakes they have made” (QPB, p. 4).
c. Evidence according to the sociograms

Both the focus group interview and the questionnaire revealed that the participants each identified one family member whose personal “characteristics” they admire, and which have influenced their career aspirations. This is shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Admired Characteristics of Participants’ Family Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Family member</th>
<th>Admired characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Skill of being able to fix cars and being good at mechanical engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Aunt</td>
<td>Determination, focus, perseverance despite hardship (resilience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Hard work to get where she is today</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biddle, Bank, and Marlin (as cited in Simpson, 2003) state that it is common for children and adolescents to be influenced by values espoused by parents (and family members) in terms of their future career choice. It is evident from the data in this research that participants B and C are in some way influenced by certain values or characteristics such as determination, perseverance and resilience, and this has impacted them as they consider their future career hopes and dreams. Although Participant A did not share much with regard to this subtheme, he may in future identify certain admirable characteristics in his family member’s as he considers his future career hopes and dreams, and the discussion during the focus group interview may be a catalyst for this to occur.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Counting the “cost” of career aspirations

It became evident in the analysis of the data that the participants are aware of potential barriers to them achieving their career aspirations. They therefore experience “anticipatory compromise” (Gottfredson, 1981). Findings show that the participants have a fairly nuanced understanding of what it is going to take for them to achieve their career aspirations. Furthermore, they possess a determination to work towards their future career goals in spite of barriers they might encounter, and this illustrates that they have what Arulmani terms “persistence beliefs” (2011a, p. 25). Both “anticipatory compromise” and “persistence beliefs”
fall under the broad theme of “counting the cost of career aspirations” and are separated into two sub-themes: perceived barriers to career aspirations, and overcoming perceived barriers to career aspirations.

4.4.3.1 Perceived barriers to career aspirations

a. Evidence according to the collages

Although Participant A and B’s collages do not contain overt evidence of this sub-theme, Participant C has included a picture which could relate to it. As mentioned before, this participant stuck a picture on his collage of a man walking along a path with a briefcase in his hand. To the left of the path is a bear with a bucket of money in front of him that he is eating. In thinking about barriers to career aspirations, this picture could symbolise that the bear represents barriers (or simply an overt threat) to one’s career aspirations. The ‘bear’ or barrier could take the form of money, resources, or poverty, for instance. This idea was expanded on in the focus group interview, which will be discussed next.

b. Evidence according to the focus group interview

Initially when asked “What do you think might be stopping you from achieving or realising your career dream of owning your own company?” (FGIR, p. 8), Participant A said that he was not aware of anything that could stop him from achieving his career dream when he said “Nothing so far, I don’t know” (FGIPA, p. 9). However, when Participant B was asked the same question and mentioned money as a barrier, Participant A agreed with a simple “Ja” (FGIPA, p. 28). Participant B answered this question with “Um…money” (FGIPB, p. 28), to which I responded “Money, okay, can you tell me a little more about that?” (FGIR, p. 28) and he answered “Like when I go to university, like some people, like they can’t afford, couldn’t afford to go to university. So if it’s too much for my family, so I won’t have to go, so I will make a plan” (FGIPB, p. 28).
The conversation took an interesting turn when I asked Participant C about the picture of the man on the path and the bear eating the bucket of money. He initially responded by saying “Teacher, I think, I think a person…ja, teacher it’s just a fun drawing for, to replace something in the house, like to start a business” (FGIPC, p. 37), but then the other two participants joined in the discussion and gave their interpretation of the picture in relation to career aspirations. This demonstrates the value of using a focus group interview as part of the data collection process because as Merriam (2009) states, it allows participants get to hear one another’s responses and enables them to make additional responses beyond their initial responses. Participant A added, “Teacher I would think like the person is like, like in my own words I would say this person is working towards a dream” (FGIPA, p. 38), and then I asked “Okay so you’re saying they are walking maybe towards a career dream?” (FGIR, p. 38) and he answered “Yes” (FGIPA, p. 38). Participant B added “I think there is like this, this darker part is like the wrong side and this is the bright side. This like she, he just, he chose like money and getting troubles, or he chose to just make, start a business like don’t meet it half way, there are no short cuts to making money” (FGIPB, p. 38). Participant B added “this darker part, the wrong side” which relates to the idea of barriers to career aspirations.

To facilitate the conversation, I reflected my understanding of what the participants had mentioned and said “When I looked at that I thought that could be someone walking the path to their career dream and a bear, I mean we could talk about a bear in terms of things in our lives that almost could be like bears that want to “eat up” your career dream” (FGIR, p. 39). I then asked Participant C if he could think of any “bears” that might try and “eat up” his career dream and he responded with “Ja, it’s like someone who like who doesn’t want you to succeed and blocking all your ways and starting your business you need to be confident and some people are not confident and they have money and buy equipment that’s another trouble thing, because some stock goes missing to invent stuff” (FGIPC, p. 39-40). I then asked “So is there anybody in your life now who would try and stop you do you think?” (FGIR, p. 40) “Ah teacher, I don’t know” (FGIPC, p. 40). Therefore, in addition to money being a barrier or “bear” identified by Participant B, Participant C identified people and a person’s lack of confidence as barriers to achieving one’s career aspirations.
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I followed up with Participant B in terms of the idea of “bears” that can “eat up” our career dreams and asked “You spoke about money earlier; do you think money could be like a bear that could be a barrier in you getting onto this side of the path?” (FGIR, p. 41), to which he said “Yes, I think it could be” (FGIPB, p. 41). Participants A and C both agreed that money could be a barrier to them achieving their career dreams. Interestingly, Participants A and C both said they have not experienced money as a barrier before when I asked “And have you experienced that in your family Participant A, where money has been an issue?” (FGIR, p. 42), he said “No teacher I haven’t. But I have seen it in some families” (FGIPA, p. 42) and Participant C answered “Teacher I’ve experienced it in some other families” (FGIPC, p. 42), to which I probed “And in yours?” (FGIR, p. 42), and he said “No teacher, I haven’t” (FGIPC, p. 42). The participants’ answers could be a result of their age and the fact that as far as they know, they have not been financially disadvantaged. They could also have been protecting their families by avoiding a discussion of their financial situation. Given that the participants are relatively young, they may not yet fully understand that a lack of financial resources can be a significant barrier to their future career.

c. Evidence according to the questionnaires

Participant B and C’s response in their questionnaires to “Tell me how your background and upbringing has influenced what you want to become one day” (Q, p. 4) links to the idea of barriers to career aspirations. Participant B answered “I am growing up in a family that wants his/her child to achieve their goals and persevere and not do the mistakes they’ve done” (QPB, p. 4), which by implication shows that his family faced barriers to their career aspirations (although these were specified) that they were not able to overcome. Participant C answered “My background has influenced me to look where I came from and focusing in the future” (QPC, p. 4). Again, it could be inferred from this statement that this participant is aware of his background being a potential barrier that he should overcome by focusing on the future.
d. Evidence according to the sociograms

It is worth noting that Participant A and C’s parents are employed, and Participant B’s father is employed but his mother is not. Although not overtly stated, having limited resources at home may be what informs Participant B’s understanding (at a young age) that money is a barrier to achieving one’s dreams. In the participants’ sociograms, it is evident from the kinds of jobs that their family members have (those that are employed) that money is probably a pertinent issue for them; recall that all three participants are living in impoverished circumstances. It is evident from literature by McGrath and Akoojee (2007) as well as Arulmani (2011b) and Watson et al. (2011), that poverty and socio-economic status are obstacles to the development of children’s career aspirations and the continuity of their education. The participants in this study are likely to be faced with these obstacles in the future.

4.4.3.2 Overcoming perceived barriers to career aspirations

a. Evidence according to the collages

Participant A’s collage represents a lifestyle of someone who is affluent and who has overcome potential barriers to their career. Participant B has included three phrases which relate to this sub-theme and which speak of being proactive and overcoming obstacles that may stand in the way of achieving one’s career aspirations. The phrase “your future is created by what you do today, not tomorrow” may relate to overcoming perceived barriers by being proactive. Also, we do not know what tomorrow may hold. “I have a dream” could relate to having a vision for the future which will help when times are tough and when obstacles stand in the way. Finally, the word “ahead” in the bottom left hand corner of Participant B’s collage may indicate a sense of pushing ahead and persevering, no matter what may stand in one’s way and moving ahead despite hardship.

As previously mentioned in relation to the previous sub-theme, the picture in Participant C’s collage of the man walking along a path with a briefcase in his hand and a bear eating money out of a bucket may describe the obstacles that he may face in achieving his career aspirations. However, the man is seen walking away from the bear which could represent overcoming
barriers. Furthermore, the magazine cover Participant C has stuck on his collage says “The hunger made me stronger”. This could relate to a tenacity and hunger for a career (a career dream) which keeps a person strong when times get tough and when one has to overcome barriers to reach one’s career dreams and goals.

b. Evidence according to the focus group interview

It was clear from the focus group interview that the participants have a fairly realistic comprehension of what it is going to take to achieve their career aspirations and, even at a primary school level, they are “counting the cost”. When asked what he thought it was going to take to fulfil his career dream of owning his own company one day, Participant A answered “Teacher I think I’ll have to like study hard and get experience in what I would like to do” (FGIPA, p. 10). I then asked “Do you want to go to university when you’re finished school?” (FGIR, p. 10) “Yes I would like to” (FGIPA, p. 10).

When explaining his collage, Participant B’s comments also related to the notion of knowing what it is going to take to achieve his career aspirations. Pointing at a quote on his collage, he said “And here is a message I want to give to the people...Your future is created by what you do today not tomorrow” (FGIPB, p. 16). Explaining what this meant for him, Participant B said “You can do something with your life while you still can, because you cannot count on tomorrow” (FGIPB, p. 17). Explaining the choice of the word “ahead” on his collage, Participant B said “Then here it’s like when you say ‘ahead’, like you go ahead even if it’s tough you must persevere...Yes, when you go on a rocky road” (FGIPB, p. 19). Pointing to the word “gifted” on this collage, Participant B said “And here it is like a question I always say to myself. Like, are you gifted? Are you gifted?” (FGIPB, p. 20). Participant B further mentioned that he does think that he is gifted. This statement could be indicative of this participant’s belief in his ability to succeed, defined as self-efficacy by Bandura et al. (2001). This will be a tool he can use in the future to overcome potential barriers to his career development. Bandura et al. (2001) state that self-efficacy directly influences an individual’s career choice and development, as well as their commitment to achieving their career goals.
Participant B further said “And you can change other people to be like you. Like if you never give up then you encourage that they will also never give up” (FGIPB, p. 22). There is a sense here of this participant wanting to set an example for others in the way that he overcomes obstacles and challenges to his career dream. When asked how he is going to achieve his dreams, Participant B’s response was “I am going to achieve my career by not just saying but also by acting and trying to do what I like” (FGIPB, p. 26).

This indicated his ability to be proactive in his achieving his dreams and honing in on the sorts of things he is going to do to achieve his career dreams. Participant B said “I am going to have to like, I have to like study for business, study hard and like then I will have Art school – that is what I will do” (FGIPB, p. 27). I then asked “So do you also have a dream to go to university one day and study business?” (FGIR, p. 27), to which he replied “Yes” (FGIPB, p. 27). Talking about money being a barrier to his career aspirations, Participant B said “Like when I go to university, like some people, like they can’t afford to go to university. So if it’s too much for my family, so I won’t have to go, so I’ll make – I will make a plan” (FGIPB, p. 28). In explaining the plan he said, “I’ll make art then towards my business and like I’ll go find a job, and like go to university and I pay while I work” (FGIPB, p. 28). This means Participant B is prepared to explore possible avenues to assist him in achieving his dreams. It further shows maturity and problem solving skills in that he is already thinking of how he is going to support himself through university, being aware that money is a barrier to him achieving his career aspirations. It is also indicative of the fact that this participant does not perceive the barriers to his career aspirations as insurmountable and that these aspirations may translate into actual career goals (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2000). This participant realises that “there are no shortcuts to making money” (FGIPB, p. 38), as he mentioned when discussing the picture of the man walking along the path with the bear on the side of the path in Participant C’s collage.

When asked what they were taking away from the focus group interview, Participant A and C’s responses were pertinent to the sub-theme of overcoming perceived barriers to career aspirations. Participant A said “What stood out for me is like they (his parents) told me I should work hard and get degrees so that I can achieve my dream and don’t be the same like them” (FGIPA, p. 58), and Participant C said “I’ve learnt that I have a future and I have to work for it. I also know that I should not back down now because if I do it will be a disappointment” (FGIPC, p. 47).
From this discussion, it is evident that the research participants display key characteristics of resilience, (Ungar, 2012, as cited in Maree & Di Fabio, 2015). These include active agency, flexibility, the ability to take advantage of situations, and the ability to reflect on themselves, all of which are keys to seeing their career aspirations fulfilled. The participants show a realistic understanding of what it is going to take to see their career aspirations become a reality and they are aware that “there are no short cuts to making money” (FGIPB, p. 38). Furthermore, they are thinking flexibly in terms of “making a plan” (FGIPB, p. 28) to overcome barriers to the achievement of their career goals and they are not going to “back down” (FGIPC, p. 47) but take every opportunity they get.

c. Evidence according to the questionnaires

When the participants were asked to write down their career hopes and dreams, their answers had elements that point to overcoming potential barriers. Participant A mentioned that he wants to “become the best mechanical engineer in the whole world” (QPA, p. 5). On the one hand this shows that Participant A has high standards for himself and does not want to be mediocre, but the best. However on the other hand, it could also be indicative of a somewhat unrealistic goal and telling of his possible current lack of understanding of what achieving a goal like this actually takes. Participant B answered “I hope that I will achieve my dream and dream big and persevere and make my family proud and be a business man” (QPB, p. 5), and in 10 years’ time he wants to be “Trying to discover my own business and making it. I have a vision of what I want and don’t want in my business and working hard and studying about business” (QPB, p. 6). This participant is prepared to persevere through hardship to overcome barriers he may face and his ability to dream big and have a vision will assist him in pursuing his career dreams. Participant C mentioned that he “will try to save money” (QPC, p. 5), which is a way of overcoming the lack of financial resources as a potential career barrier.
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d. Evidence according to the sociograms

The participants’ family backgrounds may present barriers to their aspirations in the sense that they have not been and might not ever be afforded opportunities that more advantaged people are. However, they did not name their families as barriers to their career aspirations per say, on the contrary, the participants want to make their families proud and have jobs that are “suitable” to them, as Participant C said. The participants have identified barriers such as money and people, however they appear to be taking their background into account, and are prepared to use this to move forward. Overall, they seem to have a realistic, mature understanding of what it is going to take to achieve their career aspirations. Their families have encouraged them not to make the same mistakes they did, and to work hard to achieve their career aspirations.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the findings of this research were interpreted and discussed, drawing on relevant literature from chapter 2. The findings that emerged were ordered into three main themes and seven sub-themes, and evidence from all data sets was triangulated, and this yielded a rich and detailed discussion of the findings. From the findings presented in this chapter, it is clear that the career aspirations of the grade seven learners in this research relate specifically to a sense of independence and autonomy. Their career aspirations, if realised, would also afford them a better lifestyle and a career that is secure and lasting.

There is also a clear indication from the data that family plays a role in shaping the participants’ career aspirations, and that although they do not aspire to any of their family members’ jobs, they relate to some of their dream careers. The participants also admire certain qualities in their family members and these appear to influence their career aspirations. Finally, it is apparent that the participants have a realistic picture of the “cost” of their career aspirations and this includes potential barriers to the achievement of their career aspirations as well as ways and means of overcoming these barriers.
In chapter 5, an overview of the research and the findings thereof will be summarised and final conclusions and recommendations for future research will be proposed. A critical reflection on the strengths and limitations of this research will also be included.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the procedures used in this research as well as the findings that stemmed from the research question “What are the career aspirations of grade seven learners at a community school?” Furthermore, recommendations based on the findings of this research, as well as recommendations for further research, will be made. The limitations and strengths of this research will also be discussed before drawing this minor-dissertation to a close.

5.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Conceptualised within an interpretivist framework and utilising a generic, qualitative research design, this research aimed to explore the career aspirations of grade seven learners from a community school. A small, purposive sample of three grade seven learners at a local community school allowed for an in-depth exploration of the research question. Four data sets, namely collages, a focus group interview, a questionnaire and sociograms were used, and qualitative content analysis was used in the analysis. Data was collected at the community school over three afternoons. Ethical procedures and measures of trustworthiness were strictly adhered to throughout this research in order to ensure its rigor (Merriam, 2009).

Given the scarcity of contextually-grounded research on the career aspirations of primary school children in South Africa, particularly those of a low socio-economic status, this research is timely and relevant. The importance of this research lies in the contribution it will make to the knowledge on the career aspirations of learners of primary school age as determinants of educational goals that shape an individual’s future. This research also contributes to an understanding of the potential career aspirations have to influence the implementation of
relevant career guidance programmes (Watson et al., 2011; Schuette et al., 2012, Arulmani, 2006).

The findings of this research have successfully fulfilled the research aim in three main themes and seven sub-themes. The stage of development that the participants were in was consistently taken into account, as was their career and psychosocial development as per the theoretical framework for this research (Gottfredson, 1981). The developmental theories of Erikson (Hook, 2009) and Nsamenang (1992) were also discussed to further anchor this study. The first main theme entitled “Career hopes and dreams”, as well as its three sub-themes, relates directly to the research question of “What are the career aspirations of grade seven learners at a community school?”. The three sub-themes include aspiration towards a career that allows independence and autonomy, aspiration towards a career that affords a better lifestyle, and lastly, aspiration towards a lasting career.

The second and third main themes as well as their associated sub-themes – although not directly related to the research question – were included as main themes after the triangulation of data and the findings indicated that these themes strongly influenced the participants’ career aspirations. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter one, these themes responded to the research objectives of identifying and considering various influential social, familial and contextual factors that impacted the career aspirations of the participants. Theme two, which was entitled “The role of family in shaping career aspirations”, included two sub-themes, namely, family influence on career aspirations, and admired characteristics shown by family members. The findings of this research confirmed that family is indeed a key influence on the career aspirations of young people, and although the participants did not aspire to any of their family members’ jobs, they admired personal character traits of family members, and these have influenced their career aspirations. The third and final theme was entitled “Counting the ‘cost’ of career aspirations” and included a discussion of findings related to perceived barriers to the participants fulfilling their career aspirations as well as overcoming the perceived barriers.

Each of the themes and sub-themes were discussed in detail using findings from all four data sets. Throughout the discussion of findings, literature, both theoretical and empirical, was carefully integrated with the research findings.
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS

Based on the findings of this research, I will now make various recommendations, however it must be noted that this is by no means an exhaustive list. These recommendations are aimed at assisting and supporting primary school learners in the development of their career aspirations.

The first main theme of this research, that of career hopes and dreams, as well as the associated sub-themes, is proof that primary school children do indeed have career aspirations and that they are aware of what they do and do not want in a future career. Based on this, I would recommend that apart from an isolated module as part of Life Orientation, structured and regular career interventions be introduced in primary schools, particularly for grade seven learners throughout their final year of primary school. These interventions would include repeated exposure throughout the learners’ grade seven year to talks by professionals in various career fields, visits from various universities and companies who could disseminate information regarding future careers and related subject choices, year-long mentorship from teachers and other school personnel (school counsellors, educational psychologists and the like), as well as visits to different career-related places (businesses, hospitals etc.). With regard to community schools, where funding is often limited, companies and other sponsors could be brought on board to fund these career initiatives.

In addition to this, I recommend the design of a structured course (which could be incorporated into the Life Orientation curriculum) that is aimed at a grade seven level and equips learners with the necessary skills for entrepreneurship. Findings from this research indicated that all three of the participants desire to start their own business and they aspire towards a career that will afford them independence and autonomy. Therefore, a structured, weekly course (of eight weeks for example) would prove useful in providing them with the foundational skills needed to start their own business. These skills could include conceptualising a business idea, drawing up a simple business plan, budgeting, marketing, etc., and could be employed by learners to start a small business while still at school. The money made from this small business could be saved and in time go towards supporting learners in achieving their long-term career goals. Findings of this research discussed in theme three, which was entitled “counting the ‘cost’ of career aspirations”, indicated that the learners are aware of barriers to their career aspirations
but that they are prepared to do what it takes to overcome these barriers. For example, one participant mentioned selling art to make money to support himself at university. The skills learnt during this proposed weekly course could transform an entrepreneurship day (which most primary schools already do) into more than the selling of arbitrary goods but rather the first sale of the learners’ new business stock.

Furthermore, I recommend introducing Life Orientation certificates (Department of Education, 2008) in the primary school so that by the end of their compulsory school-going age (Grade 9 according to The South African Schools Act No. 84, 1996) learners have tangible skills that will allow them to be productive members of the country’s economy. Currently, Life Orientation certificate tasks are designed to enhance both the earning and learning potential of learners as they exit matric, and should make a direct contribution to the curriculum vitae of each learner. The aim of these certificates is that learners benefit from experiences such as community work, organising an event, computer literacy, entrepreneurship and participation in sport (umpiring, lifeguarding, coaching) to name a few, as the types of skills involved in such tasks will assist in the development of skills related to the workplace and active citizenship (Department of Education, 2008).

I would recommend that structured, hands-on career guidance and mentorship be provided in primary schools from school counsellors and educational psychologists in the form of career construction counselling as devised by Maree (2013). This would form part of the structured career interventions previously mentioned and could be developed into a ‘career mentorship’ course where learners are given the opportunity to tell their life stories and further explore their career hopes and dreams. In explaining this approach to career counselling, Hartung (as cited in Maree, 2013, p. xii) states:

The central goal of career counselling shifts from choosing an occupation or charting a career path to championing a meaningful work life that matters to the person and to society. In short, the goals moves from what occupation to pick, to how to use work with purpose. In telling their life stories, people shape their identities in the form of self-defining autobiographical narratives. These narratives carry them through times of uncertainty and instability.
I concur with Maree (2013), who states that this type of career counselling makes school counsellors and educational psychologists relevant to their clients.

Furthermore, it is a contextually-relevant approach (Arulmani, 2006) that can be used in varying contexts and is useful to “a gifted 17-year old from a private school in Sydney who wants to study medicine, an average 18-year old girl from a public school in Gaborone who wishes to become a teacher, or a 15-year old boy from Shoshanguve who sells newspapers to support his seven siblings” (Maree, 2013, p. 3). Maree (2013) uses these examples to illustrate that he “supports a shift in career counsellings towards a contemporary, contextualised approach that will be of value to everyone, regardless of colour, creed, financial situation or geographic location” (p. 3). This is an approach to career counselling which I personally believe in.

In order to increase the number of school personnel able to assist with career counselling, Life Orientation teachers (and teachers in general) could be trained in career counselling and could thereby assist school counsellors and educational psychologists. Properly structured career construction counselling would, in my opinion, be invaluable in solidifying grade seven learners’ career aspirations and shaping these into realistic career goals. The third main theme of this research indicated that the participants are aware of potential barriers to the fulfilment of their career aspirations and therefore, career guidance and counselling would help learners to further identify potential barriers to their career goals as well as ways in which they could overcome these barriers.

The second main theme of this research entitled “The role of family in shaping career aspirations” indicated that families do indeed play a key role in shaping young people’s career aspirations. In this research, the participants admired particular characteristics shown by certain family members, and these have influenced them with regard to their future career dreams. A further recommendation in relation to the implementation of career construction counselling would be to involve the parents and families of the grade seven learners as part of the career construction process. This could include collaborative workshops between parents and school personnel (educational psychologists, school counsellors and Life Orientation teachers) in order to form a support mechanism to see learners achieve their career goals. The strengths and insights of family members could be used to shape and support the learner’s career aspirations.
5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

The first limitation of this research is that the scope of the fieldwork focused on one community school and included a small sample size of three participants, and this may mean that the findings of this research are not generalisable to all grade seven learners. However, the intention of this research was not to generalise the findings, but rather to explore the career aspirations of the participants in-depth. This was possible given the richness of data that was gathered in this research. Furthermore, the sample included only males, and therefore females were not accounted for. However, I do believe that the findings will offer noteworthy points for primary schools to consider in terms of their learners career development, and that these can transcend gender categories.

Although I attempted to remain self-reflexive throughout this research and aware of my own background and biases, another possible limitation of this research is the fact that the findings were influenced by the fact that my culture, family, class, age and sex differs from those of the participants. Findings could also have been skewed by the “position” that the participants placed me in (as discussed in chapter 3). The fact that I knew the participants and their context before conducting this research could be both a strength and a limitation. It could be limiting in the sense that my objectivity may have been impaired to some degree and inferences may have been unknowingly made. Furthermore, my familiarity with the participants would have given me preconceived ideas about them which may have influenced my interpretation of the research findings, and this is why verification of the findings with the participants via phone was important. However, I believe that a strength of my relationship with the participants was that it allowed for comfortable interaction during the research process and the collection of rich data. Given that I was actively involved in the generation of the research findings, my bias and limitations need to be considered as constraints to the research.

In adding to the trustworthiness of this research, my intention was to conduct either a post-study meeting or a telephone conversation with the participants to ensure that they did not find themselves characterised in ways that they believed were untrue, and to ascertain if the information contained in this study was congruent with what the participants actually meant (as stated in chapter one). Although I was able to make contact with two of the three
participant’s parents, and was therefore able to confirm my findings with two of the three participant’s over the telephone (taking into account the language diversity between myself and the participants), the fact that I was unable to contact the third participant is possibly a limiting factor of this research.

Finally, the language diversity of the participants is potentially a limiting factor of this research. The three participants and I were all from differing language backgrounds with the participants being tshiVenda, isiXhosa and isiZulu and me being English. The data collection was conducted in English, which is the participants’ second or third language and this may have limited the richness of data obtained. However, English is sometimes spoken at home by all three participants, and it is the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) at the community school. Furthermore, the data gathered from this research was detailed and in-depth and did not appear to be significantly influenced by a language barrier. It must be noted however that there were times during the focus group interview that I needed to clarify my understanding and summarise what the participants were saying because they were finding it difficult to utilise the correct words to properly describe what they wanted to say. I therefore needed to be careful that my summarising was not making inferences on the participants’ behalf that they simply said “yes” to. Language diversity was to some extent a limiting factor in the verification of the research findings, especially given that it took place over the telephone.

5.5 STRENGTHS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

First, I am of the opinion that a strength of this research lies in its potential to guide further research. In addition, it can be used to inform contextually-relevant career guidance interventions in primary schools. Personally, I hope to utilise the findings of this research to become actively involved in seeing career guidance programmes established. I have a vision to see contextually-relevant career interventions (with a focus on mentorship) be successfully implemented in primary schools, particularly in schools such as the one used in this research. This is in line with an eco-systemic approach to community educational psychology, which emphasises that theory and practice go hand-in-hand to see mass intervention take place (Pillay, 2003). I believe that my existing relationship with the school based on the work done with my colleague during our school counsellor internship (described in chapter one) is a
strength of this research as this will aid in the implementation of a career guidance programme at the school.

This research reveals the “tip of the iceberg” in terms of responding to a gap in research and contributing to a scarcity of literature on the career aspirations of primary school children, specifically South African children from low socio-economic backgrounds (Patton & Skorikov, 2007; Watson et al., 2010). Much work needs to be done in this regard. The findings of this research can be used to inform future career guidance practice.

As mentioned in the discussion of the research limitations, I knew the participants and their context prior to this research. This established relationship with both the participants and the school meant that I had a vested interest in the research and believed in the value that this research could have for future interventions. This meant that I approached this research with a fairly well-established knowledge of the participants and their context, allowing them to interact comfortably with me and vice versa. I believe that this positively influenced the depth of data obtained from this research.

Lastly, a strength of this research was the variety of data collection methods (data sets) used. This is in keeping with the concept of ‘triangulation’ which is known to increase the credibility of the research findings, particularly in qualitative research where objective truth or reality cannot ever fully be captured (Merriam, 2009). Analysis of data showed that there were indeed correlations between the data sets: sometimes between all four sets, and otherwise between at least three of the sets.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research could lay the foundation for further research related to career aspirations and their implications for career development and the achievement of learner’s career goals. For a start, research that employs a bigger sample size could be conducted, and this sample could include learners from different types of schools including a community school, a former model C school, a school in an informal settlement and a private school, therefore allowing for a comparative study of the career aspirations of primary school learners from different school
contexts to take place. Taking this diversity into account would help such research to gain a holistic picture of the South African reality. Furthermore, given that this research had a male-only sample group, a sample including both males and females would yield interesting results in terms of the role that gender plays in shaping career aspirations.

Given that the Life Orientation curriculum includes modules on “the world of work”, it would be interesting for research to be done on the role that this plays in learners’ career development, especially in primary school contexts. This could yield valuable feedback as to how relevant the content is and how it could be modified. Linked to the curriculum is the recommendation for research on teachers’ perceptions of their role in helping children realise their career aspirations and goals. This may yield interesting results that could inform future training of teachers to assist in career intervention programmes.

In line with the idea of collaborating with parents and family members in the construction of a learner’s career is the recommendation for research that would closely explore the role of family in the development of children’s or adolescents’ career aspirations. Again, parent’s perceptions of their adolescent children’s career goals and aspirations would be valuable. Furthermore, a comparative study may prove insightful into how families’ impact children and adolescents’ career aspirations differently. A study could be conducted around a learner/s experience of their family as part of the construction of their career aspirations.

If the career guidance interventions mentioned in 5.3 were to be implemented at a primary school, a study exploring the learner’s experiences of the intervention would prove useful to understanding its value and making the necessary changes to enhance its effect.

Finally, a recommendation is made for a follow-up to this research which is longitudinal in nature. It would be intriguing to track the participants in this study over the next 5-10 years to see if what they aspired to as per the findings of this research has any bearing on their career development and whether these aspirations are predictors of long-term career goals. In a study like this, it would be interesting to note what has enabled the participants to achieve their career goals (if they have) or what stood in their way (if they did not).
5.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a summary of this research, including a discussion of the need for such research as well as a brief overview of the research findings. Recommendations based on the findings of this research have been made, with a focus on the potential practical career guidance interventions that could be informed by this research. The limitations of this research have been acknowledged and discussed along with its strengths and contributions. Finally, recommendations for future research have been made.

This research has explored the career aspirations of grade seven learners at a community school. It is evident that the grade seven learners do indeed have career aspirations, and more specifically, they aspire to a career that will give them independence and autonomy, a better lifestyle and a career that will last. It is apparent that the learners’ family members play a role in shaping their aspirations and that although they do not aspire to their family members’ jobs, they admire some of their personal qualities and character traits. Lastly, the learners acknowledge barriers to the achievement of their career dreams, however they show a willingness and a desire to overcome these barriers. While acknowledging the limitations of this research, it is my belief that its findings can inform practical career guidance programmes in primary schools such as the one used in this research. I contend that this would contribute significantly to the need for contextually-relevant career interventions that are so needed in South Africa (Maree & Molepo, 2007; Watson et al., 2010).

It is hoped that this research will form part of the advancement (however small in nature) of career education in South African schools, and particularly in marginalised communities where the need for research into career development is so great. A good starting point has been an exploration of the career aspirations of grade seven learners in a community school. I conclude this minor-dissertation with a few excerpts from Alexander McCall Smith’s “The No.1 Ladies Detective Agency” (pages 1-4 and page 59). The excerpts describe how Mma Ramotswe pursues her dream of starting the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency, despite her father’s expectations of her to start a more conventional business. The excerpts fittingly capture the simple beauty of pursuing one’s career dream or “calling”, as Mma Ramotswe says.
Mma Ramotswe had a detective agency in Africa, at the foot of the Kgale Hill. These were its assets: a tiny white van, two desks, two chairs, a telephone and an old typewriter. Then there was a teapot, in which Mma Ramotswe – the only lady private detective in Botswana – brewed redbush tea. And three mugs – one for herself, one for her secretary, and one for the client. What else does a detective agency really need? Detective agencies rely on human intuition and intelligence, both of which Mma Ramotswe had in abundance. No inventory would ever include those, of course.

Mma Ramotswe set up the No.1 Ladies Detective Agency with the proceeds of the sale of her father’s cattle. “I want you to have your own business”, he [her father] said to her on his death bed. “You’ll get a good price for the cattle now. Sell them and buy a business. A butchery maybe. A bottle store. Whatever you like”. “I’m going to set up a detective agency. Down in Gaborone”, said Mma Ramotswe. “It will be the best one in Botswana. The No.1 Agency”. For a moment her father’s eyes opened wide and it seemed as if he was struggling to speak. “But...but...” But he died before he could say anything more.

Everything, thought Mma Ramotswe, has been something before. Here I am, the only lady private detective in the whole of Botswana, sitting in front of my private detective agency. But only a few years ago there was no detective agency, and before that, before there were even any buildings here, there were just acacia trees, and the river-bed in the distance, and the Kalahari over there, so close. But look at it now: a detective agency, right here in Gaborone, with me, the fat lady detective, sitting outside and thinking these thoughts about how one thing today becomes quite another thing tomorrow.

She was just Precious Ramotswe from Mochudi. She had never been to London or wherever detectives went to find out how to be private detectives. She had never even been to Johannesburg. What if someone came in and said “You know Johannesburg of course”, she would have to lie, or just say nothing.

She was a good detective and a good woman. “These are my people”, said Mma Ramotswe. “My brothers and sisters. It is my duty to help them to solve the mysteries in their lives. That is what I am called to do.”
LIST OF REFERENCES


APPENDIX A1
ETHICAL CLEARANCE – UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

ETHICS CLEARANCE

Dear L Robinson

Ethical Clearance Number: 2014-064

Re: The career aspirations of grade seven learners in a community school.

Ethical clearance for this study is granted subject to the following conditions:

- If there are major revisions to the research proposal based on recommendations from the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted.
- If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, it remains the duty of the student to submit a new application.
- It remains the student’s responsibility to ensure that all ethical forms and documents related to the research are kept in a safe and secure facility and are available on demand.
- Please quote the reference number above in all future communications and documents.

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee has decided to

☑ Grant ethical clearance for the proposed research.
☐ Provisionally grant ethical clearance for the proposed research
☐ Recommend revision and resubmission of the ethical clearance documents

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Prof Geoffrey Lautenbach
Chair: FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
15 October 2014
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Belinda’s Transcription Services

I, Belinda Inez Bredenkamp transcriber, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes / digital audio and documentation received from Ms. Lucy Robinson related to Group Counselling Interviews [4 Audio Recordings]. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;

2. To not make copies of any audiotapes / digital audio or computerised files of the transcribed Dictation Notes, unless specifically requested to do so by Ms. Lucy Robinson;

3. To store all audiotapes/files and/or materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;

4. To return all audiotapes/ digital audio files and or study-related documents to Ms. Lucy Robinson in a complete and timely manner.

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audio tapes / digital audio and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber’s name (printed) Belinda Inez Bredenkamp

Transcriber’s signature

Date 15th of April 2015
APPENDIX A3 – EDITORS LETTER

Karen Anne McCarthy
Freelance Editor
16 King’s Gardens
Kings Crescent
Grahamstown
6130

10/22/2015

To Whom It May Concern

This letter certifies that I have edited Mrs. Lucy Robinson’s minor dissertation titled *The Career Aspirations of Grade Seven Learners in a Community School*. I checked the piece for grammar, clarity and style, and made several suggestions for revision. I find that the dissertation is now of a standard suitable for submission.

Yours sincerely

Karen Anne McCarthy
Freelance Editor
Email: karen.mccarthy@ru.ac.za
Phone: +27824342483
APPENDIX B1 – LETTER OF REQUEST TO THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The School Principal & Management Committee
C/O xxxxxxxxxxxxx
School address

Dear Mrs xxxxxxxxxxxxx and Management Committee

REQUEST TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH AT XXXXX SCHOOL

This letter serves to briefly inform you of the details of my intended research. As you are aware, I am currently completing my masters in educational psychology at The University of Johannesburg. I am at the beginning stages of my minor-dissertation which seeks to explore the career aspirations of grade 7 learners in community schools, such as yours. There is a need for research in the area of primary school children’s career aspirations as determinants of their long-term career goals. It is hoped that from research of this kind, relevant career interventions can be put in place at a primary school level to assist learners in fulfilling their career goals.

I would like to ask your permission to carry out my research with some of the grade 7 learners at your school. Participation in the research will require face-to-face meetings in the afternoon (so as not to disrupt class time) and will involve the completion of a collage, a career sociogram (family tree), a questionnaire and taking part in a focus group interview. The highest possible ethical standards will be adhered to throughout the research, including informed parental consent, informed participant assent, anonymity, no-harm to participants and integrity in terms of the collection and analysis of data and the reporting of findings.

I look forward to hearing from you in this regard. Please do not hesitate to call me on xxxxxxxxxx or my research supervisor, Dr. B. M. Diale, on xxxxxxxxxx to discuss this request further.

Many thanks,
Lucy Robinson

Student Educational Psychologist
M. Ed 1 (Educational Psychology UJ)
PS S 012 4915
APPENDIX B2 – LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

(Note that the letter was on an official school letterhead which has been removed along with other identifying information to ensure that anonymity was maintained.)
APPENDIX C1 – LETTER AND CONSENT FORM TO PARENTS

Dear Parents

I, Lucy Robinson, am conducting a study on the career aspirations of Grade seven learners in a community school. Career aspirations are a person’s hope and expectation of studying in a certain field one day. I would like to invite your child _______________________________ to take part in my study.

I have spoken to your child about the study and asked them to sign a letter with you to say if they would/would not like to take part.

Please could you read the letter that is attached and tick the blocks that I have circled. Please also fill in your details on the letter.

I will be collecting data on these days:

Monday – 24 November
Tuesday – 25 November
Wednesday – 26 November
Thursday – 27 November

If your child is going to take part in the study, please allow them to stay after school on the above dates until approximately 4:00 pm. I will provide them with some lunch and transport money to get home.

Thank you for your time.

Lucy Robinson
Student Educational Psychologist
MEd 1 (Educational Psychology)
HPCSA Reg. no: PS S 0124915
Cell: 084 218 1567
Email: lucyannrob@gmail.com

CONTINUED…
Project Title:
The career aspirations of grade seven learners in a community school.

Investigator:
Lucy Robinson

Date:
October 2014

Please mark the appropriate checkboxes. I hereby:
☐ Agree to be involved in the above research project as a participant.
☐ Agree to be involved in the above research project as an observer to protect the rights of:
  ☐ Children younger than 18 years of age;
  ☐ Children younger than 18 years of age that might be vulnerable*; and/or
  ☐ Children younger than 18 years of age who are part of a child-headed family.
☐ Agree that my child, ____________________________ may participate in the above research project.
☐ Agree that my staff may be involved in the above research project as participants.

☐ I have read the research information sheet pertaining to this research project (or had it explained to me) and I understand
  the nature of the research and my role in it. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this
  study. I understand that my personal details (and any identifying data) will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that
  I may withdraw my consent and participation in this study at any time with no penalty.

☐ Please allow me to review the report prior to publication. I supply my details below for this purpose:
☐ Please allow me to review the report after publication. I supply my details below for this purpose:
☐ I would like to retain a copy of this signed document as proof of the contractual agreement between
  myself and the researcher

Name: _____________________________________________________________
Phone or Cell number: _______________________________________________
e-mail address: ______________________________________________________
Signature: __________________________________________________________

If applicable:
☐ I willingly provide my consent/assent for using audio recording of my/the participant’s contributions.
☐ I willingly provide my consent/assent for using video recording of my/the participant’s contributions.
☐ I willingly provide my consent/assent for the use of photographs in this study.

Signature (and date): ________________________________________________
Signature of person taking the consent (and date): _______________________

REPLY SLIP

PLEASE RETURN THIS REPLY SLIP AND THE LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL BY
WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2014.

I _______________________________ (your name) have read the letters and give
permission for my child ____________________________ (your child’s name) to take
part in this study. I understand that my child will need to stay after school on Monday 24 November,
Tuesday 25 November, Wednesday 26 November and Thursday 27 November. I understand that my
child will be given lunch and transport money to get home on these days.

Signed: __________________________ Date: __________________________
APPENDIX C2 – PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM

(This was given to the participants after informed consent and permission from the parents and school principal was obtained and after my initial meeting with the participants to explain the research.)

PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM

I ______________________________ (NAME) have voluntarily agreed to take part in the study conducted by Lucy Robinson on the career aspirations of Grade 7 learners. Lucy has explained the project to me and I have asked any questions that I might have. I understand what I will be required to do, should I take part in the study. I understand that the information will be kept confidential and that my name will not be used in the study.

Signed: ______________________________
Date: ______________________________
Place: ______________________________
APPENDIX D1 – DATA COLLECTION SESSION 1
EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONNAIRE

(Note that blank lines have been removed to conserve space. Participants were given space underneath each question.)

Session 1
Career aspiration questionnaire
Adapted from the Career Style Interview (CSI) by Dr. Mark Savickas (1989, 1998) and designed by Lucy Robinson (2014)

Name: ____________________________

YOUR FAMILY
1. Tell me a little bit about each member of your family.
   a) Tell me about your parents and how old they are
   b) The work that they do
   c) How many brothers or sisters you have and how old they are
   d) The work that you brothers and sisters do (if they are working)
2. Is there anyone in your family whose work or career you admire? Tell me about that.
3. Is there anyone in your family whose work you would not like to do? Tell me about that.

ACADEMIC
1. Tell me about your primary school life.
2. What are your favourite subjects at school? Why?
3. What subjects do you not enjoy? Why?
4. Are you in a leadership position at school? Tell me about it.
5. In your future career, do you want to be in a leadership position? If yes, please explain.
HOBBIES (THINGS YOU LIKE TO DO WHEN YOU’RE NOT AT SCHOOL)

1. Tell me what you like to do when you are not at school.

THINGS OR PEOPLE THAT MAY INFLUENCE YOUR CAREER ASPIRATIONS

1. Are there any celebrities/famous people or anyone outside your family that have influenced or currently influence what you want to become one day? If yes, please explain.
2. Have any members of your family influenced or currently influence what you want to become one day? If yes, please explain.
3. Are there any other role models (people you look up to) that have influenced what you want to become one day? If yes, please explain.
4. Tell me about how your background and upbringing has influenced what you want to become one day.

YOUR CAREER VALUES AND INTERESTS

1. If you are to think of a career for yourself now, what careers would you want to be in? What careers would you not want to be in? Make a list in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAREERS I WANT TO BE IN</th>
<th>CAREERS I DON’T WANT TO BE IN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Which of the following careers would you MOST want to be in? Tick the ones that really interest you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Helping people | Science
---|---
Artistic | Teaching
Other? ________________________ | Other? ________________________

CONCLUSION

1. Tell me about your hopes and dreams for your future career.
2. Where do you see yourself in 10 years’ time? Explain.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE
Session 2

Career collage

Apparatus:

- Magazines
- Coloured and plain paper and cardboard (A4)
- Newspapers
- General arts and crafts materials

Instruction:

The participants will be asked to create an A4 career collage that depicts their career aspirations (what they want to become one day). In this collage they can include picture, words and phrases that depict their career hopes and dreams. They can also include different things that influence their career aspirations such as family, parents, poverty, money etc. In addition to this, participants could also include information about why they have aspirations towards a certain career.

Career socio-gram

The participants were given an information sheet in the first session which they took home to complete with their parents. During this session, the information will be discussed and added to their already existing genograms.

Focus will be on:

- Education and work activities of family members
- Career patterns (past and present)
- Roles, behaviours and attitudes of family members
- Unfulfilled goals that specific family members may have had and the influence of this
- Career dreams
- Family patterns and pressures of standards and attitudes.
Looking at my family members work experiences and career dreams

Please could you fill in as much information as you and your family members know about your family member’s careers. Feel free to ask other people in your family to help you. Please bring this with you when we meet on Wednesday 26 November. Thank you.

**Name:** ___________________________________________

**MOTHER**

**Education:** ___________________________________________

**Job at the moment:** ___________________________________________

**Past jobs:** ___________________________________________

**Dream job:** ___________________________________________

The above information was completed for the family members mentioned below:

**FATHER**

**GRANDPARENTS ON YOUR MOTHER’S SIDE**

**GRANDMOTHER (MOTHER’S MOM)**

**GRANDFATHER (MOTHER’S DAD)**

**GRANDPARENTS ON YOUR FATHERS SIDE**

**GRANDMOTHER (FATHER’S MOM)**

**GRANDFATHER (FATHER’S DAD)**

**ANY OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS JOBS/CAREERS?** For example, maybe you know some information about the work your great-grandparents did.
Session 3

Focus group interview

The focus group interview questions will be predominantly based on the participant’s career collage, although aspects from their sociograms etc. may be part of the discussion. Therefore questions will be open-ended and will flow naturally.

Questions will include:

1. Please tell me about your collage.
2. Explain how these pictures/quotes/words describe what you aspire to be?
3. Is there anything in this collage that tells me what could influence you becoming what you want to become? This could be positive or negative.
4. Is there anything in this collage that tells me what you do not aspire to be? Tell me about that.
5. What are some barriers or things that you think might stop you from being what you want to be.
6. If you could do any job in the world, what would it be? What is stopping you from being that?
7. Do you know what you have to do to become whatever it is you want to be?
## APPENDIX E1 - DATA ANALYSIS

### EXAMPLE OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION SHOWING ANALYSIS OF DATA – ALL PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSCRIPTION</th>
<th>CODING</th>
<th>MEMO’S</th>
<th>EMERGING THEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant A:</strong> Teacher I would think this person’s like, like in my own words I would say this person is working towards a dream. (Points to picture of a man with a briefcase walking along a path)</td>
<td>Working towards career dreams</td>
<td>Interesting that participant A started interpreting the picture on participant C’s collage of his own accord. He was able to look at the picture from a symbolic point of view and relate this to the research topic.</td>
<td>Fulfilment of career dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator:</strong> Mmm, okay, so they’re walking maybe, ja, towards their career dream maybe, hey?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overcoming barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant A:</strong> Yes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator:</strong> So could you guys identify with being that man on the path?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant B:</strong> I think there’s like this, this darker part is like the wrong side, this is the bright side. This like she – he just – he chose like money and getting troubles, or he chose to just make – start a business like don’t meet it half way like there are no short cuts to money.</td>
<td>Notion of choosing the “right path” or the “bright side” Starting a business is the “right path”</td>
<td>Participant B chips in. Link this to the NB of focus group interviews and the power of the collective voice in such instances.</td>
<td>Potential barriers to career dreams – money and “getting trouble”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant B:</strong> Yes.</td>
<td>Implications of choices</td>
<td>Career choice Counting the cost “There are no shortcuts to money”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant A:</strong> Because they lead to his lifestyle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant B:</strong> Yes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator:</strong> That’s great, ja I can, I also – also when I looked at that I thought that could be exactly someone walking along the path to their career dream. And a bear, I mean we could talk about a bear in terms of you know when I asked you, are there things in your life that almost could be like bears, hey. like things in your life that want to eat up your career dream, hey?</td>
<td>Barriers likeness to “bears”</td>
<td>This is my interpretation and reflection on the picture as the researcher. I used the bear as a symbol of potential barriers to achieving career aspirations.</td>
<td>Implications of choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant A:</strong> Yes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant B:</strong> Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator:</strong> So participant C do you think – have you in your life or can you think of any kind of bears that might want to try and eat your career path, or eat your career dream?</td>
<td>Barrier = people</td>
<td>Potential barriers to career dreams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant C:</strong> Ja, it’s like someone who like who doesn’t want you to succeed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Potential barriers to career dreams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The table layout and formatting have been adjusted for readability and consistency.*
### APPENDIX E2 – DATA ANALYSIS

#### EXAMPLE OF ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF PRELIMINARY THEMES FROM INTERVIEW & QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary themes</th>
<th>Interview transcription participant 1 (ITP1)</th>
<th>Interview transcription participant 2 (ITP2)</th>
<th>Interview transcription participant 3 (ITP3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW ON COLLAGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. Aspiration towards a career that allows for independence & autonomy | • Wants to have his own business  
• Family also desire independence for him | • Wants to have his own business (a studio)  
• “People working for me, they can speak like, they have to have a say, if they don’t feel free, they must say.” | • Wants to start and engineering company one day (but not now he says).  
• “People working for me, they can speak like, they have to have a say, if they don’t feel free, they must say.” |
| 2. Aspiration towards a lasting career | • Spoke about having a career that will last – not like soccer which will end  
• Important to have a backup plan – plan B  
• “First value (evaluate) it and see how it’s going to last”  
• Wants to be a mechanical engineer | • Wants own clothing label and music & art studio  
• Preference is art, then business and then music  
• Also acknowledged that he likes soccer but knows this is not a lasting career. He would do business as plan A and possibly soccer as plan B.  
• Also become a chef  
• Be on the cover of a magazine as a soccer player or a person giving advice (a mastermind) – possibly fame? | |
| 3. Aspirations towards a career that will afford them a specific lifestyle | • Need for safety (contextual factor of not feeling safe at where he lives). A good career will mean a secure life and money to make your home secure.  
• He wants a big home  
• A fancy car – GTI | • Wants to design his own home (big house with lots of space)  
• Have a good life  
• “The life I’ve always wanted”  
• Fancy cars – Benz, Jeep, BMW and Range Rover. | • Fancy cars – BMW and Land Rover  
• Fame – he didn’t say this but could possibly link to wanting to be on the cover of a magazine |
| 4. Aspiration towards an altruistic career | • Not relevant to him | • Came out strongly in what this participant said.  
• Wants to impact someone’s life | • Wants a career that enables him to build relationship with people  
• Wants to help people through tough times |
| 5. Perceived barriers to career aspirations | • Initially said none but then agreed that MONEY is a barrier. | • Money  
• But will overcome this by selling art for make money. | • Stuck a picture of a man of a path with a bear on the other side. The other two participants interpreted this as possible barriers and a “darker side.” |
### 6. Influence of family & background in shaping career aspirations

- Family desire a career for him that allows independence
- Interestingly, aspires to his father’s dream job of being a soldier.
- Does not aspire to his father’s real job of security guard
- Said “my family don’t want my background to look like theirs so I must work hard and get a degree.”
- His aunt has particularly inspired him but NOT HER ACTUAL JOB, RATHER PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS SHE HAS SHOWN – Perseverance and hard work.
- Also aspires to his parents dream job of being a television presenter
- Caution from family not to make the same mistakes they made that could ruin his life.
- Does not aspire to any family members jobs but like participant B, he admires personal qualities that his mother has shown in getting to where she is today.
- His mom’s HARD WORK

### 7. Counting the cost of achieving their career aspirations

- Says he will go to university
- Study hard
- Get experience in order to achieve his career aspirations
- Says he needs to be pro-active
- Study hard
- Go to university
- “There are no short cuts”
- “Your future is created by what you do today, not tomorrow”
- “You must do something with your life while you can”
- I “should not back down – otherwise it will be a disappointment.”
- Perseverance is key

### B. QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant one questionnaire (P1Q)</th>
<th>Participant two questionnaire (P2Q)</th>
<th>Participant three questionnaire (P3Q)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Influence of family &amp; upbringing in shaping career aspirations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Influence of family &amp; upbringing in shaping career aspirations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Influence of family &amp; upbringing in shaping career aspirations.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother – domestic worker Father – security guard at WITS Older brother – works at Lifestyle and goes to school at PC training Second brother passed away</td>
<td>Mother – unemployed Younger brother – at school Younger sister – at school Biological father – absent Step-father – unemployed</td>
<td>Mother – teacher assistant at xxxx Father – passed away Younger sister – 6 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head boy – link to owning own business one day.</td>
<td>Not on leadership team but would like to own a business one day and make his family proud.</td>
<td>Prefect (on leadership team) – link to leading people in handling shares and showing them the ropes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Admiration of personal qualities that family members have shown in their careers – but not their actual careers. Family role models in terms of character issues of overcoming adversity, working hard and persevering rather than their actual jobs.

- Would NOT like his father’s job as a security guard BUT then also says his dad is good at mechanical engineering and therefore he wants to be like him in this regard.
- Admires his auntie’s career because she always “gets serious” about her work and she loves it very much.
- She is a manager at Lifestyle Garden Centre.
- Admires his mother’s job at xxxx because she has WORKED HARD to get there.
Growing up he has seen a lot of people fixing cars and he wants to be like them. (Role of context?)
Possible confusion over being a mechanic and a mechanical engineer?

His aunt who grew up poorly but said she is going to make something of her life has influenced him in terms of a future career. Perseverance despite hardship.
He would not like to be a domestic worker like his oldest aunt because “it can’t support me.”
His family wants him to achieve his goals and to persevere. Also not to make the same mistakes they made.

His mother has influenced him to study and have his own famous business and time measures for everything?
Upbringing has encouraged him to look where he came from and to focus on the future.

---

### 2. Most desired careers

- Business
- Artistic
- Helping others
- Engineering
- Science
- Computers

- Business
- Artistic
- Helping others
- Sport
- Musician
- Law

- Business
- Artistic
- Sport
- Engineering
- Science

---

### 3. Undesirable careers

- Teacher
- Sport
- Racer
- Security guard
- Soccer player

- Domestic worker

- Teacher
- Law
- Scientist (Then says science is one of his most desirable careers)

---

### 4. Career hopes and dreams

To become the best mechanical engineer in the whole world.

I hope that I will achieve my dream and dream big and persevere and make my family proud and be a business man.

To have a good job that is suitable to my family.
I dream to have a wonderful family and later on to start having a business with a major shareholder in the company. I will try to save money.

(In 10 years’ time I see myself …)

“… working for myself in a business and owning a shop of my own. I see myself getting married and driving my own cars.”

“… trying to discover my own business and making it. I have a vision of what I want and don’t want in my business and working hard and studying about business.”

“… having a well-known famous business. I also see myself inventing the latest technology and having a nice big house the latest, fancy car.”
APPENDIX E3 – DATA ANALYSIS

THEME 1 SUB-THEME 1.1

(Example of data analysis tables included for theme 1 sub-theme 1.1 only as the inclusion of all tables was not possible given the number of tables in total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME 1: CAREER HOPES AND DREAMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUB-THEME 1.1: DESIRE FOR A CAREER THAT ALLOWS INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATA SET</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLABO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Fabulous ideas – yes I’ve got some ideas of what I want to do as a career.” Showing independent thought as to what he wants to become one day.

“Teacher, it’s like managing your own company and owning your own company and not working for someone else.”

“And working for your own self and have employees.”

“Is this your biggest dream?” “Yes”

“Tell me again what kind of company you’d like to own one day” “An engineering company”

“Teacher I think it’s because I don’t like want to fall under a person’s need, like I’d like to fall under my own need.” “My own company”

“And guys all of you have said that you want to one day own your own company, so that kind of talks to wanting to be independent. Like you said Participant A, you don’t want to have be under someone’s name.” “Yes” “You want to work for yourself. Would you agree with Participant B in terms of wanting a career that allows independence?” “Ja”

“And there’s like making my OWN label. “Your own clothing label?” “Yes”

Pointing to the phrase that says “YOUR SAY” Participant B says “and here it’s like when I start doing, doing what I am doing like opening the company. Like I SAY WHAT I FEEL.”

Points to the quote that says “JOY IS BRIGHT, BOLD AND BEAUTIFUL” and I asked “So that will bring you joy?” “Yes” “When you start living your dream of owning a company?” “Yes”

Pointing again to the phrase “YOUR SAY” he says “And here the people that will be working for me they can speak like – they have to have a say, like if they are – they don’t feel free, they can say.”

“So would you say you value people being able to speak their mind?” “Yes” Sense here of giving other people the freedom and autonomy to speak their mind. Freedom of independent thought.

When I asked what they had learnt from this process, Participant B said “I’ve learnt the chef thing…like if someone is not there then you can cook a meal for yourself,” “So being a chef would kind of give you a skill of being able to cook for yourself?” “Yes”

“And not depending on someone…you can do things on your own.” “So that kind of career would make you independent.” “Yes” “Ja, like you are saying, not dependent on other people.” “Yes” “So Participant B is that something you value in a career” “Yes” “Is being independent, not having to rely on other people.” “Yes”
### QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To become the <strong>best mechanical engineer</strong> in the whole world.</th>
<th>I hope that I will achieve my dream and dream big and persevere and make my family proud and be a business man.</th>
<th>To have a good job that is suitable to my family. I dream to have a wonderful family and later on to start having a business with a major shareholder in the company. I will try to save money.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“…working for myself in a business and owning a shop of my own – INDEPENDENCE &amp; AUTONOMY”</td>
<td>“…trying to discover my own business and making it”</td>
<td>“…having a well-known famous business”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see myself getting <strong>married</strong> and driving my own cars.”</td>
<td>I have a vision of what I want and don’t want in my business and working hard and studying about business.”</td>
<td>INDEPENDENCE &amp; AUTONOMY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIOPHGRAM</strong></td>
<td><strong>SOCIOPHGRAM</strong></td>
<td><strong>SOCIOPHGRAM</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interestingly his mother’s current job is that of a domestic worker. By nature this is a job which allows for little independence and autonomy. It is not particularly high paying and one is under the “ownership” of an employer. His mother’s dream job is to be a nurse. This is a more prestigious job which would allow for further autonomy and independence. Also links to the idea of an altruistic career – helping others. His father’s current job is that of a security guard. This is also low on the spectrum of well paid jobs and is also a job where one is dictated to and at the mercy of the owner of the company. Could talk to altruism. His father’s dream job is that of a soldier which is also altruistic (fighting for a cause) and is more prestigious than his current hob of a security guard.</td>
<td>His mother is currently unemployed. This in itself can be disempowering and take away one’s sense of autonomy and independence. Her dream job is to be a television presenter or actress. Although this probably talks more to the idea of fame and a career that affords a better lifestyle, it could relate to the independence and autonomy that such a career might bring. In terms of earning capacity etc. His father is also a security guard. Low on the job spectrum and little autonomy or independence allowed. Could talk to altruism. His father’s dream job is to become a personal trainer and health and fitness instructor. This kind of career allows for flexibility and mastery of certain skills which in turn would lead to a sense of autonomy.</td>
<td>Mother is currently a teacher assistant at a private school. Although this participant’s mother has the most autonomy and independence, compared to the others, she is still and assistant and not in full control of the class. There is still a sense of deferring to the teacher. Her dream job is to be a teacher and have her OWN class. This talks directly to the idea of independence and wanting the autonomy that comes with having one’s own class. His father is deceased however, his dream job was to OWN a printing company. Again talking to the idea of ownership, autonomy and being independent. Autonomy = the freedom to act independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIOPHGRAM</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>